

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE - 13 JULY 2016

QUESTION NO. 1 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Councillor Rodda to ask the Chair of Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee:

“Could the lead councillor raise the issue of potential job losses at Royal London Insurance with Reading CIC and investigate what further support may be given to help encourage the company and similar businesses to retain jobs in Reading rather than relocating posts overseas.

“I understand Capita also considered moving jobs to Asia however after considering the advantages of basing work in Reading the company decided to retain jobs in the town.

“I hope the council will continue to work closely with businesses to help create and protect jobs by promoting Reading as a business location, building on its successful work with Reading CIC and other partners.”

REPLY by the Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (Councillor David Absolom):

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

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

I would like to thank Cllr Rodda for his question.

Clearly any loss of jobs from Reading businesses is regrettable. Having contacted Reading UK CIC it is my understanding that Royal London Insurance are consolidating their operations at their London headquarters and there is little scope to influence this decision. Reading UK CIC are also able to offer help, working alongside DWP, with redeployment or retraining opportunities for affected staff if required.

The Council and Reading UK CIC do continue to actively promote Reading. Reading UK CIC have just produced their latest RUK Magazine promoting Reading as a business location and this has been circulated to 5,000 businesses that might be interested in relocating in Reading.

We also have much to be positive about with regard to the strength of the local economy. For example, Green Park is now 93% let; IKEA opens its new store tomorrow;

we have a range of new and refurbished Grade A office buildings being developed in the town centre; there are proposals for a new Science Park by the University, as well as the current proposals for a major new conferencing facility next to the football stadium.

Many of the new offices are speculative and, at this volatile economic time following the referendum, the Council will do all in its power to promote Reading as a good place in which to invest not only in accommodation but also in local people.

All colleagues should be aware that the Leader of the Council, myself and relevant officers will work closely with the business community, Reading UK CIC and other partners to ensure Reading's continued economic success.