

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

20 JANUARY 2020

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 1

Peter Burt to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Leisure Centres

Please can the Lead Councillor for Sport and Leisure provide a) the total number of swimmers and b) the total numbers of centre users annually for each of Reading Borough Council's leisure centres for the years 2017, 2018, and 2019.

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

In the three years 2017, 2018 and 2019 over 760,000 swimmers used the council's swimming pools, averaging 250,000 per year across all five sites, which included Central Pool until it closed in 2018.

Total general attendance has grown each year since 2017, with 1.06 million general attendances in 2019 across the four sites. There was a total of 2.8 million general attendances in the three years across all four sites.

The system for monitoring overall general attendances at Reading Sport & Leisure sites changed in 2018. So unfortunately, it has not been possible to access the data for the financial year 2017/18. The information is, therefore, presented by quarter for the periods requested and available.

Site	Activity	2017					2018					2019					
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	
Meadway	Swimming	12,933	12,750	13,766	11,631	51,080	11,857	14,640	17,350	15,146	58,993	16,499	15,876	18,285	15,670	66,330	
	General Attendances	55,682		---	No Data	---	55,682	No Data	41,587	44,261	37,787	123,635	49,774	46,424	41,516	28,670	166,384
Palmer Park	Swimming																
	General Attendances	55,682		---	No Data	---	55,682	No Data	38,674	24,284	23,528	86,486	26,265	33,439	22,735	22,987	105,426
South Reading	Swimming	24,104	24,798	13,486	-	62,388	1,718	3,210	4,549	3,184	12,661	3,932	4,586	5,100	3,372	16,990	
	General Attendances	77,478	68,354	57,257	49,193	252,282	67,838	69,869	53,054	66,663	257,424	70,946	61,974	54,378	58,720	246,018	
Rivermead	Swimming	17,151	16,475	16,104	14,729	64,459	42,837	44,214	45,545	31,789	164,385	39,615	46,665	47,220	35,672	169,172	
	General Attendances	126,466	90,485	92,613	86,197	395,761	178,614	131,869	132,539	103,170	546,192	160,243	135,007	128,144	127,027	550,421	
Central Pool	Swimming	27,387	26,793	28,262	15,332	97,774	3,482					Closed					

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 2

Peter Burt to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Consultation with Users

Will leisure centre users be consulted over future changes to timetables and prices when the planned new contractor takes over operation of Reading Sport and Leisure?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

As is referred to in the main report, the main aim of the Council in the award of this contract is to support and encourage exercise and activity not only by current leisure facility users, but more widely across our community, including encouraging greater use by groups who have been traditionally under-represented, such as young people, people who are economically disadvantaged, people with disabilities, older people and minority ethnic groups. Consequently, the activity timetable programming has been specified within the contract to be as high a proportion of casual use of the facilities as possible consistent with a balanced programme of use by the public, clubs, schools, community groups and instructed development courses. It is also specified to be dynamic, innovative and responsive to the requirements of Users, including frequent or seasonal variations and target non-users as appropriate.

As part of the procurement process a consultation was carried out including 501 face to face interviews, 628 online survey responses and 4 focus groups. This consultation has been used to produce the Strategic Outcomes Delivery model appended to this report. This plan will guide the operation and development of facilities. In addition, the effectiveness of the programming at each site will be reviewed on a regular basis, using market information and through regular consultation with relevant users, so yes, users will be part of the consultation on timetable changes albeit this will not be the only information used to inform any programme changes.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 3

Roger Lightfoot to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Leisure Contract break point

Given the very long length of the proposed leisure sources outsourcing contract, are there proposals to introduce a break point into the contract, and if so at what point and will cleaning standards form part of any decision to cancel the contract?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

The length of the contract is required to achieve the council's aim of securing a strategic partner to design, build, operate and manage the council's leisure offer and to justify the significant capital investment being made in facilities. However, the Council clearly wants to ensure that this investment provides good quality services and facilities as well as remaining current and relevant through the term of the contract. The contract includes robust contract and performance management mechanisms, detailed in paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the main report, to achieve consistent good quality services and facilities throughout the contract term.

Whilst there is no specific break clause, the contract also includes target indicators and performance measures linked to the overall contract outcomes, one of which is providing high quality services, which includes customer satisfaction. Again, to guard against failure to achieve the relevant measures, the contract enables the Council to impose financial adjustments and, for persistent issues, there is also the mechanism for the Contractor to fall into default that could lead into either step-in and/or ultimately, the termination of the contract.

Specifically on cleaning standards: there are detailed facility reporting requirements and standards, which include cleaning. Failure to meet the required facility standards, be that for cleaning, maintenance, area/equipment availability or any other relevant standard, will result in service performance adjustment points, which in turn, depending on the number of points accumulated, may result in a financial performance adjustment against the Contractor. Should performance be so poor and the Contractor incurs a significant number of service performance adjustment points within a period, then the Council will have the right to terminate the contract.

Finally I would like to add that these new highly active contract management measures are part of our learning the lessons from previous leisure contracts and from best practice elsewhere in the country.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 4

Roger Lightfoot to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Leisure contract bids

How many potential contractors entered the contest for the leisure services outsourcing contract, and how many of these were shortlisted?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

We have been really pleased at how successful the highly competitive leisure partner procurement exercise has been.

Sections 3.16-3.20 of the main report refers to:

- 11 bidders expressed an interest in the Leisure contract when it was advertised in March 2018;
- Five bidders completed the required supplier qualification all of whom met the expected standards and were selected to proceed to the dialogue stage of the process;
- Two bidders submitted outline solutions and progressed through to detailed solutions and close of dialogue;
- Two bidders were invited to submit final tenders on 30 September and both returned their final tenders by the deadline of 17 October 2019.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 5

Colin Lee to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Financing of Leisure contract

How will the leisure outsourcing contract be financed, and in particular where will the planned £35 million capital spend over the next three years come from?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

As set out in section 12 of the report, the council will be borrowing the capital, the revenue costs of which (interest and minimum revenue provision charges) have been factored into the overall financial implications.

The council is also assuming c.£1.5m of Sport England grant funding will be made available to fund an element of the Rivermead replacement costs.

I would also like to draw your attention to section 12.4 which details how investment in new top quality leisure facilities and partnering with a nationally leading leisure provider driving up participation leads to savings for Reading council tax payers over the life of the contract.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 6

Colin Lee to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Palmer Park pool

Has the Council undertaken any studies to demonstrate that construction of a new swimming pool in Palmer Park, as opposed to refurbishment of Arthur Hill Pool, would contribute to the Council's carbon neutral targets, or is this claim just an assertion unbacked by evidence?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

No technical assessment has been undertaken to assess the carbon implications of the Arthur Hill pool, a pool which is now closed and where agreement has been sought to redevelop the site for key worker housing. The new pool at Palmer Park will be built to BREEAM excellent standards. BREEAM is the world's leading sustainability assessment method, assessing an asset's environmental, social and economic sustainability performance. The designs are sustainable, meeting the council's local plan sustainable construction aspirations.

The new development at Palmer Park, less than a mile from the old Arthur Hill pool site, will combine the benefits of a modern, sizable pool, velodrome and athletics stadium, in one location within a large park with many recreational facilities. This will deliver a significantly more flexible and varied offer able to meet a very wide range of local community needs. These new and refurbished facilities will provide a relatively unique facility in our region and put Reading firmly on the map as a top sports destination.

In addition to the refurbishment of the existing stadium building, there will be:

- a modern new 25m minimum 4-lane (the administration is minded to support the 6-lane option tonight) community pool;
- a 100 station gym;
- three Multiuse studios;
- a new junior activity zone/soft play facility with party rooms;
- a new café and information hub;
- improved landscaping around the centre;

The consideration of building a new pool at Palmer Park did not focus solely around the sustainable construction, but as importantly the ability of the facility to serve the needs of all residents. The Arthur Hill Pool had several

limiting factors reducing its ability to meet a wide range of needs. The poolside changing cubicles were inflexible being difficult to use for some customers, were accessed via steps, necessitated accessing poolside in outdoor shoes and limited programming options. The restricted size of the site prevented expansion of other facilities seen as a fundamental part of a modern health and fitness offer such as gym, meeting and social spaces, along with car parking to support use. The staffing and running costs of a small standalone pool are also greater than a pool integrated into a larger facility.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 7

Colin Lee to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Rivermead contract settlement

Can the Council please explain what the settlement terms are for Greenwich Leisure, the current incumbent of the management contract for Rivermead and how it was determined/calculated?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

The settlement terms you refer to are contained in an Exit Agreement made between the GLL and Council dated 28th March 2018 (The Exit Agreement), which was agreed to facilitate a Borough wide procurement process to take place.

The provisions of the Exit Agreement will become of effect if GLL are not awarded the contract from the procurement exercise.

Due to the commercial sensitivity of the provisions and the confidentiality clause contained within the Exit Agreement it would be inappropriate to provide the details of terms at this stage of the procurement process.

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 8

Richard Tredgett to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Better Mental Health

The new Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health shows that a prevention-focused approach can improve our community's mental health. As well as being sustainable and cost-effective, by focusing on cross-sector action it can achieve a fairer and more equitable society. Can he let us know if RBC plan to sign up to the Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevention-concordat-for-better-mental-health-consensus-statement>

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

At its meeting on 6th October 2017, the Reading Health and Wellbeing Board received a series of reports under the theme of 'emotional wellbeing'. The theme had been selected by the Board to facilitate a review of local plans against the Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health, and in recognition of World Mental Health Day on 10th October. At this meeting, the Board agreed to adopt the Concordat commitments as a set of guiding principles for its future work. As a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board, Reading Borough Council is bound by this agreement.

This is an ongoing commitment, but the Council has so far taken the lead in co-ordinating local cross-sector plans to deliver on several priorities from the current Health and Wellbeing Strategy which focus on mental health, specifically:

- Reducing loneliness and social isolation;
- Reducing deaths by suicide; and
- Making Reading a place where people can live well with dementia.

Reading has a multi-agency Mental Wellbeing Group chaired by the Public Health Consultant based in the council. This groups draws on the expertise of people with lived experience of mental health problems, and the wider community, to identify solutions and promote equality. The group oversees local plans to promote early help for mental health through the use of upstream interventions.

The Council is also a 'Time to Change' employer, having pledged to change how people think and act about mental health in the workplace, and make sure that employees who are facing mental health challenges feel supported.

As a significant local employer, how the Council supports staff health and wellbeing can have a direct impact on the health of the town. Indirectly, by modelling the behaviours it would like to see in other employers, the authority can potentially have a much wider impact. This is another example of how the Council is applying the principles from the Prevention Concordat to promote better mental health.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 9

Richard Tredgett to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Partnership work on community wellbeing

Can you please let us know how plans to work more closely in partnership with other services, such as the NHS and Voluntary Organisations, to further improve community well-being are progressing?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

The Reading Integration Board (RIB) facilitates partnership working with the NHS and Voluntary Organisations. The Board includes representatives from Health, Social Care and the Voluntary Sector and since October also has General Practitioner representation to facilitate links with the new Primary Care Networks (PCNs).

RIB's work programme includes the development of Multi-Disciplinary Meetings which include Social Care, Health professionals and the Voluntary Sector. Pilot meetings began in April 2019. These have enabled partnership working to identify actions which support individuals in the community to maintain their health and wellbeing. They also enable professionals to strengthen relationships and understanding of each other's roles, further enhancing partnership working to the benefit of community-wellbeing.

There are a series of multi-agency groups which oversee the delivery of Reading's Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, focusing on the eight priorities from the current Health and Wellbeing Strategy. These bring the Council, health partners, third sector organisations and other stakeholders together to improve community wellbeing. Work to date is summarised below. One example is the Berkshire West Future in Mind group, which supports the priority of 'improving mental health & wellbeing in children and young people'. Building resilience in young people is a strong unpinning to the current plan, including work in schools, communities and with the voluntary sector, and the ongoing promotion of #littlebluebookofsunshine, developed by young people. The local Future in Mind plan seeks to develop a whole system approach to supporting young people, and 491 professionals from the Reading area received training in Psychological Perspectives in Education and Primary Care (PPEP) in 2018-19. This increased the confidence and skills of a wide range of partners to address mental health issues with young people.

Another example is the Reading Steering Group for 'reducing loneliness & social isolation' which is chaired by the Council and includes health and

business partners, with particularly strong voluntary and community sector engagement - including Mencap, Reading Community Learning Centre, Age UK Berkshire, Autism Berkshire, Mustard Tree, Get Berkshire Active, Caversham End Loneliness Champions, Support U, Sunday Assembly, Age UK Reading, Readibus, Reading Voluntary Action, Enrych, Total Communications and the Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality (ACRE). The Steering Group brings partners together to promote understanding of the health benefits of social connection, and to develop and raise awareness of services which support this. The Group oversees initiatives focused on employment, volunteering, transport and community development and to target groups of residents at particular risk of isolation as well as supporting the broader population.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 10

Ann Dally to ask the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services:

Debt and Mental Health

We note that the Council's Revenues web pages are currently being reviewing to encourage early engagement from customers who are struggling to meet their financial liabilities. In Reading this involves approximately 20,000 households in CT arrears. Recent research suggests that financial education highlighting the link between debt and developing poor mental health can alert people and prompt them to act. Will RBC consider how they might promote this information as an effective preventative measure via their corporate services?

[Report: Preventing financial difficulties - Money & Mental Health](#)

REPLY by Councillor Emberson (Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services):

We currently actively promote information on how people can find support to be financially resilient and at the same time to look after their mental health and wellbeing through our online Reading Services Guide. The guide directs people to local and national organisations that can help them deal with their debt queries, as well as local support and activities to help people with emotional and mental health issues. A link to this guide will be provided on the Council Tax updated web pages along with information about our Debt Advice Team which offers free, confidential and impartial debt advice to all Council tenants, anybody affected by the benefit cap or at risk of imminent homelessness referred by the Housing Advice Team. The team helps clients to make informed decisions on how they would like to deal with their debts, to understand benefit awards and provides support to clients to get back in control of their finances.

We will continue to work with our partners to better help promote information about financial education.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 11

Ann Dally to ask the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services:

Preventative Programmes

The Council's Narrowing the Gap contract with Citizens Advice Reading, Reading Community Welfare Rights and Communicare includes preventative programmes including financial education and money management skills. Are there plans to increase the availability of these services in the near future?

REPLY by Councillor Emberson (Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services):

Within the scope of our existing contract we are working with Citizens Advice Reading, Reading Community Welfare Rights and Communicare to improve access to financial education and money management skills. This contract will continue until 2022.

In addition, Compass, the Council's Recovery College for Mental Health includes a 'Money Matters' course within its prospectus, offering people a space to discuss financial concerns as well as the chance to develop the knowledge and skills to improve their financial management.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 12

David McMullen to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Management Capacity

In November 2018 the Council agreed a new senior management structure which is costing an additional £524,000 per annum. One of the reasons given for this was 'ensuring there is Corporate capacity at the heart of the organisation'. However section 12.6 of the report recommending the outsourcing of Reading's leisure centres says 'without the national marketing experience and corporate resources, an in-house option would be likely to deliver around £600k per year less income from usage when the newly provisioned facilities are fully on-stream.'

The new senior management team is already in place and costing the taxpayers of Reading an extra half a million pounds each year, so please can you explain why the council still lacks the corporate capacity to manage and to market Reading's leisure facilities in-house?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

As paragraphs 4.20 - 4.23 of the main leisure procurement set out, an in house option was considered and not recommended due to the estimated cost of running the service being in excess of twice the cost of that offered by Bidder A.

The new senior management structure was designed to increase capacity to deliver a range of projects to support service delivery and the sustainable growth and development of the town. The restructure also secured the resources needed to complete this complex and robust leisure procurement exercise which through competitive dialogue has delivered in an excellent outcome for Reading's residents. In addition, the new Assistant Director for Culture will take formal responsibility for ongoing contract management ensuring that the provider performs at the high standards required.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 13

Tom Lake to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Cost of Palmer Park pool

According to the BBC in July 2014 Central Bedfordshire Council gave the approval for 12.5 million pounds to be spent on the construction of Flitwick Leisure Centre, which contains a 6-lane swimming pool, a large fitness suite, climbing wall, sports hall and squash courts plus rooms for fitness classes, creche and cafe.

Granted that inflation is non-zero, how can you justify the expenditure of 12.3 million pounds on a 4-lane swimming pool and refurbishment of the modest fitness facilities at Palmer Park Leisure Centre?

Has this proposed expenditure been compared with similar projects around the country?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

According to Central Bedfordshire Council, the new leisure centre in Flitwick was opened in May 2016, at a cost of £14.7m. Flitwick Leisure Centre was part of a wider £40m council investment to support active lifestyles and help improve public health.

The expenditure proposals for Palmer Park have been reviewed and benchmarked by Sport England and Cost Consultants, Press and Starkey, to ensure the capital costs are in line with currently industry cost metrics.

The capital works proposal totalling £12.1m from Bidder A for Palmer Park includes the following elements:

- £900k for lifecycle maintenance
- £9.9m for major capital development (this cost element is comparable to £14.7m Flitwick capital cost)
- £1.3m for major replacements and refreshes

Through a robust competitive procurement process the Council has achieved an excellent value for money outcome. I look forward to the new facilities opening in Spring 2022.

The proposed new and refurbished facilities at Palmer Park include -

- 25m minimum 4 lane (the administration is minded to support the six lane option tonight) swimming pool

- 115m² Junior Activity Zone (currently planned as a Soft Play) and a large multi-use area within the existing stadium (multiple party rooms)
- Café and information hub providing interaction with both the soft play, pool hall and park
- 100 station gym (500m²) with x2 studios
- Existing Stadium & 3G pitches
- Refurbished stadium building containing team changing rooms for the outdoor pitches and activities
- External works and car park modifications

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 14

Tom Lake to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Palmer Park car parking

Is large-scale car parking necessary for a neighbourhood facility? Is it consistent with the council's climate emergency policies?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

The new development at Palmer Park will combine the benefits of a sizable pool, velodrome and athletics stadium all in one location. This will deliver a relatively unique facility in the region and put Reading firmly on the map as a top sports destination. Many teams currently compete and train there and this is set to grow once the new facilities come are in place.

Having a range of facilities provided at Palmer Park will allow people to participate in popular physical activities at one location, rather than making multiple visits to other sites.

Bidder A has, as part of their proposal, indicated a number of car parking spaces at Palmer Park. However, the final number will be determined as part of the final, detailed design discussions. These discussions will be informed by planning guidance on the parking requirements based on building size and use.

One of the reasons the why we are so excited by the potential of Palmer Park as a multi-sport venue including swimming is its excellent location for public transport travel.

The design will be considered in the context of public transport links; carbon reduction commitments and initiatives such as encouraging sustainable travel (cycling, walking, etc.) and electric car parking points. This will be balanced with the planning guidance, whilst providing access to services and enabling Palmer Park to maintain and grow its reputation as a top sports destination.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

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20 JANUARY 2020

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 15

Tom Lake to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:

Arthur Hill refurbishment

Was the full refurbishment of the Arthur Hill pool ever considered? If so what cost was proposed?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport):

The new development at Palmer Park, less than a mile from the old Arthur Hill pool site, will combine the benefits of a modern sizable pool, velodrome and athletics stadium all in one location. This will deliver a relatively unique facility in the region and put Reading firmly on the map as a top sports destination.

In addition to the refurbishment of the existing stadium building, there will be:

- a modern new 25m minimum 4-lane (the administration is minded to support the six lane option tonight) community pool;
- a 100 station gym with 3 studios;
- a new junior activity zone/soft play facility with party rooms;
- a new café and information hub.

Palmer Park will deliver the best possible facilities for Reading and the local community. The new facility will also be BREEAM excellent. BREEAM is the world's leading sustainability assessment method, assessing an asset's environmental, social and economic sustainability performance.

Full council considered a report in October 2016 setting out the rationale for disposing of Arthur Hill swimming pool rather than refurbishing it.

In summary, Arthur Hill Pool was an old facility on a constrained site that had very little scope for significantly improving its offer to local people. The capacity of the pool was limited and, relative to the levels of use, it had inherently high staffing and operating costs, compared with modern multiuse leisure and swimming facilities.

A condition survey carried out by Faithful & Gould in April 2015 concluded that the overall structural condition of the building was poor. At the time Faithful & Gould estimated the costs of necessary works to just repair the pool and building to be over £650k, these costs will have increased significantly in line with general trends in the construction industry.

However, this would have only repaired the pool, it would not have refurbished the building to provide the range of activities and facilities being proposed as part of the new leisure contract.

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COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing & Sport:

Zero Hours Contracts

The controversial leisure services' giant, Greenwich Leisure Limited, or GLL, which has run Reading's Rivermead facility for years, has been condemned by Britain's largest union, Unite, for its shameful practices of relying on zero hours contracts and refusing to recognise trade unions. The Green Party believes that jobs should be permanent for all those who want them to be. How can anyone be expected to plan, to save or to live if they don't know how long they are going to work or how much they will earn week to week?

Will the Lead Councillor ensure that this Council doesn't extend or sign new contracts with GLL until these exploitative business practices are ended?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing & Sport):

This administration takes the issue of fair employment practices extremely seriously and we completely agree that jobs should be permanent for those who want them.

It is not within the Council's control to determine national business practices nor the arrangements that organisations have with other authorities. There are also demands within the leisure industry where programmes change for holidays or demand led courses where the number of hours of work required will vary and permanent contracts cannot be offered. This, along with the need to secure operational cover at short notice for sickness or other leave, does require some non-permanent and casual contracts.

With regards to Reading, the draft contract terms include an obligation on the Contractor to, "recognise the trade unions representing Relevant Employees", i.e. those transferring under the contract, and officers will continue discussions as part of contract finalisation to secure ongoing union recognition.

It is my commitment to work with officers and unions during the contract finalisation period to seek to secure the best possible contractual terms for casual staff that match both the needs of the industry and the aspirations of workers.

It should also be noted that through the procurement and associated contract, as part of the bid from the recommended partner, officers have already secured commitment to staff being paid Living Wage Foundation rates.

The recommended bidder also holds an 'Investors In People Silver Standard Framework' and will provide a number of apprenticeship opportunities, volunteer and work experience placements each year to support local skills and employment.

Their proposals identify training and development of existing and new staff, including accredited qualifications. This is part of ongoing investment to support an engaged and professional workforce and enable the delivery of services to the standards as laid out in the contract.

Reflecting the changeable nature of staffing requirements, the preferred bidder has recently started trialling contracts with guaranteed minimum hours to provide greater assurance than a zero hours contract.

We will of course be expecting regular employment to be formalised in appropriate contracts providing the surety and predictability outlined in the question above. In addition, we will be requiring recruitment to be in line with the Council motion of 19th January 2019 preventing exploitative unpaid work trial periods.

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COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 2

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

Council inaction on Green Road tennis courts

Back in 2015, the old tennis courts land at Green Road was earmarked by the Council as land for recreation and was added to the comprehensive review of open space/playing fields at the time. Its use as recreation space was to offset some of the loss of part of the playing fields. It has been empty and nothing has been done since then to convert the land into something that the local community can use. Green Councillors would like to see it in use as soon as possible for sport or recreation. Can the Lead Councillor please update us as to the Council's plans for this land including a timescale?

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

I thank Cllr White for his question.

The Council's Policy Committee made a decision on 20th July 2015 to put this land back into use as recreational open-space in order to compensate for the expansion of Alfred Sutton Primary School from a two to a three form entry school and the DfE development of Maiden Erlegh School. A further financial contribution of £45k was secured via a planning agreement to improve the quality of the pitch.

While the pitch improvements were completed last year, the works to resurface the former tennis courts were postponed given the need to consider the most suitable plan for the whole playing field site should the Hamilton Centre become the new home of Phoenix College.

The expansion of the Hamilton Centre is now subject to a planning application 191634 which awaits determination. In order to minimise the off-site inconvenience to local residents from these works it is proposed to use the former tennis courts site as a site compound until the end of the contract. At the moment the works are anticipated running until autumn 2021 after which the compound will be removed and re-instatement works completed.

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COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 3

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Education:

Eco Schools in Reading

Climate change is the greatest issue that we face. Eco-Schools empower pupils, raise environmental awareness, improve the school environment and also create financial savings for schools. What percentage of schools in Reading are registered as Eco-Schools?

REPLY by Councillor Pearce (Lead Councillor for Education):

I would like to thank Cllr White for the question and to take this opportunity to state what education is doing in Reading to help with the climate emergency that was declared last year.

There are 49 eco-schools in the borough, of which 28 have achieved the bronze award and 15 the silver award. But as well as this there is a lot of work going on in our schools after a climate emergency was declared by the Council last year.

There are two main branches of the work on this - in classrooms and out of classrooms. In classrooms, last November Brighter Futures for Children held their first ever climate emergency summit at Alfred Sutton School that was well attended by schools across Reading. The aim of this is for every school in Reading to have at least one lead teacher for climate change. Once qualified, the teachers will be collectively tasked with helping pupils learn about the causes, extent and solutions to the climate issues facing the world today.

In December last year the Council also hosted a climate summit for students based on its UN equivalent. Here students debated how each country can cooperate to reduce carbon emissions, and proposed everyday actions that can make a difference in their own schools and wider school communities across the Reading area. On top of this I know that many schools have their own eco reps and have won individual prizes for their schools for green initiatives and raising awareness of climate issues, and many are also using the Clean Air Schools resources in classrooms that have been provided by Friends of the Earth. All of these things help arm our young people with the knowledge and importance of the climate emergency going forward.

We have also been doing our bit outside of the classroom. We recently undertook a heating and electrical review of our schools, approved at a Policy Committee meeting last year that will help improve the energy efficiency of our schools lowering both their costs and energy use. Our new

secondary school to be located on Richfield Avenue will be built to BREEAM standards which gives third party certification of the assessment of an asset's environmental, social and economic sustainability performance.

We are encouraging Schools, local residents and ward Councillors to get into contact with us if they believe their area will benefit from the introduction of School Streets, a campaign aimed at reducing danger and pollution around pick up and drop off times for students. Alongside these, we are encouraging our schools to review and update their travel plans to ensure that safety and sustainability are at the forefront of thinking when it comes to pupils getting to school.

Lots of work has been undertaken already but we are aware there is lots still to do and look forward to meeting this challenge.