

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

27 NOVEMBER 2017

QUESTION NO. 1

Roger Lightfoot to ask the Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport & Consumer Services:

Demountable Pool timetable

Now that the temporary demountable pool is progressing, given the reduction in capacity on the closure of Central pool (two smaller pools and diving pit going), has any work been done on organising a timetable for the demountable pool, and will users, schools and groups be able to have some input prior to publication into this given the reduced capacity; and will Central Pool remain open for a reasonable period until any teething problems at the demountable pool have been eradicated?

REPLY by Councillor Hacker (Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport & Consumer Services):

We are in ongoing discussions and have been for some time with the main groups using Central Swimming Pool to finalise the swimming pool programme.

As you observe there is a significant reduction in the amount of water space that is available and we are unable to accommodate all of the activities that were taking place at Central Pool at the new demountable pool or elsewhere.

We are accommodating the club training either in the demountable pool or other Reading Sport and Leisure facilities albeit at slightly different times to existing. Unfortunately activities such as diving, water polo, synchronised swimming and underwater hockey require deeper water which we are unable to provide. Where possible we are providing other facilities to support their activities, such as trampolines and diving boards with mats for dive training or fitness activities for conditioning.

Recent improvements at some other non-Council swimming facilities in Reading have provided opportunities for clubs to access their improved facilities including swimming and diving. We are also appreciative of Swim England's assistance in accessing some facilities out of Borough.

We are moving the swimming lesson programme, largely unchanged, from Central Pool to Rivermead making use of both the new pool and the existing lagoon pool.

We are also able to make the pool available to schools wishing to use the pool for school swimming lessons and are liaising with schools to facilitate access.

There will also be an extensive public swimming programme for the demountable pool as well as the existing lagoon pool at Rivermead.

I am pleased to confirm that charging for the demountable pool will be the same as for the existing Council pools with Your Reading Passport concessions continuing to be provided. There is also the opportunity to transfer current memberships at Central pool to Rivermead, again at existing charges.

We do not foresee any delay in the opening or operation of the demountable pool, however Central Swimming Pool will continue to operate for 2 weeks after the new pool opens.

As you know we have invested in the demountable pool to ensure continuity of provision pending our delivery of two new pools to replace Central and Arthur Hill pools. Whilst this has caused some disruption, particularly to those disciplines requiring deep water, this is a much better position than we would have been in if forced closures had been necessary because of the poor condition of these two old pools.

QUESTION NO. 2

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

Use of open space at Palmer Park for proposed Swimming Pool

You recently told the Reading Chronicle newspaper that the Council is opposed to the loss of open space at the BBC site in Caversham, and said that "Open space is I think something we would fight for strongly".

Does this welcome commitment to preserve open space in Reading extend to land already under Council care at Palmer Park? Should development of the proposed new swimming pool in Palmer Park ever go ahead, how will the Council compensate for the resulting loss of open space in a way which is accessible to the park users who would lose out?

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

I thank Mr Burt for his question.

The Council has made a clear commitment to providing a new pool at Palmer Park Stadium as part of the emerging strategic leisure procurement process. I'm sure most people welcome the enhancement of leisure provision at Palmer Park and the provision of easy access for local residents and schools to high quality swimming facilities. In this context I would not necessarily agree with your assertion that park users would lose out because of the enhancement of existing facilities.

The development of a new pool will however be subject to the planning process and will be expected to comply with the relevant policies for the site. A Pre-Submission Draft of the Local Plan was considered at Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 22nd November 2017. The Plan identifies a site for additional leisure development for a new swimming pool centred on the stadium and car park.

Policy ER1j Palmer Park Stadium Area on page 227 states:

Additional leisure development for a new swimming pool.

Development should:

- ***Demonstrate that car parking to be lost can be replaced on or off-site, or is no longer required;***
- ***Ensure that there is no adverse impacts on the use of the park and its sport and leisure facilities;***
- ***Ensure that there is no adverse impact on the listed monument and its setting;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance; and***
- ***Retain public rights of way across the site.***

Site size: 3.08 ha

Approximately 1,000 sq m pool

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COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor White to ask the Leader of the Council:

Spend on Consultants and Agency Staff

Please can I get confirmation as to how much money was spent on agency staff and consultants in each of the two previous financial years? Please can I also be updated as to how much money the council has spent on agency staff and consultants so far this current financial year, and what the prediction is for the end of the year?

REPLY by Councillor Lovelock (Leader of the Council):

Councillor White will recall he asked a similar question to last February's Council meeting, and we have provided the response in a similar format. The expenditure recorded in the accounts as of last week for Agency & Consultancy is as set out in the tables below:

Actual expenditure

	Agency		
	15-16	16-17	17-18 as at 23/11/17
General Fund	8,392,398.22	12,201,328.90	7,633,077.73
Housing Revenue Account	272,371.87	151,196.26	73,268.54
Schools	1,171,239.33	1,355,864.89	622,981.96
Total	9,836,009.42	13,708,390.05	8,329,328.23

Actual expenditure

	Consultancy		
	15-16	16-17	17-18 as at 23/11/17
General Fund	4,588,847.79	3,853,667.37	972,966.78
Housing Revenue Account	51,173.98	17,500.00	2,000.00
Schools	0.00	9,805.00	0.00
Total	4,640,021.77	3,880,972.37	974,966.78

I am sure Cllr White will agree with me that it is good to see the reduction in use of agency and consultants.