

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 4 NOVEMBER 2019

Present: Councillor Stevens (Deputy Mayor in the Chair);

Councillors Edwards, Debs Absolom, David Absolom, Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Davies, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Grashoff, Hacker, Hoskin, James, Jones, Khan, Lovelock, Manghnani, Maskell, McEwan, McGonigle, McKenna, O'Connell, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, DP Singh, R Singh, Skeats, Stanford-Beale, Terry, Warman, White, J Williams, Carnell, Duveen, Sokale, Challenger and Whitham

Apologies: Councillors Woodward, Ballsdon, Eden, R Williams and Leng

22. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Mayor paid tribute to a former Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, Dick Taylor who had sadly died recently. Dick served the Council with great distinction in a wide variety of roles for 32 years, until his retirement on 29 February 2004. He had continued to support the Council during his retirement as Deputy Returning Officer, carrying out various reviews at the invitation of the Monitoring Officer and until recently he was a serving member of the Independent Remuneration Panel. The Council stood in silence in his memory and as a mark of respect.

23. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Mayor.

24. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Richard Stainthorp	Statutory Responsibilities, Duties and Obligations of Reading Borough Council	Cllr Brock
2.		WITHDRAWN	
3.	Philip Allen	Why does the Council Exist?	Cllr Brock
4.	Roger Lightfoot	Pop up Pool	Cllr Hoskin
5.	Roger Lightfoot	Arthur Hill Site	Cllr Brock
6.	Peter Burt	Arthur Hill Site	Cllr Brock
7.	Peter Burt	Parkland in Reading	Cllr Rowland
8.	Michael Sage	Citizen's Panel	Cllr Brock
9.	Michael Sage	Reading 2050 Refresh Workshop	Cllr Brock
10.	Michael Sage	Council's Energy Provider	Cllr Emberson
11.	Stuart Kinton	Heathrow Expansion	Cllr Page
12.	Stuart Kinton	Council's Declaration of Climate Emergency	Cllr Page

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As there was insufficient time, pursuant to Standing Order 9(6), a written reply to Question 12 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).

25. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr White	The Reading Area's Performance on Climate Change	Cllr Page
2.	Cllr Josh Williams	Inclusive Play Areas	Cllr Rowland
3.	Cllr Grashoff	Leisure Needs of Residents	Cllr Rowland
4.	Cllr Robinson	Arthur Hill Site	Cllr Brock

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

26. ARTHUR HILL POOL

Further to Minute 30 of the Policy Committee held on 26 September 2019, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the presentation of a petition to the Policy Committee on 26 September 2019 and the decision taken at that meeting to appropriate the Arthur Hill site into the Housing Revenue Account to enable the Council to develop and deliver housing as key worker accommodation to rent. As the petition had collected over 1,500 signatories, it had exceeded the threshold required for the Lead Petitioner to request a debate by full Council of the issue, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8(6)(e). The report entitled 'Arthur Hill Pool', which was considered by Policy Committee was attached to the report for information.

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

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted and the issues raised in the petition entitled 'Reading Council - consult us on the future of Arthur Hill Pool', be debated, in accordance with the provisions in Council Procedure Rule 8(6).
- (2) That the decision of Policy Committee, at its meeting on 26 September 2019, as set out in Section 4.1 of the report, be noted.

27. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW OF WARD BOUNDARIES 2019-20

Further to Minutes 20 and 38 of Policy Committee on 15 July and 26 September 2019 respectively, the Returning Officer submitted a report seeking agreement to the authority's submission on warding patterns to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), as part of the LGBCE's first period of consultation, based on the recommendations of the cross-party Ward Boundary Review Working Party. The report explained that the LGBCE was undertaking an electoral review of the Council in its 2019-20 programme because the 2017 canvass showed over 30% of the authority's current wards (5 out of 16) had a variance greater than 10% from the authority's average ratio of electors, which was 2,443 per Councillor or 7,329 per 3-member ward. The final submission document had been circulated to all members of the Council on 25 October 2019 and copies were available at the meeting.

The previous review had led to the establishment, in 2001/02, of a Council of 46 Councillors, representing 16 wards, of which 15 were 3-member wards which held elections by thirds. The first stage of the review process, concerning Council size, had been completed, with the LGBCE accepting the authority's submission, agreed by Policy Committee on 15 July 2019 (Minute 20 refers), that the authority should continue to have elections by thirds, and that the number of Councillors should be increased from 46 to 48, representing 16 three-member wards across the Borough, in recognition of the significant projected growth in the Borough's electorate, from 113,590 in 2019 to 121,002 in 2025 (an increase of 7,412 electors, or 6.5%).

The LGBCE's timetable for completing the review was set out in Table 1 in Section 4 of the report. The LGBCE had commenced the second stage of the review process - public consultation on warding patterns - on 27 August 2019, to run to 4 November 2019. In line with the LGBCE's good practice advice, the Policy Committee on 26 September 2019 had set up an advisory cross-party Ward Boundary Review Working Party to assist the development of the Council's response to the consultation. The Working Party had met twice, on 2 and 22 October 2019, to develop a submission for the authority to make to the LGBCE. The notes of the Working Party's meetings on 2 and 22 October 2019 were attached to the report at Appendices A and B. A map showing the Working Party's proposals was attached at Appendix C to the report and Table 2, in Section 5 of the report, set out the names of the 16 new three-member wards in the proposal, and their projected 2025 electorates.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the detailed deliberations of the cross-party Working Party be noted and endorsed, and the map showing the Working Party's proposals be agreed and submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England along with the supporting explanation as set out in the Minutes of the two Working Party meetings and this report;

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- (2) That the suggested names of the 16 new wards be agreed as shown in Table 2 in Section 5 of the report and set out below:

	Ward
A	The Heights
B	Emmer Green
C	Caversham
D	Thames
E	Abbey
F	Park
G	Redlands
H	Church
I	Whitley
J	Katesgrove
K	Minster
L	Southcote
M	Norcot
N	Battle
O	Kentwood
P	Tilehurst

28. LOCAL PLAN ADOPTION

The Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the Council's replacement of its existing development plans (the Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) with a new single Local Plan to set out how Reading would develop up to 2036. The Local Plan had been submitted to the Secretary of State on 29 March 2018, which marked the beginning of a public examination held by an independent Planning Inspector, including public hearings in September and October 2018. The Inspector's Report was received on 24 September 2019, and the conclusion was that the Local Plan fulfilled the duty to co-operate, and that, subject to a number of 'Main Modifications', it was sound and legally compliant. The Inspector's report was attached to the report as Appendix 1. In view of the Inspector's findings the Local Plan, which was attached to the report at Appendix 2 could be adopted as modified, and used for determining planning applications. The report also had attached the list of minor modifications at Appendix 3.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Page and seconded by Councillor Barnett-Ward and CARRIED:

Resolved -

- (1) That the Report of the Inspector who conducted the Examination into the Local Plan, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted and that the Inspector had found the Local Plan, as amended by the Main Modifications, to be sound, legally compliant and that it fulfilled the duty to co-operate be noted;

- (2) That the Local Plan and Proposals Map, incorporating the Main Modifications and minor modifications, be adopted as attached to the report at Appendix 2.

29. CONSTRUCTION CHARTER

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report outlining the content of the 'Unite Construction Charter'. The Charter, which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report, set out requirements for construction contractors and their supply chain regarding industrial and employment areas including procurement, planning, recruitment, health & safety, engagement, welfare facilities, skills, training and career development. It had been adopted by a number of Councils on the basis that it supported increased fairness for workers. Unite had contacted all Council Leaders seeking support to have these terms of the Charter agreed nationally as minimum standards in any local authority procurement policy.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Emberson and seconded by Councillor Hacker and CARRIED:

Resolved -

- (1) That the Council's commitment to support the implementation of the Unite Construction Charter principles be approved;
- (2) That the AD for Procurement & Contracts be authorised to take the necessary steps for the implementation of the Unite Construction Charter principles into future relevant construction contracts, with implications to be reviewed on a case by case basis within the Council Procurement policies.

30. STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report on the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of 27 June 2019, 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 Edwards and seconded by Councillor Ayub and CARRIED:

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 27 June 2019, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be received.

31. HIGH STAKES TESTING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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

Resolved -

Reading Borough Council welcomes the commitment of the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party to abolish SATs and other high-stakes testing in primary schools.

This Council notes

- 1 Statutory testing in primary schools has increased since 2010 and is increasing further: by 2020, children will be tested in Reception (the Baseline Assessment), Year 1 (the Phonics Screening Check), Year 2 (SATs), Year 4 (the Multiplication Tables Check) and Year 6 (SATs).
- 2 The pressures of statutory assessment contribute to the crisis of teacher morale, workload, recruitment and retention.
- 3 Tests are focussed on the requirements of school accountability and league tables rather than on support for children's learning.
- 4 The pressures of testing in primary schools have a detrimental effect on children's mental health.
- 5 Educational research has demonstrated repeatedly that teaching to the test narrows the curriculum and the educational experience of children, focussing on labelling, learning how to pass a test but not learning.

This Council believes that campaigning, by those who work in primary schools, parents and academics, to end the current high-stakes system of primary assessment should be welcomed, in particular the More Than A Score campaign.

This Council resolves:

- 1 To express its support for campaigns against the current system of primary assessment from parents, Governors, Schools and teaching unions.
- 2 To call a meeting of all interested parties to discuss the council's position on these matters and to coordinate a response.

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- 3 To lobby the Secretary of State for Education to listen to the growing number of voices who are calling for the abolition of high-stakes testing in primary schools.
- 4 To offer support and guidance to schools within the area which adopt an alternative approach to assessment.

32. A FULLY FUNDED, PROPER PAY RISE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKERS

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Emberson and seconded by Councillor Brock and CARRIED:

Resolved -

This Council notes:

- Local Government has endured central government funding cuts of nearly 50% since 2010.
- Between 2010 and 2020, Councils will have lost 60p out of every £1 they have received from central government.
- The 2019 LGA survey of Council finances found that 1 in 3 Councils fear they will run out of funding to provide even their statutory, legal duties by 2022/23. This number rises to almost two thirds of Councils by 2024/2025 or later.
- The LGA estimates Councils will face a funding gap of £8 billion by 2025.
- Faced with these cuts from central government, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing 22 per cent of their value since 2009/10.
- At the same time as seeing their pay go down in real terms, workers experience ever increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity. Across the UK, an estimated 876,000 jobs have been lost in local government since June 2010 - a reduction of 30 per cent. Local government has arguably been hit by more severe job losses than any other part of the public sector.
- There has been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than two thirds of the local government workforce.

This Council believes:

- Our workers are public service super heroes. They keep our communities clean, look after those in need and keep our towns and cities running.
- Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the Council services our residents rely on would not be deliverable.
- Government funding has been cut to the extent that a proper pay rise could result in a reduction in local government services.
- The government needs to take responsibility and fully fund increases in pay; it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding has been cut to the bone.

This Council resolves to:

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- Back the pay claim submitted by the NJC local government unions.
- Write to the Secretary of State to call for a pay increase for local government workers to be funded with new money from central government.
- Meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim.
- Encourage all local government workers to join a union.
- Continue to be an accredited Living Wage Foundation Employer.

33. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE - APPOINTMENTS

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Brock and seconded by Councillor Page and CARRIED:

Resolved -

- (1) That Councillor Barnett-Ward be appointed as Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport (SEPT) Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2019/20;
- (2) That Councillor Eden be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2019/20;
- (3) That, in view of (1) above, Councillor Barnett-Ward be appointed as Chair of the Cycle Forum, in place of Councillor Debs Absolom, for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2019/20;
- (4) That, in view of (1) above, Councillor Barnett-Ward be appointed to the Berkshire Strategic Flood Risk Partnership for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2019/20 and that the Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport (SEPT) Committee continue to be appointed as the Council's representative on the Partnership in subsequent years on the basis that the SEPT Committee was responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the exercise of flood risk management functions.

(The meeting closed at 9.20 pm)