

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 18 OCTOBER 2016

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, Livingston, Lovelock, Maskell, McElligott, McGonigle, McKenna, O'Connell, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rodda, Singh, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Steele, Stevens, Terry, Vickers, White, J Williams, R Williams and Woodward.

Apologies: Councillors Khan, McDonald and Tickner.

20. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Mayor referred to the recent death of former Councillor Leighton Yeo. Leighton had been a member of the Council between 1996 and 2000, representing Minster Ward. The Council stood in silence in his memory and as a mark of respect.
- 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 Planning Applications Committee and the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee.
- The Mayor, stated that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5(3)(a), he had decided to change the order of tonight's business to take agenda item 13 'No Confidence in Councillor Jan Gavin' immediately following item 7 'Children's Services Learning and Improvement Plan'.
- The Mayor reminded everyone that October was Black History month and that leaflets were available at the meeting providing information about the commemorative events taking place.

21. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1.	John Mullaney	Bus Only Route	Cllr Page
2.	Tom Lake	Arthur Hill Pool	Cllr Gittings
3.	Tom Lake	Arthur Hill Pool	Cllr Gittings
4.	Carol Froud	Charges for Emptying Green Recycling Bins	Cllr Terry

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 18 OCTOBER 2016

5.	Roger Lightfoot	Arthur Hill Pool Site Visit	Cllr Gittings
6.	Philip Vaughan	Arthur Hill Pool	Cllr Gittings

As there was insufficient time, pursuant to Standing Order 9(6), a written reply to Questions 5 and 6 above would be provided in accordance with Standing Order 9(8).

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

23. 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	Grammar School	Cllr Jones
2.	Cllr McGonigle	Revenge Evictions	Cllr Davies
3.	Cllr J Williams	Year of Culture	Cllr Gittings
4.	Cllr Livingston	Universal Credit	Cllr Lovelock
5.	Cllr Livingston	Benefit Cuts	Cllr Davies
6.	Cllr Debs Absolom	Traveller Incursions	Cllr Terry
7.	Cllr James	Council's Housing Register	Cllr Davies

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

24. CHILDREN'S SERVICES LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Further to Minutes 19 and 23 of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education (ACE) Committee meetings held on 23 August and 3 October 2016 respectively, the Director of Children, Education and Early Help Services submitted a report providing the Council with details on the progress being made in developing the Council's Improvement Plan required by Ofsted, following the June 2016 Inspection of the Council's Services for Children in need of help and protection, Children looked after and care leavers. A copy of the Reading Children's Services Learning and Improvement Plan draft was attached to the report at Appendix 1. The plan was structured around three key priorities and 18 outcomes, which responded to the 18 recommendations set out by Ofsted in their inspection report dated 5 August 2016.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Gavin and seconded by Councillor McElligott and CARRIED:

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 18 OCTOBER 2016

Resolved -

- (1) That the RBC Children's Services Learning and Improvement Plan be approved, (statement of action) and the strategic approach being taken by the Director of Children, Education and Early Help be endorsed;
- (2) That the RAG status be accepted, acknowledging the impact that the current resource position was having on the timeliness and sequencing of progress on key actions;
- (3) That it be noted that the Children's Services Learning and Improvement Plan (statement of action) by the Director of Children, Education and Early Help Services would be submitted to Ofsted no later than 11 November 2016.

25. NO CONFIDENCE IN COUNCILLOR JAN GAVIN

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

"This Council accepts the recent OFSTED report on Children's Services in Reading and undertakes to follow its recommendations fully.

This Council recognises that prior to this report Children's Services in Reading have been in disarray and children being cared for by the Council have been let down.

This Council also notes that the recovery from the dire state that the service was in has been led by new officers and is currently tackling the shortcomings and improving the service to supported children to good effect.

The OFSTED report criticised, in particular, the Managing Director of RBC, the senior officers who worked in Children's Services and the 'Political Leadership'.

The Council notes that:

- the Managing Director has resigned.
- that the officers who were directly involved in the governance of Children's Services over the last few years have all resigned and have been replaced.
- that the third party involved in the governance of Children's Services and specifically criticised in the report, the Political Leadership, has yet to accept its responsibilities in running a failed service.

This Council believes that it is not right that senior officers accepted their responsibilities for past failures but Lead Councillors carry on as though nothing has happened. The Lead Councillor for Children's Services should also shoulder the blame for several years of neglect that has provided poor quality care for some of the young people that this Council was looking after.

Given the findings of the OFSTED report this Council calls on Cllr Jan Gavin to accept responsibility for past failures and to resign her post as Lead Councillor."

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 18 OCTOBER 2016

26. FINANCE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Managing Director submitted a report on the Council's response to the Final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2016/17, which included indicative funding allocations for the subsequent three financial years up to and including 2019/20 and confirmed that the Government would offer any council wishing to take it up, a Four-year Funding Settlement running from 2016/17 up to 2019/20. Local authorities were required to submit a four year financial sustainability plan by 14 October 2016 as a condition of the Four Year Settlement offer. Councils that did not accept the offer would be subject to the existing annual process for determining the level of central funding that they would receive and might be subject to additional grant reductions. It was therefore proposed that the Four Year Settlement offer was accepted, which would mean that Revenue Support Grant (RSG) would not be less than the figures published by the Government. The Policy Committee on 26 September 2016 (Minute 35 refers) agreed that the draft sustainability plan should be considered at the meeting of Council on 18 October 2016, notwithstanding that this was a few days after the government's deadline. The plan was attached at Annex one to the report.

The Plan set out the severe financial challenge the Council was facing over the coming years, despite making significant savings over several years. As a result of continuing reductions in funding and increasing pressures, it was currently forecast that the Council needed to make revenue savings of £41.9m by 2019/20. Savings of £23.4m had already been agreed by Councillors, and were in the process of being delivered. This left a budget gap of £18.5m which would be closed through the adoption of the strategic approach to budget review and planning the Council's future service offer and delivery model.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the Council's Four Year Settlement Offer, which would run from 2016/17 to 2019/20, be accepted;
- (2) That the Financial Sustainability Plan, as submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government by the deadline of 14 October 2016 and appended to the report, be approved;
- (3) That the Interim Director of Finance be asked to bring forward specific proposals for making use of the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts in due course linked to the approach set out in the report;
- (4) That the Managing Director be requested to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer asking him to clarify the government's proposals regarding the retention of business rates by local government;
- (5) That the Managing Director also write to the local M.P.s and the LGA asking that they support not only Reading Borough Council, but also Councils of all persuasions in asking for clarity on the retention of business rates.

27. BUDGET SAVINGS PROPOSAL: ARTHUR HILL POOL

The Director of Environment & Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on a budget saving proposal in relation to Arthur Hill Pool. The report stated that the Corporate Plan and Budget for 2016-2019, which were set at Council on the 23 February 2016 (Minute 46 refers) had made it clear that further options to reduce the Council's overall budget to bridge the gap in all years to 2019/20 would need to be considered. Policy Committee on 18 July 2016 (Minute 21 refers) had approved a first tranche of additional savings proposals totalling £19.84m with over £19m still to be identified to bridge the currently forecast budget gap between 2016 and 2020. The report made clear that further proposals would need to be brought forward in the Autumn to address this budget shortfall.

The report outlined a specific budget savings proposal to close Arthur Hill Pool to enable full-year revenue savings in 2017/18 and future years of £120k per annum, remove significant liabilities regarding the short-term investment of approximately £700k needed to upgrade the facility and also to reduce ongoing property maintenance costs. The report set this in the context of the Council's approach to modernising its leisure facilities and in principle approval for the development of a new 25m 6 lane pool at Palmer Park Stadium linked to the existing leisure facilities. The report made clear that the value of any capital receipt to the Council from disposing of the current Arthur Hill Pool site would be used to contribute to the cost of this new pool at Palmer Park Stadium. The report had appended an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposal.

The report recommended closing Arthur Hill Pool as soon as practicably possible. Emergency works had been carried out in the summer of 2014 to enable Arthur Hill pool to remain operational. These works were intended to extend the short-term operational life of the pool and did not negate the need for the additional investment outlined above and there was an increasing risk of major building or plant failure. A planned closure as soon as possible was therefore proposed to manage the impact on user groups through alternative provision and to avoid the risk of an unplanned, forced closure that was becoming increasingly likely.

The report highlighted alternative swimming facilities within the Borough, which were available at Central Pool, Academy Sport and Meadway Sports Centre. The Council was also progressing the provision of a demountable pool at Rivermead. Aligned to this provision, enhanced bus services to Rivermead would be in place from this autumn. This would include a new hourly bus service between Rivermead and the Town Centre from October this year.

In addition, the Council received a copy of a letter, dated 14 October 2016, which had been received from Public Law Project (PLP) headed, raising the issue of legal challenge to the proposal in the report. This letter referred to an earlier letter, dated 23 September 2016, sent by the legal firm's client, Peter Burt, to the Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport and Consumer Services, which was attached to the PLP letter. Copies of both letters were circulated by email and tabled at the meeting to all Councillors, along with a memorandum setting out a response to the issues raised in the letters from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

Peter Burt addressed the Council in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8(6)(f).

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 18 OCTOBER 2016

A motion was moved by Councillor Gittings and seconded by Councillor James and CARRIED as set out in the resolution below.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor White and seconded by Councillor McGonigle and LOST:

“Delete all words after ‘That’ in (1) of the recommendation and delete recommendations (2), (3) and (4) and replace with the following:

‘...a decision on Arthur Hill Pool be deferred until a budget for 2017-18 is set in order to allow officers to consult, formulate and discuss with stakeholders other options to closure in December 2016, provide councillors with more information about costings, and allow local community organisations to prepare plans for taking over the pool.’”

Resolved -

- (1) That the permanent closure of Arthur Hill Pool be approved from 19 December 2016 as set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report to deliver the savings identified in section 9 of the report, having full regard to the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix 1 of the report;
- (2) That, following closure, the Arthur Hill Pool site be declared surplus to requirements and be disposed of;
- (3) That the property be advertised in line with the Council’s approved policy, to both third sector organisations and on the open market and that a further report be considered by Policy Committee once bids had been received;
- (4) That a sum equivalent to the capital receipt arising from the disposal of the site be invested in new replacement swimming facilities.

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

For the motion: 29

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ayub, Brock, Chrisp, Davies, Dennis, Eden, D Edwards, K Edwards, Ennis, Gavin, Gittings, Hacker, Hoskin, James, Jones, Livingston, Lovelock, Maskell, McElligott, McKenna, Page, Pearce, Rodda, Singh, Terry, R Williams and Woodward.

Against the motion: 14

Councillors Ballsdon, Duveen, Grashoff, Hopper, McGonigle, O’Connell, Robinson, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Steele, Stevens, Vickers, White and J Williams.

(Councillor White declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item as the Chair of Newtown Globe, which as an organisation had lodged a ‘Community Right to Challenge’ in relation to Arthur Hill Pool).

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 18 OCTOBER 2016

28. STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report on the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of 30 June 2016, which were attached at Appendix A.

The report advised that Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 had ended the statutory standards regime set up by the Local Government Act 2000, and introduced in its place a duty on local authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors and Co-opted Members, including adopting a local Member code of conduct. The Act also required local authorities to adopt arrangements to deal with allegations that Members had not complied with their local Code of Conduct, and allowed local authorities to establish a local Standards Committee, and to make Standing Orders relating to aspects of the standards process. The local Standards Committee had been first established at the Annual Council Meeting on 23 May 2012.

The following motion was moved by Councillor D Edwards and seconded by Councillor Livingston and CARRIED:

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 30 June 2016, attached at Appendix A to the report, be received.

29. CITY OF SANCTUARY

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

Resolved:

Reading has a proud history of welcoming diversity, challenging discrimination and supporting refugees, asylum seekers and other newcomers. We value the contribution that those seeking sanctuary can make to Reading and we are committed to taking practical steps to welcome and integrate all people into Reading's community.

In January the Council expressed its commitment, in real terms, to being a place of sanctuary by committing to take three families per year for five years through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme.

This Council notes that the first three families are now settled in Reading, supported by a range of organisations to help them adjust to their new lives.

This Council wishes to continue to promote the inclusion and welfare of those coming to Reading to seek sanctuary and resolves to support the Reading City of Sanctuary movement and to spread the sanctuary message of welcome across all sections of the local community.

30. SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION PLANS

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

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 18 OCTOBER 2016

Resolved:

This Council notes that:

- On almost all performance measures the NHS in England is getting worse with waiting times for cancer care, accident and emergency, ambulances and routine operations all rising
- Spending on the NHS as a proportion of our national income in GDP was 8.8% in 2009, fell to 7.3% by 2015 and is projected (on current plans) to fall to 6.6% by 2021 (source: The King's Fund)
- The NHS in England is currently developing local Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) in order to deliver the NHS Five Year Forward View with the aim of delivering financial sustainability, improved outcomes and better integration with local authority services
- On 22 March 2016 this council passed a motion condemning the creation, without consultation, of the STP area of Berkshire West, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (BOB) planning NHS cuts without public or democratic scrutiny and resolved to write to the Chief Executive of NHS England and the Secretary of State for Health outlining our objections
- No response was received from either the Chief Executive of NHS England or the Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt
- That, following orders from Whitehall, STPs have been developed, will be finalised and submitted to NHS England, in secret and with the general public banned from having any sight of the plans
- That the BOB STP area is on course for a £587 million shortfall in funding by 2021 and that the primary aim of the secret STP is to cut spending to stay in budget

Council believes that:

- It is a disgrace that the government is directing the planning of massive cuts to the NHS across England behind closed doors, shutting out public or democratic involvement
- That cuts of £587 million to NHS spending across Bucks, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West are unacceptable and are likely to damage essential health services in Reading
- These drastic NHS cuts are a direct result of underfunding of health services by the UK government and that our country should return to the last Labour government's policy seeking to fund health services at a similar level to the EU average which stood at 10.1% of GDP in 2013 (source: the King's Fund)

This Council agrees to:

- request that the Managing Director write to the chief executive of NHS England and the Secretary of State for Health requesting that draft STPs are published and that full public involvement and consultation takes place before they are finalised
- request that the leader of the council writes to the MPs for Reading East and Reading West expressing this council's objection to both the secretive nature of the STP planning process and the scale of NHS cuts

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 18 OCTOBER 2016

being considered and to ask for their support in opposing cuts to NHS services in Reading.

31. SCHOOLS THAT WORK FOR EVERYONE

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor McElligott and CARRIED:

Resolved -

This council notes the launch of the government consultation “Schools that work for everyone” on 12 September 2016, which invites responses to the Department for Education by 12 December 2016.

This council also notes that the ambition of the green paper is to promote a discussion on how to ensure that “every child should have access to a good school place.”

The council resolves:

1. to make a submission to the DfE as part of the consultation exercise within the specified deadline.
2. that in response to the four key areas of the consultation, this council disagrees that the way forward is to:
 - Use public money to induce Independent fee-paying schools to create more school places, or else lose their charitable status;
 - Bully Universities in to opening schools, or else risk capping their tuition fees;
 - Use public money to assist in the expansion of selective schools;
 - Allow faith schools to become mono-cultural institutions.
3. that the best way to ensure that every child in Reading can have access to a good school place is for there to be:
 - A fairer funding arrangement for all schools in Reading;
 - Public money to be made available for the recruitment and retention of school staff in Reading;
 - An end to the needless distraction of the forced academisation of schools in Reading;
 - Public money to be made available to support the council’s raising attainment strategy (known as the Reading First Partnership).

32. POWER TO THE PEOPLE, COLLECTIVE ENERGY SWITCHING

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor White and seconded by Councillor McGonigle and CARRIED:

Resolved:

This Council notes:

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 18 OCTOBER 2016

- the number of households in fuel poverty in Reading has increased from 5,600 to 7,264 - worse than the national and south east average
- millions of people in the UK have never switched energy provider and could save around £200 per year by switching
- the good work already being done by The Big London Energy Switch, West Berkshire Council, Cornwall Together and many more which are encouraging their residents to sign up to collective energy switching
- the Cornwall Together collective energy switching campaign managed to engage the disengaged (17% of members had never switched before) and reach the hard to reach (28% of switchers were in fuel poverty)

This Council believes:

- no one should be living in fuel poverty and have to choose between heating and eating
- if we are to be a truly caring town we need to do more on tackling fuel poverty

This Council resolves:

to investigate the feasibility of a collective switching initiative and to bring a report on this back to the relevant committee before the end of this year.

(The meeting closed at 11.10 pm).