

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 20 OCTOBER 2020

Present: Councillor Stevens (Mayor);

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Carnell, Challenger, Davies, Duveen, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Grashoff, Hacker, Hoskin, James, Jones, Leng, Lovelock, Manghnani, McEwan, McGonigle, McKenna, O'Connell, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, Rynn, D Singh, R Singh, Skeats, Sokale, Stanford-Beale, Terry, White, Whitham, R Williams and Woodward;

Apologies: Councillors Khan, Maskell and J Williams.

1. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Fred Pugh

The Mayor referred to the recent sad news of the death of the former Mayor, Fred Pugh, who had represented Thames Ward and latterly Mapledurham Ward until his retirement from the Council in 2012.

(b) Dick O'Brien

The Mayor also referred to the death of Dick O'Brien who was a founding member of the Reading Clonmel Association.

(c) Forbury Gardens - 20 June 2020

The Mayor recalled the awful events in Forbury Gardens of 20th June 2020 where three people had lost their lives in a senseless terrorist attack.

The Council held a minute's silence to remember, and as a mark of respect, to Fred Pugh, Dick O'Brien and for those affected by the attack in the Forbury Gardens.

(d) General Dispensation from Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972

The Mayor received reaffirmation by the Council of the Policy Committee's decision on 27 April 2020 (Minute 90(7) refers) to grant a general dispensation to all Councillors in relation to the requirement set out in Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, in the following terms:

That, in view of the ongoing disruption to the normal Committee cycle due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a general dispensation be granted to all Councillors from the requirement set out in Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, which states if a member throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance fails to attend any meeting of the authority, he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the authority.

2. APPOINTMENT OF THE MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR

The Mayor sought the Council's confirmation of the decision of the Policy Committee held on 27 May 2020 (Minute 2(3) refers) to appoint the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

Resolved -

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That the appointment of Councillor David Stevens as Mayor of this Borough and Councillor Rachel Eden's appointment as Deputy Mayor for the 2020/21 Municipal Year be confirmed.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Mayor.

4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 9

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Louise Keane	Black History Mural	Cllr Rowland

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

5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO 10

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr White	Fly-Tipping so far this Year	Cllr Barnett-Ward
2.	Cllr Manghnani	Children's Parks	Cllr Rowland
3.	Cllr Manghnani	Park Keepers	Cllr Rowland
4.	Cllr Manghnani	School Streets Project	Cllr Page
5.	Cllr Whitham	Redlands Road Active Travel Scheme	Cllr Page
6.	Cllr Raj Singh	Racist or Religiously Aggravated Crime	Cllr Brock

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

6. ONLINE MEETING PROTOCOLS

Further to Minute 15 of the Policy Committee held on 22 June 2020, the Executive Director of Resources submitted a report setting out further proposed arrangements for holding online meetings. The protocols in this report would be in place for meetings of Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education (ACE) Committee; Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure (HNL) Committee, Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport (SEPT) Committee and Personnel Committee as permitted by the

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Coronavirus Act 2020 and subsequent Regulations that had come into force on 6 April 2020. The protocols for these meetings were attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report recommended that the Committee retain the membership of the Personnel Committee; reduce the membership of the ACE, HNL and SEPT Committees; and agree the quorum thresholds for the new online meetings. It was also recommended that provision should be made to allow substitutes where a member of the Committee could not attend the online meeting.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the protocols for meetings of the Adult Social Care, Children & Education Committee; Housing, Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee; Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee and the Personnel Committee, drafted in accordance with the provisions of 'The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020', and attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved;
- (2) That the provisions agreed in (1) above be applied only to those Committee meetings required to be held, or held, before 7 May 2021 and the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to end or make amendments to the arrangements prior to 7 May 2021;
- (3) That, during these arrangements, the attendance of members at the Committees be as follows:
 - (a) **Adult Social Care, Children & Education Committee (10)**
Councillors (Labour 6; Conservative 2; Greens 1; and Liberal Democrats 1)
 - (b) **Housing, Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee (10)**
Councillors (Labour 6; Conservative 2; Greens 1; and Liberal Democrats 1)
 - (c) **Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (10)**
Councillors (Labour 6; Conservative 2; Greens 1; and Liberal Democrats 1)
 - (d) **Personnel Committee (5)**
Councillors (Labour 4; Conservative 1) or nominees;
- (4) That the quorum for the Committees set out in 2.3 above be set at three members.

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7. TACKLING EMPLOYMENT INEQUALITY

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Challenger and seconded by Councillor James and CARRIED:

Resolved -

This Council notes that:

- Just 52 out of the 1099 most powerful roles in the country are held by People of Colour, or 4.7% of the total number compared to the 13% proportion of the UK population (Colour of Power report 2020).
- There are 56 Unitary Authorities in the UK, currently only two Chief Executives identify as BAME.
- 3.3% of local government staff are Black in the South East compared to over 10% of the population.
- Progression remains important to BAME employees across the UK, with 70% saying that career progression is important to them, compared to only 42% of White British employees. However, over half of BAME employees (52%), believe that they will have to leave their current organisation to progress in their career, in contrast with 38% of White British employees who believe this.
- The evidence clearly shows that the workforces and institutions of the UK and our region are not reflective of their stakeholders.
- Many of the recommendations in the Lammy Review (2017), the Dame Angiolini Report (2017), the Windrush Lessons Learned Review (2018), the McGregor-Smith Review (2017), and the Macpherson report (1999) have not been implemented by Government.
- Reading Borough Council commits to being an anti-racist organisation - one that does not just tackle inequality, but actively fights racism in the Borough.
- Work is already being undertaken at the Council to identify the gaps and long-term solutions to fix the inequalities in our community and workforce, focusing on the understanding of the causes and consequences of inequality

This Council resolves to:

- Ask officers to bring forward plans to improve the diversity of the Council's senior leadership by instigating inclusive leadership training and seek to achieve the 'excellent' rating in future Local Government Equality Framework peer challenges.
- Develop an apprenticeship scheme that commits to increasing the number of black employees across the Council in a range of roles.
- Work with partners to improve diversity across the public sector.
- Request that the Corporate Management Team to identify a Lead Officer at Executive Director level to champion equalities work across the borough.
- Publish Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting on an annual basis and lobby Government to make such reporting mandatory for all organisations.
- Improve transparency in our recruitment, retention and progression data of Black/BME colleagues and develop an Action Plan.

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- Become a signatory to Business In The Community's Race at Work Charter.
- Engage with any future Government commissions on racism in the UK and lobby the Government to implement outstanding recommendations in existing reviews.

8. HOMES AT THE HEART

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

Resolved -

This Council notes:

- The £12.2bn investment in affordable housing announced by the government
- Investment in social housing enables economic growth and building homes creates jobs and skills development
- Investment in social housing enables housing affordability and supply for those otherwise shut out of the market
- Investment in social housing enables prosperous communities
- Investing in greater energy efficiency in social housing stock improves residents' health and finances, boosts the economy and the job market whilst also tackling climate change
- Tackling climate change is a priority for Reading Borough Council and other social housing providers, but we cannot achieve it alone - we need to work in partnership with the government, local agencies, residents, lenders, suppliers, and many others
- Reading Borough Council has a great track record in delivering energy efficient homes through the retrofitting of council stock and has a clear commitment to Passivhaus principles for new developments
- The planning white paper 'Planning for the future' and other national planning changes

This Council believes that:

- The government should invest in social housing and supports the Local Government Association's call for more powers to be made available for councils to deliver social housing
- The government should support the social housing sector to play a leading role in cutting carbon emissions
- The government must deliver on its manifesto commitment to set up a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund
- The government must quickly produce a policy roadmap to set out the standards and measures that housing associations and others will need to work towards to achieve the net-zero ambition
- The controversial planning white paper is unwelcome, and its implementation would severely curtail the powers of local planning authorities to control development and ensure quality, leading to poor-quality housing and fewer affordable homes being built

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Consequently, this Council resolves to:

- Support the Housing Federation's Homes at the Heart campaign
- Write, via the Chief Executive, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to express our support for the Homes at Heart campaign
- Continue to lobby, both independently and in partnership with other bodies and local authorities, against the implementation of the planning white paper
- Commit to continue investment in decarbonisation of social housing stock locally.

9. HYDROTHERAPY SERVICES

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

Resolved -

This Council notes that:

- NHS Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group [CCG], who commission and plan the vast majority of health services in Reading, are running a 12-week public consultation on future NHS provision of hydrotherapy in Reading, ending 2nd November 2020
- The NHS is experiencing severe financial pressures. Despite recent increases in funding, the present situation follows a decade of the tightest squeeze on spending in the Health Service's history. Berkshire West CCG's 2019/20 Financial Plan detailed a funding gap of £20.7 million, and this was before the extra pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Berkshire West CCG tells us it is consulting on the future provision of hydrotherapy now because the current Covid-19 pandemic and related controls mean the pool is currently closed and that 'the ongoing challenges and potentially open-ended nature of the pandemic' has prompted them to examine future options for the service.
- The Royal Berkshire Hospital's website declares that hydrotherapy can help with the relief of pain and muscle spasm, increasing range of movement and improving both the strength and control of muscles as well as helping encourage weightbearing, especially where land-based exercise is very difficult.
- The strong support for continued provision of NHS hydrotherapy in Reading by a range of charities and support groups, including Berkshire Disabled People Against Cuts, Arthritis Matters, Parkinson's UK, Reading Families' Forum, Reading Fibromyalgia Support Group, the MS Society and the Berkshire MS Therapy Centre.
- This Council, at its meeting on the 24th January 2017, passed, in response to a previous consultation, a resolution objecting to the closure of hydrotherapy services in Reading.

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This Council recognises that the judgement of many clinicians and patients that there is a therapeutic benefit and is shown to improve mobility, strengthen muscles, increase circulation and help movement in some painful joints.

This Council believes that:

- It is premature to make decisions about the permanent provision of services like hydrotherapy based on the Covid-19 pandemic. It is too soon to understand whether the virus will have a long-term impact on the need of people to socially distance and maintain Covid-19 infection control policies.
- There is a strong probability that the human and financial costs caused by the detrimental impacts on people's health and wellbeing from the closure of this therapy service will far outweigh any short-term savings.

Consequently, this Council resolves:

- To ask the Chief Executive to write to Berkshire West CCG conveying the outcome of this motion and relaying the Council's support for the continuation and, when safe, increased access to NHS hydrotherapy services in Reading.
- To request that the Director of Adult Care and Health Services responds to the formal consultation and survey expressing the Council's desire that this service continues.

(Councillor Duveen declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item. Nature of interest Councillor Duveen was the secretary of the Reading Branch of Parkinson's UK)

(The meeting closed at 8.41pm).