

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 24 JANUARY 2017

Present: Councillor Ayub (Mayor);

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ballsdon, Brock, Chrisp, Davies, Dennis, Duveen, Eden, D Edwards, K Edwards, Ennis, Gittings, Grashoff, Hacker, Hopper, Hoskin, James, Khan, Livingston, Lovelock, Maskell, McDonald, McElligott, McGonigle, McKenna, O'Connell, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rodda, Singh, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Steele, Stevens, Terry, Tickner, Vickers, White, J Williams, R Williams and Woodward.

Apologies: Councillors Gavin and Jones.

33. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor:

- asked the Council to note that the Head of Legal & Democratic Services had exercised his delegation at the request of the Labour Group Leader to appoint Councillor Brock to the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee in place of Councillor D Edwards, who had stood down from the Committee.
- reminded the Council that he expected all councillors to be courteous and respectful of each other and members of the public throughout the meeting and that they must show respect for the Mayor as Chair of the meeting at all times during debates, as required by Council Standing Order 18.

34. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

35. PETITION

Wendy Thompson presented a petition in the following terms:

Save Our Children's Centres

Reading Borough Council has announced a consultation on closing 9 of its 13 children's centres.

In North Reading they propose to close **both** children's centres: North Reading Children's Centre in Emmer Green and Caversham Children's Centre.

Reading Borough Council's proposal to remodel Children's Centres shows that 28% more children attend North Reading children's centres (1,335 children age 0-4), than South Reading children's centres (956 children age 0-4), yet they propose for South Reading to keep one of two existing centres and for North Reading to lose both.

It is unreasonable to suggest that 5,097 children age 0-4 years old from East and North Reading should attend one children's centre in Cemetery Junction. It is unreasonable

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to ask families from North Reading to travel across the Thames to East Reading to access a children's centre.

Children's centres are not only vital support for young children they are also a lifeline for their primary caregivers, the majority of whom are women. Some mothers struggle with isolation, depression, anxiety or other conditions and need the help they can access at children's centres.

We are asking the Council to keep Children's Centres open and at least one in North Reading.

RESPONSE by Councillor Lovelock (Leader of the Council) on behalf of Councillor Gavin (Lead Councillor for Children's Services and Families):

Thank you, Ms Thomson, for your petition

Firstly, may I say on behalf of the Labour Administration that we agree that Children's Centres, brought in by the last Labour Government, provide a vital and valuable programme for families and we regret that Government cuts to funding mean that the Council is no longer able to continue to spend the level of money on its Children's Centre programme as we have in the past. This is due directly to cuts in Government funding to the Council. By 2019 the government will have reduced our annual grant by £57million to less than £2million and on top of that there is no allowance made for increased pressures such as more elderly people needing care and more children needing care and school places - to name but two of the additional costs the Council is facing.

The proposals for Children's Centres which is out for consultation is based on the principle that the remaining resource needs to be targeted on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children and families in the town. The number of children is not the main indication of need and we hope that during the consultation discussions people will be able to question in detail at the different needs analysis which underpin the proposals.

Although it is proposed that there will no longer be a registered Children's Centre in the North of Reading, we are committed to retaining a significant resource with a satellite building housing services on the Amersham Road at the Caversham Nursery School site.

I agree with the petitioner that it would be unreasonable to ask families to travel to Sun Street to access Children Centre services from north Reading. The proposal is that the Caversham Centre will continue to provide a good range of universal Health services, including midwifery and health visiting as well as range of RBC activities for families, some limited universal and a range of targeted services. We are also working with voluntary sector partners to assess how they might be able to provide some elements of universal 'Stay & Play' type sessions, as indeed they already do.

Therefore, it is not the case that Children and families from the north of Reading will have to travel across the Thames for access to services within the proposed remodelled Children's Centre offer.

I hope the petitioner and those who have signed this petition will participate in the consultation now underway and we welcome any dialogue on how to keep services

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available to the community whilst still needing to meet the savings target outlined in the proposal.

36. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 9

	<u>Questioner</u>	Subject	Answer
1.	Bob O'Neill	Street Homeless in Reading	Cllr Lovelock

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

37. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 10

Questions on the following matters were submitted:

	<u>Questioner</u>	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr Duveen	Green Bin Collections	Cllr Terry
2.	Cllr McGonigle	Expanded Polystyrene	Cllr Gittings
3.	Cllr Pearce	South Reading CCG	Cllr Hoskin
4.	WITHDRAWN		
5.	Cllr White	Children's Services	Cllr Lovelock on behalf of Cllr Gavin
6.	Cllr White	Air Pollution Deaths	Cllr Page
7.	Cllr Brock	Help for Residents to get Home from Hospital	Cllr Eden

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

38. BUDGET 2017-18: APPROVAL OF COUNCIL TAX BASE, NDR1 ESTIMATE & ESTIMATED COLLECTION FUND SURPLUS; APPROVAL OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2017/18; AND REMOVAL OF EMPTY AND SECOND HOME COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS

Further to Minute 82 of the Policy Committee held on 16 January 2017, the Strategic Finance Director submitted a report regarding the Council Tax support scheme, estimated Council Tax collection rate and Council tax base for the 2017/18 financial year and a proposal to remove Council Tax discounts for empty and second homes.

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The report explained that, by 31 January 2017, 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 2017/18. 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 2017/18, which was done by completing an NNDR1 form.

The report also explained that there was a requirement on 16 January 2017 to estimate the collection fund surplus or deficit separately for both Council Tax and business rate transactions as at 31 March 2017. Any surplus or deficit would then be taken into account when calculating the total amount to be collected from Council Tax payers in 2017/18. 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 2017/18. The main changes to the scheme that applied in 2016/17 would be to increase the minimum those of working age were required to pay from 20% to 25%; remove earned income disregards from the earnings calculation; and increase non-dependant deductions. A summary of the responses to the consultation on the changes to the local scheme were set out in Appendix B to the report along with the officer advice.

The report also noted that the various technical changes to Council Tax made in previous years would continue, and subject to the Council's approval further changes would be introduced this year to reduce discounts for Major Works and for second homes. A consultation had also taken place on these proposed changes and details of the consultation response and a summary of the key points made was appended to the report at Appendix C.

The Equality Impact Assessment in respect of the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme and Council Tax discounts was included at Appendix F.

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 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 16 January 2017 (Minute 82 refers), the 2017 uprating of the allowances in the council tax support scheme be approved and other amendments to the scheme as set out in paragraph 6.7 of the report;
- (2) That the following be noted:

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- (i) the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2886(2012)) in 2013;
- (ii) the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 (SI 3181 (2013)) in 2014;
- (iii) the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2014 in 2015;
- (iv) the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 in 2016;

and these would remain in place as the basis of our 2017-8 scheme (to the extent the requirements in each regulation remain prescribed);

- (3) That the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 which came into force on 15 January 2017 and apply to local schemes from 1 April 2017, as set out in Appendix A, be adopted;
- (4) That the proposed local changes set out in Appendix B for 2017/18 and 2018/19 and the overall Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18 be approved (Appendix B to the report set out the summary of responses to the consultation on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme);
- (5) That the Council's "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 2017/18 scheme, be noted;
- (6) That, following consultation, the changes to discounts for certain empty property and second homes as set out in Appendix C to the report, be approved;
- (7) That for the purpose of, and in accordance with, the provisions of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations, 1992 (as amended) the following be approved:
 - (a) The estimated Council Tax collection rate for the financial year 2017/18 be set at 98.75% overall (unchanged since 2015/16);
 - (b) Taking account of (1) above, and the Council Tax technical changes made since 2013/14, set out in (2) above, and the estimated Council Tax collection rate in (7)(a) above, the amount calculated by Reading Borough Council as its Council Tax base for the financial year 2017/18 shall be 53,671;
- (8) That a surplus of £928,955 had been estimated in respect of Council Tax transactions as at 31 March 2017, and Reading's share of this would be £800,000, be noted;

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- (9) that a surplus of £1,800,000 had been estimated in respect of NNDR transactions as at 31 March 2017, and Reading's share of this would be £882,000, be noted;
- (10) That the NNDR1 summary form, in Appendix E to the report, be noted and approved, noting that it was estimated that £124m would be collected, of which Reading would retain £33.276m after the £27.484m the DCLG tariff, but would pay an estimated increased levy (over both years of around £1.5m).

39. FUTURE AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS - APPOINTMENT OF PUBLIC SECTOR AUDIT APPOINTMENTS LTD

Further to Minutes 22 and 12 of the meetings of the Audit and Governance Committee meetings held on 19 April 2016 and 29 September 2016 respectively, the Strategic Finance Director submitted a report explaining the latest position in relation to the changed arrangements in the Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) for the appointment of an external auditor for the Council. The report recommended that the Council confirmed the recommendation of the Audit & Governance Committee to appoint Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited to assist the Council to appoint an external auditor. The report explained that, as part of the process of shutting down the Audit Commission, Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited had been established to manage the run off of the audit contracts, and had been specified by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government as an 'appointing person' under regulation 3 of the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015. This meant that PSAA could make auditor appointments for audits of the accounts from 2018/19 of principal authorities that chose to opt into its arrangements.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the appointment of Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) by the Government, to act as an appointing person under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015, be noted;
- (2) That, in accordance with regulation 19 of the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015, the recommendation of the Audit & Governance Committee to 'opt in' to the 'Appointing Person' arrangement be confirmed and agreed;
- (3) That, under the 'opt in' arrangement, PSAA be appointed to assist the Council in finding an Auditor for 2018/19 and beyond for a 5 year period, in accordance with the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015 and on the recommendation of the Audit & Governance Committee (Minute 12 of the meeting held on 29 September 2016 refers) and the Head of Finance be authorised to make the necessary arrangements to progress the process within the required timescale;

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- (4) That the decisions to 'opt in' to the 'Appointing Person' arrangement to seek external auditors on behalf of the Council; and to confirm the appointment of the external auditors be added to the list of matters reserved to Council set out in Article 4 of the Council's Constitution.

40. READING'S 2ND HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

The Director of Adult Care & Health Services submitted a report on the adoption of Reading's second Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Strategy, which was attached to the report at Appendix C. The report explained that, as required by statute, the Strategy would set the basis for commissioning plans across both the local authority and the local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). It was a joint strategy and its development to date had been driven by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The report recommended that the Council delegated responsibility to the Health and Wellbeing for approval of implementation plans and future monitoring arrangements. The report also had attached the results of the consultation on the Strategy at Appendix A and an Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix B.

The report explained the process of developing the Strategy over the next three years, which had identified the following priorities:

- Supporting people to make healthy lifestyle choices (with a focus on tooth decay, obesity and physical activity);
- Reducing loneliness and social isolation;
- Reducing the amount of alcohol people drink to safe levels;
- Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing in children and young people;
- Making Reading a place where people could live well with dementia;
- Increasing breast and bowel screening and prevention services;
- Reducing the number of people with tuberculosis;
- Reducing deaths by suicide.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Hoskin and seconded by Councillor Eden and CARRIED:

Resolved -

- (1) That the feedback from the formal consultation on Reading's second joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (annexed to the report as Appendix A) together with the Equality Impact Assessment (annexed to the report as Appendix B), which was considered and taken into account in the development of the Strategy, be noted;
- (2) That the 2017-20 Reading Health and Wellbeing Strategy, as attached at Appendix C to the report, be adopted;
- (3) That the Health and Wellbeing Board be authorised to approve the supporting Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, on behalf of the Council, at its next meeting on 27 January 2017.

41. READING FAIR WORKLOAD CHARTER

Pursuant to Notice, the motion set out in the resolution was moved by Councillor J Williams and seconded by Councillor Pearce and CARRIED:

In accordance with Standing Order 14(10)(a), Councillor J Williams received the consent of the Council to alter the motion he had submitted in writing by deleting all text following the section which started "This Council believes that:..." and ended with "...and from across the UK, to Reading" and replacing with the following:

"1. This Council resolves to consult with local trade union representatives, head teachers and teachers in regard to introducing a fair workload charter for Reading schools.

2. Should the consultation result in agreement that Reading Schools would be in favour of the introduction of a fair workload charter, Council officers will work to create a draft for approval at an appropriate ACE committee in the 17/18 municipal year.

3. Review of the take up and impact of the charter will be reported back to the ACE committee to a timetable agreed by the committee."

Resolved -

This Council notes:

1. Reading Council's published aims in the Reading First programme is to have all schools in Reading rated either Good or Outstanding and in the top 25% in the UK within the next three years.
2. The continuing pressures on finding, recruiting and retaining quality teachers, particularly in the South-East region where the cost of living is high.
3. That amongst others, one of the key pressures on teachers is workload. The DfE's own workload statistics show an increase in working hours for all categories of teachers compared to 2010. Primary class room teachers have increased by more than 9 hours a week to 59.3, while secondary classroom teachers have experienced nearly a 6 hour increase to 55.6. In primary classrooms, this is exacerbated by the changing and onerous requirements for statutory assessment, at the end of both Key Stages One and Two, which have also been putting unreasonable pressure on our very youngest of students. The work of the More Than A Score coalition highlights the need for significant change.

This Council believes that:

1. Reading should be at the forefront of best teaching practice in the UK.

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2. In order to achieve our stated education aims, it is essential to employ and retain quality teachers who have Qualified Teacher Status.
3. Commitment to a manageable workload should be a key factor in attracting, recruiting and retaining the best teachers in the region, and from across the UK, to Reading.

1. This Council resolves to consult with local trade union representatives, head teachers and teachers in regard to introducing a fair workload charter for Reading schools.

2. Should the consultation result in agreement that Reading Schools would be in favour of the introduction of a fair workload charter, Council officers will work to create a draft for approval at an appropriate ACE committee in the 17/18 municipal year.

3. Review of the take up and impact of the charter will be reported back to the ACE committee to a timetable agreed by the committee.

42. CLOSURE OF ROYAL BERKSHIRE HOSPITAL HYDROTHERAPY POOL

Pursuant to Notice, the motion set out in the resolution was moved by Councillor Hoskin and seconded by Councillor Skeats and CARRIED:

In accordance with Standing Order 14(10)(a), Councillor Hoskin received the consent of the Council to alter the motion he had submitted in writing by replacing the month in the first bullet point under "This council notes:" from "March" to "June" and adding after the third bullet point the following words:

"This Council welcomes the decision of the Royal Berkshire Hospital to defer the closure of the hydrotherapy pool in order to consult partners and users of the pool."

Resolved -

This Council notes:

- Reading's Royal Berkshire Hospital has announced plans to close its hydrotherapy pool at the end of June 2017
- the hospital's own website declares that hydrotherapy can help with the relief of pain and muscle spasm, increasing range of movement and improving both the strength and control of muscles as well as helping encourage weight-bearing especially where land-based exercise is very difficult
- the strong objections to the closure by a range of charities and support groups including Berkshire Disabled People Against Cuts, Arthritis Matters, Parkinson's UK, Reading Families' Forum, Reading Fibromyalgia Support Group, the MS Society and the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre.

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This Council welcomes the decision of the Royal Berkshire Hospital to defer the closure of the hydrotherapy pool in order to consult partners and users of the pool.

This Council welcomes the wide-ranging community campaign to save Reading's Hydrotherapy Pool, including local cross-party support for the campaign involving councillors, MPs and a former MP.

This Council is disappointed by the lack of detail to the RBH's rationale for closure of the pool which is described by the hospital as making a small loss and not a facility it thinks an acute hospital should provide.

This Council believes that decisions about the future of our local NHS services should be made after involving and consulting with patients and Reading residents.

The Council supports the resolution of the December meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee to request that the Royal Berkshire Hospital performs a full consultation before making a decision on the Hydrotherapy Pool.

This Council believes there is a strong probability that the human and financial costs caused by the detrimental impacts on people's health and wellbeing from the closure of this therapy service will far outweigh any short-term savings.

This Council resolves that the Managing Director writes to the Chief Executive of the Royal Berkshire Hospital and the Chief Officer of the Reading NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups to convey this Council's objection to the closure of the Hydrotherapy Pool, to repeat its demand for a full public consultation and that a comprehensive assessment of the full health and wellbeing impacts of the loss of the therapy pool is performed.

43. FOUR YEARLY ELECTIONS

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Stevens and seconded by Councillor Robinson and LOST:

"The Council spends around £510,000 a year on elections and maintaining the electoral roll. We elect Councillors in thirds and so hold local elections 3 in 4 years. So over 4 years the cost is about £1.53M. In most years we additionally hold General Elections, European Parliament elections and last year a referendum. Central government reimburse us around £100,000 for each of these national elections so the net expenditure is around £410,000 p.a. or around £1.23 M every four years.

The Council incurs the cost of maintaining the electoral roll regardless of whether elections were held. 2013/14 was a 'fallow year' i.e. there were no elections. That year the running costs were only £181,000 compared with the following two years which were £336,000 each year. So we can deduce that each local election costs RBC around £150,000.

On Wednesday 7 December 2016 in the House of Commons Ranil Jayawardena, Conservative MP for NE Hants proposed a 10 minute rule bill regarding Electoral

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Reform for local government. He proposed that local elections should be held on an all out basis every four years - rather than thirds. His arguments in favour are that:

- this would lead to considerable savings;
- they tend to concentrate voters' minds - leading to increased voter turn out;
- Councils can plan longer term rather than just be looking to the next local elections.

Recognising the saving of £300,000 over 4 years and the benefits identified by Ranil Jayawardena MP, this Council instructs the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to report to the next Council meeting on the steps required by the authority to resolve to move to all out elections from 2018."

44. BREXIT NEGOTIATIONS

Pursuant to Notice, the motion set out in the resolution was moved by Councillor Rodda and seconded by Councillor K Edwards and CARRIED:

In accordance with Standing Order 14(10)(a), Councillor Rodda received the consent of the Council to alter the motion he had submitted in writing, "Brexit Negotiations", in the following way:

Replace the word "Bill" in the second paragraph with the words "...campaign, recently launched by Melanie Onns MP..." and replace the word "Bill" in the third and final paragraph with the word "campaign".

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Hopper and seconded by Councillor Stevens and LOST:

'Delete all words after "This Council" in the first paragraph and replace with the following:

"...recognises that uncertainty over BREXIT negotiations is causing concerns amongst local residents regarding workers' long established rights.

This Council therefore welcomes the statements made by Prime Minister Teresa May in her speech of the 17th of January in which she stated:

'Britain is a country that protects and enhances the rights people have at work.

That is why, as we translate the body of European law into our domestic regulations, we will ensure that workers' rights are fully protected and maintained.

Indeed, under my leadership, not only will the Government protect the rights of workers set out in European legislation, we will build on them. Because under this Conservative Government, we will make sure legal protection for workers keeps pace with the changing labour market - and that the voices of workers are heard by the boards of publicly-listed companies for the first time.'

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This Council resolves to write to Alok Sharma MP and Rob Wilson MP expressing support for Workers Rights and this Council's support for existing protections becoming part of UK law under the Great Repeal Bill."

Resolved:

This Council is increasingly concerned that the uncertainty over BREXIT negotiations is causing unnecessary worry for local residents regarding workers' long established rights.

This Council therefore resolves to lend its support to the backbench campaign, recently launched by Melanie Onns MP, which calls for protection of rights, such as maternity and paternity leave, paid holidays and job security.

It further resolves to write to the local M.P.s urging them to support the campaign and to urge the Government to set out clearly how it intends to enshrine these rights into Post-BREXIT legislation.

(The meeting closed at 9.20 pm).