

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2017

Present: Councillor Ayub (Mayor);

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

Apologies: Councillor Singh.

51. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor addressed the Council in response to the terrorist atrocity at Westminster on 22 March 2017, in the following words:

“Last Wednesday, innocent people lost their lives and dozens of others suffered serious injuries in the terrible terrorist attack in London.

The victims of this outrage came from many different countries, including Britain, France, Poland, Romania, South Korea and the United States.

The UK is a multi-cultural country and I am proud to be Mayor of a town which is home to people of many different races and religions, faiths and beliefs. The terrorists who commit awful atrocities such as this do not represent any of us.

Reading stands together as a town, united in our condemnation of last week's attack and determined that terrorism will never shake our absolute belief in peace, community and freedom.”

The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect to the victims of the attack.

The Mayor invited Councillor Lovelock, Leader of the Council, to pay tribute to the Leader of West Berkshire Council, Roger Croft, who had recently died from injuries sustained in a car crash in France last month.

The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect.

The Mayor invited Councillor Lovelock, Leader of the Council, to pay tribute to Moira Dickenson a former Councillor for Castle and then Battle Ward from 1979-87, who had sadly died recently.

The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect.

52. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2017

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1.	Roger Lightfoot	South Reading Leisure Centre	Cllr Gittings

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

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

Questions on the following matters were submitted:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1.	Cllr White	Workloads, Morale and Staff Absence Through Illness	Cllr Lovelock
2.	Cllr Rodda	Affordable Housing	Cllr Page
3.	Cllr Rodda	Air Pollution	Cllr Page
4.	Cllr J Williams	Fly-tipping	Cllr Terry
5.	Cllr Hopper	Relocation Allowances	Cllr Lovelock
6.	Cllr Dennis	Benefit Cap	Cllr Lovelock
7.	Cllr Dennis	Business Rates Retention	Cllr Lovelock

As there was insufficient time, pursuant to Standing Order 10(4), a written reply to Question 7 above would be provided in accordance with Standing Order 11(3).

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

55. COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES 2017-2018

The Managing Director submitted a report recommending that the Council considered the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel and to adopt a scheme of Councillors' Allowances for the financial year 2017/18.

The report stated that the Independent Remuneration Panel met annually to consider a scheme of allowances and pensions for councillors and to make recommendations to Council. The Panel had recommended that the total budget for Councillors' allowances and the levels of allowances for all councillors should stay at the same level as set for 2016/17. The overall budget should therefore be £448,597 in respect of councillors' allowances; basic allowance for all councillors should remain set at £8,220 per annum; and the remainder of the budget should be split between the

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2017

Leader, Deputy Leader and recipients of special responsibility allowances as set out in Section 3 of the report. The report had appended the Public Notice of the Remuneration Panel's Findings at Appendix A.

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

Resolved:

That the recommendations of the independent Remuneration Panel, in respect of the scheme of allowances to be paid by the authority to Councillors for the financial year 2018-2019, be accepted and approved as follows:

- (1) That, for 2018-19, the total sum for the payment of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances to councillors remain at the same level as set for 2017-18 at £448,597;
- (2) That, within this total sum, the provision for the payment of Basic Allowance to all councillors remain at £378,125; and the Basic Allowance paid to individual councillors remain the same at £8,220 a year;
- (3) That the Special Responsibility Allowances payments remain the same, as follows:
 - (a) the amount paid to the Leader to be £7,004;
 - (b) the amount paid to the Deputy Leader to be £5,722;
 - (c) the amount paid to SRA Tier 1 to be £3,816;
 - (d) the amount paid to SRA Tier 2 to be £2,147;
 - (e) the amount paid to SRA Tier 3 to be £1,074.

No councillor shall receive more than one Special Responsibility Allowance;

- (4) That the existing categorisation of tiers should remain unchanged, as follows:
 - Tier 1 to be paid to the Lead Councillors and to the Leader of the main opposition Group (8 Councillors currently in receipt in 2017/18);
 - Tier 2 to be paid to the Chairs of Committees and the Leader of the other political groups (10 Councillors and one independent member currently in receipt in 2017/18);
 - Tier 3 to be paid to Vice-Chairs of Committees and other councillors carrying out other activities in relation to the discharge of the authority's functions as require the commitment of equivalent time and effort as for other categories of activity which would qualify for Special Responsibility Allowance under Paragraph 5(1)(i) of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and to the independent person appointed in accordance with Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 to carry out the functions specified in that Act in relation to the Members' Code of Conduct and Local Standards Committee (4 Councillors and one independent person currently in receipt in 2017/18);
- (5) That the 2018-19 arrangements for the payment of Dependant Carers' Allowance be paid in line with the living wage, currently as follows:

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2017

- (a) Up to £8.75 per hour for childcare for up to 15 hours a week
- (b) Up to £8.75 per hour towards the cost of a care attendant for an elderly or disabled relative (including a disabled child) for up to 15 hours a week

The person providing the care may not be a close relative defined as spouse, partner (opposite or same sex cohabitantes), parents, children, brothers, sisters, grandparents and grandchildren. The paid care attendant must sign a receipt to show that they have cared for the dependent during the hours claimed for;

- (6) That, subject to (8) below, the level of subsistence allowances, with the exception of overnight subsistence, remain the same as officers receive. The allowances are currently:

Subsistence	
Breakfast allowance	£8.26
Lunch allowance	£11.41
Tea allowance	£4.52
Evening meal allowance	£14.13
Overnight subsistence	£82.21 a day outside London £93.77 a day in London or at LGA Annual Conferences

- (7) That the level of travel allowances be set as the same as officers receive, as follows:

- Travel by councillor's own motor vehicle - 45 pence per mile
- Travel by councillor's own bicycle - 37 pence per mile
- Travel by councillor's own motorcycle - 40.9 pence per mile
- Bus travel - cost of the ordinary fare, cheap fare or portion of any weekly ticket;

- (8) That the subsistence limits referred to in (6) above be exceeded in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer, e.g. to enable a Councillor and an officer attending a conference to stay at the same accommodation, subject to there being sufficient budget provision;

- (9) That provision for Co-optees' Allowances are payable solely to non-councillor members of the Standards Committee attending meetings of the Committee or any Sub-Committee set up by the Committee as part of its process of assessing, investigating and hearing complaints about Councillors; the allowances to be paid at the daily rate equivalent of the Councillors' Basic Allowance; the Monitoring Officer to be authorised to settle the rate to be paid on each occasion;

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2017

- (10) That the salary sacrifice schemes available to Council staff also be made available to Councillors.

56. PAY POLICY 2017/18

Further to Minute 29 of the Personnel Committee held on 2 March 2017, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report outlining the draft pay policy statement, which was appended to the report. The report stated that Local Authorities were required under Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (the Act) to prepare a Pay Policy Statement that articulated the Council's policy towards the pay of the workforce, particularly senior staff and the lowest paid employees.

The report explained that each local authority was an individual employer in its own right and had the autonomy to make decisions on pay that were appropriate to local circumstances and which delivered value for money for local taxpayers. Section 40 of the Act required authorities, in developing their Pay Policy Statement, to have regard to any guidance that had been published by the Secretary of State. This included Communities and Local Government guidance on Openness and Accountability in Local Pay and the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency (as amended). The Act basically required Councils to produce a Pay Policy Statement annually that was accessible for council tax payers to be able to take an informed view of whether local decisions on all aspects of remuneration were fair.

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

Resolved:

That the revised Pay Policy Statement 2017/18, as appended to the report, be approved to take effect from 1 April 2017.

57. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE - HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Further to Minute 33 of the Personnel (Appointments) Committee held on 16 March 2017, the Managing Director submitted a report informing the Council of the process for the appointment to the new post of Chief Executive and to seek approval for the proposed interim arrangements.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That a confirmed offer of appointment be made to Peter Sloman for the new post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service;
- (2) That the interim Managing Director, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to confirm the offer of an appointment to the preferred candidate within the salary range of £130,000 to £156,000;

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2017

- (3) That the Council's Constitution and Delegations Register be updated, wherever necessary, to reflect the appointment to the new post of Chief Executive, which would act as the local authority's Head of Paid Service;
- (4) That Alison Bell, current Director of Environment & Neighbourhood Services, be appointed to the post of acting Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) within the current Chief Executive salary scale from 1 April 2017 until such time as Peter Sloman can take up the post of Chief Executive permanently;
- (5) That Alison Bell, as acting Chief Executive, be authorised to undertake all the Proper Officer responsibilities and exercise all the delegations made to the post of Chief Executive; and be authorised to undertake all other duties which fall to the Chief Executive as set out in the Council's Constitution and procedure rules, and its agreed policies and procedures;
- (6) That the acting Chief Executive be authorised to agree any consequential arrangements that may be necessary from time to time in consultation with the Leader of the Council;
- (7) That, at the conclusion of the acting arrangements described above, Alison Bell return to her substantive post of Director of Environment & Neighbourhood Services.

58. FAIR HEALTH CARE FUNDING FOR SOUTH READING

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Pearce and seconded by Councillor Hoskin and CARRIED:

Resolved -

This Council notes:

Clinical Commissioning Groups are responsible for the planning and commissioning of health care services for their local area. South Reading Clinical Commissioning Group is the lowest funded in the whole of England. This means that it is 150th out of 150 CCG's in the UK. Average funding per head across the UK is £1221, compared to just £1000 in South Reading.

Abbey, Church and Whitley Wards have the lowest life expectancy in Reading; Church and Whitley wards, which are both in South Reading, also have the lowest levels of life expectancy, and the highest rates of obesity and child poverty in Reading.

The low level of funding in South Reading is unacceptable.

A petition has been signed by hundreds of residents in South Reading demanding that this funding increases.

This Council resolves to:

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2017

Organise a meeting between the Leader & Deputy Leader of the Council, the Lead Councillor for Health, the Members of Parliament for Reading East & Reading West, the Minister for Health and South Reading Clinical Commissioning Group to urgently resolve these funding shortages in South Reading. In view of the urgency, this meeting should if possible take place by Thursday April 13th 2017.

59. AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Duveen and seconded by Councillor O'Connell and LOST:

"Council notes that the recent Audit Report by Ernst & Young pointed out an anomaly in the make-up of the Audit and Governance Committee. In their words:

'We identified that both the Leader and Deputy Leader are members of the A & G Committee. Guidance issued by CIPFA indicates that leadership of the Council should not be represented on the Committee. We recommend that the composition of the Committee be reviewed.'

This Council recognises that having Lead Councillors sitting on the Committee, part of whose job is to scrutinise their own work and decisions, will not be seen by the citizens of Reading as either unbiased or independent in its role of auditing and scrutinising the work of the Council.

Although the Ernst and Young report called for a review of the make-up of the A & G Committee, this Council accepts the guidance offered by CIPFA and recognises that in the interests of good governance Lead Councillors should not serve on the A & G Committee.

The simplest and quickest way to resolve this anomaly is for the Lead Councillors to stand down from the Committee. There is no need to instigate a full review of the composition of the A & G Committee.

This Council therefore requires that Lead Councillors should stand down from this Committee and asks the Administration to appoint members of the Committee who are not Lead Councillors."

60. REFUGE PROVISION FOR WOMEN FLEEING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Eden and seconded by Councillor Lovelock and CARRIED:

Resolved -

This Council notes that:

1. There is no national system or funding of refuge provision for women fleeing domestic violence.
2. That beds, are made available by councils with the understanding that women and children from outside of the area will need to use them because of the need to be safe.

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2017

3. That while some local authorities have always relied on others to provide refuge places Reading has a long standing commitment to ensuring that refuge is available in our town to provide sanctuary for those fleeing domestic violence.
4. That the continuing squeeze in funding from national government is increasingly forcing councils into untenable choices and that refuge funding from local authorities and across the country is being affected.
5. A letter from Reading's Community Safety partnership signed by the Leader of the Council and Stan Gilmour Superintendent Police Commander has been sent to Government as follows:

National Funding for Refuge Provision

I am writing to you on behalf of Reading's Domestic Abuse Strategy Group, a delivery group of the Community Safety Partnership, to express our concern at the national loss of refuge spaces; the complete cessation of support in some LA areas; and the need for core national funding for refuge - not simply funding for additionality.

In Reading the local authority has a long-standing commitment to providing financial support to ensure the provision of refuge to meet both local and national need. This includes generic and specialist provision for Asian women. Reading currently has 25 refuge places in the town and around 80% of these refuge places are accessed by households from outside the Reading area. The nature of refuge provision is that to improve their safety, people experiencing abuse predominantly seek emergency accommodation a distance away from the perpetrator. Based on Reading's population size, to be in line with the average in the Thames Valley, Reading would be required to provide 7 refuge places per 100,000 population (if those LAs with no provision are included) or 12 if only those with some provision are included.

The Council is about to recommission domestic abuse services and intends to rebalance investment in domestic abuse services in line with the current domestic abuse strategy. The Council is proposing to fund 15 refuge places, which is still above the regional average, and to increase investment in non-accommodation based support and preventative activity to break the cycle of abuse as these services are over-subscribed.

The Partnership welcomes the opportunity to look at the balance of the way services are delivered in the area. Our experience shows that outreach is a very effective way of supporting many service users.

We recognise, however, that for some victims a place of safety or a "refuge" is essential to prevent serious harm. For some it may be a short stay in a local refuge whilst other actions are taken to make them safe, for many others to be safe they need to move many miles away from their old home.

The system of refuge therefore relies on a principal of reciprocity of provision as many victims need to move out of area for their own safety (80% of placements in Reading's refuges are from out of area but equally many referrals of local women are made out of area). The provision of refuge places can't therefore simply be looked at from a purely local perspective. At a national level, since 2010, there

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2017

has been a loss of 17% of specialist refuges in England and a third of all referrals to refuges are turned away, normally due to a lack of available space (<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigning-and-influencing/campaign-with-us/sos/>).

In the face of funding cuts local authorities are facing significant financial pressures and are forced to make often unpalatable decisions. Alarminglly a number of authorities are ceasing to fund refuge at all. The Guardian reported last weekend that Sunderland is potentially set to become the only major city in the UK with no refuge provision - although a final decision has yet to be confirmed.

For authorities like Reading which are continuing to contribute to provision on the principle of reciprocity it feels deeply unjust that our local residents fleeing abuse and needing to move out of area to remain safe have fewer and fewer options. Our response as an LA is not to withdraw all refuge funding as other areas have done as councillors and partners wouldn't see that as a responsible response.

This is a national problem and although the Government announced £20m new one-off funding for specialist accommodation last November, the application guidance stated that the funding was for additional services and not to fund services being cut (or where not supported) by local government. Reading Borough Council applied for this funding, working in partnership with our local provider, other local authorities and the Police and Crime Commissioner. We are delighted to have heard recently that our bid for £132,000 was successful and this included £56,000 funding for specialist refuge provision.

However, longer-term a new and sustainable model of funding is required that doesn't simply fund the gaps (which is inequitable and does not reward those authorities who have protected refuges), provide short-term funding, or support 'additionality'. We urge you to consider a system of national funding for refuges which reflects the scale of need presenting and this should include the provision of specialist refuges sensitive to cultural needs.

A refuge is a place where women and children escaping abuse can be sure they are safe, and where they can access emotional and practical support from staff who understand what they have been through. It is a starting point for many to rebuild their lives. In breaking the cycle of abuse refuges help to change and save lives.

We would ask that Government recognises the specialist and unique nature of refuge provision and seeks to implement a sustainable national funding model to preserve this critical resource.

On behalf of the Reading Community Safety Partnership

This Council believes:

- 1. That keeping women safe from domestic violence should be a national priority.*

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2017

2. That there is a need for funding of preventative and outreach work to tackle the causes of domestic violence, refuge provision to protect women and a strong criminal justice response to violence and abuse.
3. That the complete ending of support in some local authorities may affect Reading women and that this is an untenable situation.

This Council therefore resolves:

1. That we endorse the letter from the Leader of the Council and the Local Police Area Commander (Superintendent Gilmour) and will publish it.
2. That we will write to the Reading MPs asking for their support in this campaign.
3. That as councillors we will continue to campaign for and support a national system of core funding not just additional support.
4. To offer to support Women's Aid and Refuge in launching a national petition on this.

(Councillors Terry and Jones declared a personal interest in this item. Nature of interest: Councillor Terry was the Chief Executive of Berkshire Women's Aid and Councillor Jones was Councillor Terry's partner. Councillor McDonald declared a personal interest in this item. Nature of interest: Councillor McDonald would be a member of the Domestic Abuse Forum from April 2017).

(The meeting closed at 8.18 pm).