

COUNCIL MEETING - 28 JANUARY 2020

AGENDA ITEM 5

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Peter Burt to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:
Greenwich Leisure Ltd

Rumours abound that the Council intends to award the contract to run its sport and leisure service to Greenwich Leisure Ltd. Is the Lead Councillor aware of the concerns raised in the recent report by the trade union Unite 'Greenwich Leisure Ltd - A Shameful Enterprise' (circulated separately and part of the question), and what due diligence checks will be conducted on the contract winner, whoever it may be, to ensure that they are an appropriate organisation to run a Council service ?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport.

The Council's Policy Committee took the decision on 20 January 2020 to award to GLL the 25 year design, build, operate and maintain contract for Boroughwide leisure facilities.

I am fully aware of the Unite report, being a member of the Unite councillor network, and the council had also received a copy directly. Whilst the striking workers at Bromley libraries have my full support and solidarity it is important that we, as councillors make the right decisions for Reading residents and our staff.

As part of the rigorous procurement process undertaken, due diligence on all bidders that applied to be part of the procurement process was conducted at the Supplier Qualification stage of the process. This work was completed in May 2018.

Potential bidders were required to demonstrate substantial experience in delivering contracts similar in size and scope to our needs and asked to provide examples of service contracts and works contracts.

This council takes the issue of fair employment practices extremely seriously. 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 should also be noted that through the procurement and associated contract, as part of GLL's bid, officers have already secured commitment to staff being paid Living Wage Foundation rates.

GLL hold 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, GLL 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. 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.

2. Roger Lightfoot to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport: Leisure Services Contract

What steps will be taken to consult leisure centre users, trade unions, and Council members on contract arrangements for the proposed new leisure services contract ?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport.

Policy Committee on 20 January 2020 agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services to finalise contractual arrangements in consultation with myself as the Lead Councillor for the Health, Wellbeing and Sport, the Assistant Director for Procurement and the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services and, subject to agreement of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy by Council in February, delegate scheme and spend approval for the Leisure procurement in accordance with the 2020 - 2023 Capital Programme to the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Assistant Director for Finance.

As a result, I will continue to be closely involved as the contract is finalised.

Consultation at the most appropriate and effective time is very important for this council. 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 involving both customers and, in lots of ways more importantly, non-users of leisure services. This consultation has been used to produce the Strategic Outcomes Delivery model appended to the recent Policy Committee decision report. This plan will guide the operation and development of facilities and builds upon an initial consultation assessing need undertaken in 2015. Officers will also be meeting with clubs over the coming weeks which will include discussing future consultation, programming development and feedback on GLL's performance.

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. Officers have been, and will continue to, consult and support staff during this procurement which includes trade union involvement. As well as Council organised meetings, GLL will also be required to arrange consultations with staff again including the relevant trades union participation.

As part of the contract, mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that centre users, as well as key stakeholders, have the opportunity to be engaged in the development and monitoring of the service.

3. Roger Lightfoot to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport: Leisure Services Contract - 50m Pool at Rivermead

Were bidders for the leisure services outsourcing contract asked to offer an option for opening a 50 metre competition standard pool at Rivermead? How many of them did so?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport.

As set out in the report considered by Policy Committee on 20 January 2020, the Leisure procurement process has been informed by the completion of two pieces of work:

- An indoor sports facilities needs assessment; and
- An options appraisal and feasibility study for the development of new leisure facilities.

The facilities needs assessment confirmed whilst there is sufficient pool space in the Borough the quality of provision needs upgrading. The options appraisal recommended the replacement of the most outdated facilities with more modern cost-effective leisure facilities that would also offer a much better service to residents and users.

In January 2019 the Council published a detailed specification seeking and inviting interested leisure operators to submit detailed solutions.

The specification issued included:

- A new-build solution at Rivermead, incorporating a new 8 lane competition standard pool with provision for diving, learning, introduction to water space and a 5 court sports hall which could accommodate league 1 basketball.
- A new minimum 4 lane community pool and improved fitness offer at Palmer Park linked to existing facilities

The specification did not request bidders to include a 50 metre competition standard pool at Rivermead.

Bidder B did include an option for a 50 metre pool at Rivermead. The details of the evaluation are confidential, however, the evaluation of these different offers is managed within the procurement process by considering the solutions independently against the agreed criteria.

The outcome of the evaluation team's assessment of the bids is that GLL scored the highest. The evaluation team, considered that GLL provided a better overall proposal which met the specification requirements including:

- better overall design for both Rivermead and Palmer Park
- less capital spend requirements
- living wage foundation commitment
- BREEAM excellent environmental impact building standards for both Rivermead and Palmer Park
- a more sustainable design meeting energy and carbon ambitions
- a better learn to swim offer
- quicker build programme for all sites, especially for Rivermead
- greater articulation of carbon reduction plans
- well established partnership between Bidder A and its experienced and well regarded building contractor.

In addition, GLL has exceeded the specification requirements in a number of areas, including at Rivermead, where the water space proposal exceeds requirements and at Palmer Park, where GLL is proposing a soft play zone, a number of party rooms plus a café and information hub, all of which exceed the council's requirements.

A 50 metre pool would have been a great addition to Reading's sports facilities and throughout the process I was hopeful that the winning bid might deliver just that. However, looking at the two, both excellent bids, the GLL offered more for the broader range of families and communities of Reading. Furthermore, the delivery of BRREAM excellent building standards for environmental sustainability was very important to us as a council which is fully committed to playing our role in combatting the climate emergency. As you would also expect the commitment of GLL to pay the Foundation Living Wage to all staff was also very important to us.

**4. Peter Burt to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:
Palmer Park Pool**

What will be the additional (a) capital and (b) annual revenue costs of constructing a six lane pool in Palmer Park rather than the four lane pool recommended by Council officers ?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport.

As set out in the report considered by Policy Committee on 20 January 2020, the additional capital costs of providing a six lane pool at Palmer Park are £955k.

The additional capital expenditure increases the Council's capital financing costs (interest and MRP). In addition, the enhanced facilities at Palmer Park increases both the contractor's running costs and income they expect to derive from the facilities. The above leads to an average additional cost of £64k per annum across the 25-year contract compared to the originally evaluated GLL submission albeit these average annual increases are not uniform in each year.

The additional costs are affordable within the overall draft Medium Term Financial Strategy.

**5. Peter Burt to ask the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport:
Leisure Facilities Contract - Performance Indicators**

Please provide a list of performance indicators which will be used to assess contractor performance in delivering the proposed sport and leisure outsourcing contract, and please explain how these will be assessed.

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing and Sport.

Appendix A of the report considered by Policy Committee on 20 January 2020, which is available on the council's website, outlined the summary of requirements.

The Contractor will be required to contribute towards the achievement of the nine Authority Outcomes including, improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities, ensuring local people have the skills to prosper, Supporting and caring for vulnerable adults and older people Summarised detail of these outcomes, target indicators and performance measures is detailed in the table within the appendix.

An example of the indicators including, increase in overall participation in line with Chief Medical Officer guidelines; and increase in participation for certain target groups (for example, young people, older people aged 60+)

Section 5.2 and 5.3 of the main Policy Committee report outlines the contract management arrangements. The contractor will report on its performance of the delivery of services in accordance with the agreed specification and against the performance standards. In addition,

the Council will undertake its own monitoring of the services to ensure performance against set requirements and KPIs in the contract.

The Contractor will report performance on a 'Scorecard' which sets out a series of key performance target indicators linked to the Council's Outcomes. The Outcome Scorecard will be produced annually providing qualitative and quantitative evidence of how the contractor has performed to the Council's requirements defined in the Service Specification. The Scorecard will cover:

- User Perspective
- Internal Business Process
- Continuous Improvement
- Financial performance

6. Sigi Teer to ask the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport: Annual Diffusion Data

Reading's annual diffusion data shows that three locations in Caversham exceeded the legal mean annual limit for nitrogen dioxide for the last 10 consecutive years.

These locations are:

59 Prospect Street
40 George Street
Baron Cadogan PH in Prospect Street

The following have been borderline over the same period:

131 Caversham Road
14 Church Street
45 Prospect Street

In addition, during 2018 Caversham Globe installed special test tubes at 4 other locations and these results also showed that the mean annual limit was exceeded regularly at all four sites.

The Transport Modelling report prepared by Peter Brett Associates in 2017 shows in figure 4.8 and paragraphs 4.6.5 and 5.1.2 that a number of junctions and routes are over capacity. The Councils own studies clearly show that the area north of the river has a real problem as far as the traffic and resultant air quality is concerned.

The traffic situation around Caversham has significantly worsened over the last few years. The traffic at the junction between Peppard Road and Prospect Street frequently backs up in the rush hour as far as the Esso service station on Buckingham Drive. This is not helped by the housing developments in South Oxfordshire in places such as Sonning Common whose residents use their cars to get to Reading via Emmer Green and Caversham.

In a previous correspondence to me you suggested that the following measures would overcome the problem:

Bus and Taxi Diesel Retrofit to Euro 6

Whilst I would agree that this will have a definite benefit in the centre of Reading as buses and taxis dominate the traffic there. However, the traffic in Emmer Green and Caversham consists mainly of cars, lorries and vans.

Park and Ride

On page 18 of the Council's Air Quality Targeted Feasibility Study is a chart assessing deliverability/feasibility of certain measures. Park and Ride in the north and west of Reading shows a score of 1 for timescale and 1 for deliverability. (1 being the lowest impact/least deliverability and 3 being highest benefit/most feasible)

The roads from Emmer Green into Caversham and Reading are too narrow to accommodate a dedicated bus lane and therefore the buses will get stuck in the same traffic jams as cars. It is highly unlikely therefore that people would use the Park and Ride unless the service was both frequent and a quick way to bypass the traffic.

Park and Ride is simply not a satisfactory solution for the area.

Electrical Charging Points

These are or will be an excellent initiative, but they will only be of benefit when a meaningful proportion of residents have switched over to electric cars. It is very difficult to judge when this might happen, and it will certainly take a considerable time.

A Third Thames Crossing

This is probably the only real solution to the traffic and air quality situation in Emmer Green/Caversham.

In view of the above and the Council's genuine concerns over NO₂ levels would you agree that no large-scale development in and around Emmer Green should be considered until a 3rd Thames bridge and a by-pass around Caversham and Emmer Green are actually built and seen to be reducing traffic through Caversham?

Whilst I appreciate that no planning application has been forthcoming yet from RGC, you will be aware that there have been pre-planning meetings with RBC regarding developing all the RGC land within Reading Borough.

Would you agree that no development beyond CA1b (as indicated in the Reading Local Plan) will receive approval until pollution levels drop substantially below the EU limits and **more importantly** that transport issues are alleviated by a third bridge and a by-pass around Caversham and Emmer Green as well as other traffic mitigation measures in South Oxfordshire?

REPLY by Councillor Page Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport.

I thank Ms Teer for her question.

The concerns raised about air quality in parts of Caversham are important, and the Council recognises the need to take action to address these.

Reading Buses, supported by the Council, are currently completing the bus retrofit programme, which is expected to have a beneficial impact on NO₂ levels through Caversham, although it is acknowledged that the impact of this will be limited by the predominance of cars, vans and HGVs using the roads.

The Council is also currently completing a project to introduce a number of electric vehicle charging points to help encourage the move away from the internal combustion engine.

A draft new Local Transport Plan is in preparation, and this will consider a range of measures to address congestion within the Borough, including in Caversham. The merits of transport schemes such as park and ride and a new crossing of the Thames will be part of this consideration, taking account of the significant level of feedback received from the consultation undertaken last summer on the high-level principles to underpin the new strategy.

In addition, we continue to work with Wokingham, Oxfordshire and South Oxfordshire and other key partners to develop proposals for a Third Thames Crossing to the east of Reading. This has been ranked as the second highest priority major scheme in the region by Transport for the South East and a bid has been submitted to the Department for Transport for funding to undertake the next stages of feasibility work and business case development for the scheme.

As well as these current projects, the Council plans to update the Air Quality Action Plan in 2020 and this process will include a review of what other new measures can be introduced to help improve air quality in Caversham and across the borough.

I should explain that the Council cannot make guarantees about the outcome of applications for additional development beyond the Local Plan levels north of the River Thames. Applications must be considered on their merits against Local Plan policies and other material considerations, and major applications will be accompanied by a Transport Assessment and in most cases an Air Quality Assessment which explores these matters further.

In line with Local Plan policy EN15, development that would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is to be properly mitigated.

7. Sigi Teer to ask the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport: Transport Modelling Report

The primary evidence base in terms of the transport impacts of the Local Plan seems to be the Transport Modelling Report, prepared by Peter Brett Associates in 2017.

My understanding is that the Transport Modelling Report carried out by PBA was based on the Reading Transport Model (RTM) which uses SATURN software and which was developed with a base year of 2015 when the majority of the data was collected. The data was then projected forward to 2021 and 2036 and used to give an assessment as to the traffic impact during that period.

If correct, could you please confirm whether the models you are using take into account the rapid housing development which has taken place over the last two years in the Centre in Reading? More importantly whether the model takes into account the increased number of housing developments in South Oxfordshire, in places such as Sonning Common whose residents use their cars to get to Reading, or the M4, via Emmer Green and Caversham?

While I appreciate that the Local Plan is a lengthy process and cannot be based on the most up to date data, I think using data from 2015 cannot give us a realistic picture even when projected forward. Is the model therefore giving us the real picture as far as the traffic is concerned north of Reading ?

REPLY by Councillor Page Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport.

I thank Ms Teer for her question.

The Local Plan Transport Modelling Report, which was prepared in order to support the Local Plan, was finalised in 2017.

It is correct that the report uses a Base Model of 2015. Two additional models were built for the report:

- A Reference Case model at 2036, which includes committed developments and highways schemes from 2015;
- A Local Plan model at 2036 which adds the Local Plan developments to the Reference Case developments.

Your question asks about whether development that has taken place in Central Reading since 2015 was included in the modelling. These developments were included within the Reference Case model as committed development and, therefore, taken into account. The Reference Case also includes committed developments within the Study Area in Wokingham and West Berkshire.

The Study Area does not include specific developments within South Oxfordshire. At the time that the Local Plan was prepared there were a limited number of sites in adjoining parishes in South Oxfordshire which were committed, totalling around 250 dwellings. However, the Reference Case model did take account of more generalised background growth taken from the March 2017 release of TEMPro (the industry standard tool for measuring traffic growth), which will have included housing and employment growth predictions for the modelled year across South Oxfordshire.

Whilst there were much larger strategic sites on the edge of Reading being investigated within South Oxfordshire's Local Plan process, they had not formed part of any draft of the plan and it would be for South Oxfordshire District Council to test their transport implications.

The soundness of the Reading Borough Local Plan was considered through the public examination process, and the conclusion of the Inspector was that the Plan, subject to main modifications, was and is sound. This includes that it is justified, i.e. an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence. The Local Plan was adopted in early November 2019.

When sites are brought forward through the planning application process, there will need to be a detailed assessment of transport impacts in line with policies in the plan and taking account of the most up-to-date information. This will include sites that are identified in the Local Plan, and therefore the Local Plan modelling is not the only test of the transport effects of those developments.