

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 26 MARCH 2019

Present: Councillor D Edwards (Mayor);

Councillors Woodward (Deputy Mayor), Debs Absolom, David Absolom, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Davies, Eden, K Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gavin, Gittings, Grashoff, Hacker, Hoskin, James, Jones, Kaur, Khan, Lovelock, Manghnani, Maskell, McEwan, McGonigle, McKenna, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, DP Singh, R Singh, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Stevens, Terry, Vickers, Warman, J Williams and R Williams

Apologies: Councillors McDonald, O'Connell and White

49. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Christchurch Terrorist Attack

The Council condemned the extreme terrorist violence, which targeted two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 15 March 2019. Fifty people had lost their lives in the deadly terror attack and at least another fifty people had been seriously injured. The Council stood in silence to pay its respects and demonstrate solidarity with those people who had died or been affected by this horrendous act of violence.

(b) Retiring Councillors

As this was be the last meeting of the Council prior to the local elections on 2 May 2019, the Mayor thanked all those councillors who would not be standing for re-election for their service to the Council.

50. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

51. PETITIONS

Sarah Watchman and Ettha Mace- Whitehouse presented a petition in the following terms:

“Save the ERAPA Play Area

In the next 12 months, the Council intends to remove the ERAPA (London Road side) play area in Palmer Park when it reaches its end of life.

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This play equipment is hugely well-used and well-loved by families and children from all across East Reading. The play equipment was designed to be accessed by disabled children meaning everyone can play.

Please, Reading Council, when the equipment is no longer usable - replace it and let children continue to play ?!"

RESPONSE by Councillor Hacker (Lead Councillor for Culture, Heritage and Recreation):

The play equipment that was formerly within the ERAPA site consists of a multi-unit with walkways and bridges, a wheelchair roundabout, swings and a small ballcourt. The age of the multi-unit is not known as it was not purchased or installed by the Council's Parks Team, but by staff from the former ERAPA group. Since the closure of ERAPA the equipment has been maintained by the Parks Team. As various parts become worn and fail, it is not possible to replace them, as the company that supplied the unit were based in the USA and are no longer in business. Other playground manufacturers have stated that they will not make replacement parts for another company's equipment, particularly as the unit does not conform to current European safety standards. Recently the Council's Playground Officer had to remove a faulty slide from the unit. As a consequence, the entry point to access the slide has had to be boarded up, limiting the overall play value of the unit. Other play elements are showing signs of wear. As they become unsafe to use, the Council has no option but to remove them.

The removal of the equipment at the former ERAPA site is therefore a H&S requirement.

A decision was made to invest significantly in the Palmer Park play area adjacent to Wokingham Road and the café, only 270m away from the former ERAPA site, with greater provision for children with special needs. In 2009 the play area was enlarged to allow for more free play; basket swings were dotted around the site, on grass, which is accessible by wheelchair; a large new rope swinger, on which parents can play with (and therefore hold) children with mobility problems, was installed; and trampolines were introduced, where disabled children can be bounced by an adult. Other equipment aimed at children with a range of challenges was installed. Some of the play equipment was installed in more remote locations, to accommodate the needs of children who prefer to play away from the melee of the main play area. This was intended as a significant improvement on the old ERAPA playground, which effectively segregated disabled children from other children.

Not only is a single larger play facility far more inclusive than separating out disabled play, but one larger play facility better serves community needs than two small playgrounds with less equipment and a degree of duplication of play items. The cost of maintaining separate areas is also greater. The advantage of expanding the Wokingham Road location rather than the old ERAPA is that it is overlooked, and not suffering from ASB and graffiti. This play area is very popular, drawing people from a considerable area to use it.

The same principles were pursued in investing in the day-out play location at Christchurch Meadows for families who have children with various challenges. Advice was sought from charities concerned with days out for disabled children. All new play equipment can be used by children of all abilities, so that disabled children can play with

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those who are able-bodied. As at Palmer Park, some equipment is designed for a parent to be able to play with children, and items of equipment are located away from the main play area to accommodate children with mental health issues.

The Council is aware that many play areas in Reading have access problems for children with mobility problems and other disabilities. This is true not only of children in wheelchairs, but of children with a range of physical and mental challenges. The Council has been seeking consciously to address this over the past two decades.

The play infrastructure is historic, and it is not possible to make overnight changes to every site to make it fully accessible to people of all abilities. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and subsequent amendments, explicitly recognises the investment burden involved in transforming all infrastructure, and the requirements of the Act are that all future changes need to account for the accessibility requirements of all users. All new investment made in play areas in Reading is DDA-compliant. Major advances were made in 2008-10 with the injection of government funding under the Playbuilder scheme. The Council used the resources to invest significantly in accessible play equipment and natural play facilities at various locations across the Borough.

In June 2016, local parents of disabled children were requested by the Play Team to complete questionnaires assessing six of the Council's major play areas for access issues. The results are being used to guide further investment in these sites.

In September 2017, the Council's Playground Officer met with the Access Forum specifically to discuss problems that parents are having with access, and to discuss improvements being made. This is an ongoing dialogue, with an annual report to the Forum on progress that is being made. One of the most important of these is the ongoing replacement of loose-fill safety surfacing with a rubber bonded product. This is very expensive, and one or two sites are being converted each year.

In 2018, a full review of all playgrounds was carried out, highlighting all investment needs, and in December 2018, a capital bid for £2.8million over five years was submitted to fund the current investment gap. £1.6m has been approved for 2019-22. Much of this funding is specifically intended to improve further access for all to the Council's playgrounds, a point that was emphasised in the bid. Sites earmarked for new investment in fully-inclusive play equipment over this 3-year period include Palmer Park.

The Play Review will be presented to members during 2019.

52. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Tony Warrell	Crossing Points	Cllr Page
2.	Micky Leng	Council Houses Built in Reading	Cllr Ennis
3.	Micky Leng	Council House Building	Cllr Ennis
4.	Richard Stainthorp	William Marshal	Cllr Hacker
5.	Richard Stainthorp	Adolescent Mental Health	Cllr Pearce

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6.	Mark Lawrence	LGBT History Month	Cllr James
7.	Glenn Dennis	Local Government Funding	Cllr Lovelock
8.	Glenn Dennis	Public Health Funding	Cllr Hoskin
9.	Peter Burt	Reading Leisure Centres	Cllr Hoskin
10.	Peter Burt	Arthur Hill Swimming Pool	Cllr Lovelock

As there was insufficient time, pursuant to Standing Order 9(6), written replies to Questions 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 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).

53. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr Ayub	Business Improvement District	Cllr Lovelock
2.	Cllr Debs Absolom	Register Office Services	Cllr Brock
3.	Cllr Debs Absolom	Trading Standards Team	Cllr Brock
4.	Cllr McGonigle	Glyphosate products	Cllr James
5.	Cllr Barnett-Ward	Readybike	Cllr Page
6.	Cllr Josh Williams	Cycle Lanes/Readybike Scheme	Cllr Page

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

54. COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2019/20

The Director of Resources submitted a report recommending that the Council considered the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel and adopted a scheme of Councillors' Allowances for the financial year 2019/20.

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 report noted that the Panel was currently conducting a full review of Councillors' Allowances and would submit the findings from its review to a future meeting of the Council for consideration. In the meantime, the Panel 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 2018/19. 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 Leader, Deputy Leader and recipients of special responsibility allowances as set out in Section 3 of the report. The report had appended the Remuneration Panel's Interim Findings at Appendix A.

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

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Resolved -

- (1) That it be noted that the Independent Remuneration Panel was currently conducting a full review of Councillors' Allowances and would submit the findings from its review to a future meeting of the Council for consideration;
- (2) That, pending the outcome of the Independent Remuneration Panel's review and its consideration by Council, the scheme for Councillors' Allowances for 2019/20 remain unchanged from that agreed for 2018/19, as set out below:

Interim Recommendations of Remuneration Panel

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 2019-2020, be accepted and approved as follows:

- (1) That, for 2019-20, the total sum for the payment of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances to councillors remain at the same level as set for 2018-19 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 (9 Councillors currently in receipt in 2018/19);
 - Tier 2 to be paid to the Chairs of Committees and the Leader of the other political groups (9 Councillors and one independent member currently in receipt in 2018/19);
 - 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

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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 2018/19);

- (5) That the 2019-20 arrangements for the payment of Dependant Carers' Allowance be paid in line with the living wage, currently as follows:
- (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 dependant 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;

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

55. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2019/20

Further to Minute 18 of the Personnel Committee held on 14 March 2019, the Director of Resources 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 Pay Policy Statement 2019/20, as appended to the report, be approved to take effect from 1 April 2019.

56. REVIEW OF POLLING PLACES 2018/19

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Further to Minute 52 of Policy Committee on 26 November 2018, and in accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (the 2006 Act), which required the Council to undertake a review of its polling districts and polling places every four years to a national timetable, the Returning Officer submitted a report on the results of the consultation exercise undertaken for the 2018-19 review of polling districts and polling places in Reading, and setting out the responses received. The report also reviewed the deployment of polling stations within polling places.

The report explained that the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (the 2013 Act) introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The previous review had taken place in 2014, and the results were reported to Council on 21 October 2014 (Minute 30 refers). The notice of the 2018-19 review had been published on 3 December 2018, on the Council's website, at the Civic Offices, and in the Council's libraries. The deadline for responses was 2 January 2019.

This year's review had attracted 37 responses: a significant increase from the 7 responses generated by the 2014 review. The comments were set out in the schedule at **Appendix A**, and included other observations on polling places received by the Electoral Services team over the past year, outside the consultation period.

The Returning Officer's written submission on the review process, which commented on the existing polling stations and any new polling stations that may be used based on proposals made in the review, was attached to the report at **Appendix B**. In light of the comments received, the report recommended changes to the Council's polling places and stations and cross-referenced the proposed changes to the relevant paragraph in the report.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the results of the consultation on the 2018-19 review of polling places (Appendix A), and the Returning Officer's written submission (Appendix B), be received and noted;
- (2) That the following changes to polling places be noted: [para. 3.5]
 - (a) The change of name of the polling place for Caversham polling district 3 (MB) to The Weller Centre (from Amersham Road Community Centre);
 - (b) The relocation of the polling station for Norcot polling District 1 (E) at St George's Church, St George's Road, from the Church Hall to the church;
 - (c) The Returning Officer's intention to return the polling place for Mapledurham ward (Y) to the Mapledurham Pavilion, when this has

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been rebuilt and the suitability of the new building to host a polling station has been confirmed; [para. 3.6]

- (3) That, following the closure and disposal of Southcote Library at Southcote Lane, the polling place for Southcote polling district 2 (FB) be moved the Southcote Community Hub in Coronation Square; [para. 4.3.1]
- (4) That, in the case of building works at Battle Library making the building not being available for future elections, the polling place for Battle polling district 1 (A) be moved temporarily to Emmanuel Church, Oxford Road, next door; [para. 4.3.1]
- (5) That with regard to Whitley ward:
 - (a) The Returning Officer's intention to explore options for a new polling district and polling place in Whitley ward, to serve the new developments west of the Basingstoke Road and in Green Park, be noted; [para. 4.3.2]
 - (b) Polling districts S and SC, both of which currently poll at Whitley Park Primary School, be merged; [para. 4.4.3]
- (6) That the following changes be made to the number of polling stations at the polling places listed below: [para. 4.4.3]
 - (a) Battle polling district 1 (A) - Battle Library - establish second polling station;
 - (b) Katesgrove polling district 2 (BA) - Christchurch Centre, Milman Road - reduce to 1 polling station;
 - (c) Kentwood polling district 1 (C) - St Mary Magdelene Hall - reduce to 1 polling station;
 - (d) Norcot polling district 1 (EA) - St Michael's Primary School - reduce to 1 polling station;
 - (e) Redlands polling district 2 (RA) - Redlands Primary School - reduce to 1 polling station;
- (7) That the position and responses concerning the use of Caversham Primary School as the polling place for both Caversham polling district 4 (MC) and Thames polling district 3 (WB) be noted, and in this respect: [paras. 4.5.8 and 4.5.9]
 - (a) the lack to date of suitable alternative polling places in Thames ward polling district 3 (WB), and the Returning Officer's continuing efforts to find a suitable alternative locations, be noted and endorsed;

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- (b) the Returning Officer consult with Thames ward Councillors about a more comprehensive review of polling districts in the ward, with a view to bring suitable locations for polling places in other parts of the ward into play;
 - (c) The Returning Officer consult with Caversham ward Councillors about the following options:
 - Combining polling district 4 (MC) with polling district 2 (MA), with the polling place at Thameside Primary School (two polling stations);
 - Identifying a suitable alternative location in polling district 4 (MC);
 - Modifying the polling district boundary between Caversham polling districts MA and MC, to extend polling district 4 (MC) eastwards, to include the area north of Church Street and west of Prospect Street; and moving the polling place to Caversham Library;
 - (d) Caversham Primary School to continue to be the polling place for both Caversham polling district 4 (MC) and Thames polling district 3 (WB), and host three polling stations, until suitable alternative polling places for both wards and polling districts can be identified and agreed;
- (8) That the position and responses concerning Kentwood polling district 4 (CC), in the light of the closure and imminent demolition of the Norcot Community Centre, Lyndhurst Road, be noted, and in this respect: [para. 4.5.10]
- (a) a temporary polling station be set up at the Lyndhurst Road Community Centre, operating from the Council's Emergency Planning vehicle, for the duration of the works to build a new community facility at the site;
 - (b) the Returning Officer consult with Kentwood ward Councillors about a more comprehensive review of polling districts in the ward, with a view to bring polling places in other parts of the ward into play, as described in para. 4.5.10;
- (9) That the Head of Legal & Democratic Services, as Returning Officer, be authorised to implement all appropriate actions arising from the review and discussed in this report, in consultation where appropriate with affected ward Councillors.

57. PRIVATISATION OF SPECIALIST CANCER SCANNING SERVICES

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

Resolved -

This Council notes:

- NHS England has announced it is privatising Positron Emission Tomography - Computed Tomography (PET-CT) cancer scanning services for the Thames Valley area which includes Reading. This will hand the contract over to InHealth, a private company and take it away from the internationally respected NHS Churchill Hospital in Oxford.
- That PET-CT scanning provides 3D scans of inside the body that are an essential specialist resource in helping doctors spot tumours, plan the best treatment and monitor whether that treatment is working.
- That specialist cancer doctors at Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust have declared they have “concerns about the potential impact on the safety and quality of patient care at the loss of the current PET-CT service”.
- That Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs in the Thames Valley have raised objections to this privatisation and concerns about potential impact of patient care.
- The lack of public consultation on these proposals.

This Council believes:

- That, as asserted in its carried motion of 27 March 2018 “NHS services should remain in public ownership and that elements of the system that have been privatised ought to be brought back into public ownership”.
- That privatisation of trusted and respected NHS services can potentially harm patient care and obstruct the collaborative and integrated health and care services that would best serve the people of Reading and the wider area.

This Council resolves:

- To formally object to the privatisation of the Thames Valley’s specialist PET-CT scanning services.
- That the Chief Executive writes on behalf of the Council to the Chief Executive of NHS England and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to call for a halt to this procurement exercise, particularly highlighting the lack of consultation with the public, councils or MPs, and the lack of a transparent assessment of the potential risks to clinical care and patient safety.
- To send a copy of this letter to councils and MPs in the Thames Valley area covered by these services and encourage them to raise any concerns they may have with NHS England.
- To explore the possibility of a joint health scrutiny of this privatisation with other concerned councils.

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(The meeting closed at 8.03 pm)