

AGENDA ITEM 6

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

1. Councillor Josh Williams to ask the Leader of the Council:

A Local Election System that Represents the People of Reading

In England the electoral system means we often get Councils that do not represent what people voted for. The Green Party in Reading believes in a fairer local electoral system which more accurately reflects people's wishes. Does the Leader of the Council agree that it's time we ended the broken first-past-the-post system and brought in a more proportional system which would help open local democracy and make sure all voters' voices are heard?

Will he lobby on behalf of the people of Reading for the chance to move to a system that gives voters more choice, ensures their vote counts and delivers greater representation ?

**REPLY** by Councillor Brock Leader of the Council

All electoral systems have merits and demerits and no system produces 'perfect' outcomes according to some imagined gold standard. If we start on the premise that wards are a desirable building block of local Council representation (and I think that they are) and accept the settled position of this Council that election by thirds is appropriate for Reading, one is left with relatively few plausible options for reform.

On balance, I think I would support a shift to the Supplementary Vote system for local elections. It is familiar to voters in our area, being used for the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner election, and offers an opportunity to take second preferences of voters into account. I can see a case for a mixed-member top-up system with overhang seats. But, as I say, all systems involve compromises.

Independent of my personal views, I won't be prioritising electoral change as a lobbying activity. Such an effort would be more appropriately led by the LGA, and the Council would play a part in this as appropriate. There are also a great many issues of far greater importance to Reading's residents at the present time and it is appropriate that I focus on those.

Even if I were to focus on purely electoral matters, I would feel that a drive to increase voter turnout is far more appropriate. Messing around with electoral systems when turnout is low often feels, to me, like an indulgence driven by those who only have architectonic 'solutions' to structural issues (and it often seems to come from a condescending place *vis-à-vis* the electorate).

2. Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services:  
Agency Manager Day Rates

Please can the Leader of the Council confirm the day rates of the 10 highest-paid agency managers working for the Council or Brighter Futures for Children and how long each has been working for the Council or Brighter Futures for Children ?

**REPLY** by Councillor Emberson Lead Councillor for Corporate and Consumer Services:

The Council makes use of interim managers to provide cover for key funded vacant posts or for a fixed period to deliver a specific piece of work, where it would not be practical or possible to employ a permanent member of staff. In both instances engagements of this type are only undertaken following strict scrutiny of the requirement.

The below table presents a direct response to your question:

Job Title	Tenure (m)	Charge Rate (inc agency costs)	Department
Assistant Director for Finance	10	£975	RBC
Delivery Manager	10	£870	RBC
Executive Director of Finance and Resources	5	£861	BFFC
Project Consultant	2	£791	BFFC
Strategic Finance Business Partner	1	£722	RBC
Head of HR	2	£722	BFFC
Corporate Parenting Lead	24	£689	BFFC
Strategic Finance Business Partner	1	£667	RBC
Strategic Finance Business Partner	2	£662	BFFC
Locality Manager	1	£651	RBC

In recent years the Council has significantly reduced spend on interim managers and agency staff in total, this focus continues and forms a key part of our people strategy, Team Reading.

The below table demonstrates the significant reduction in both interim and agency spend in recent years across both Reading Borough Council and Brighter Futures for Children, in summary:

- RBC spend on interim managers has decreased by over 60% since 17/18.
- BFFC spend on interim managers projected to have decreased by 34% by the end of the financial year.
- Overall RBC spend on temporary agency workers is projected to have decreased by 42% by the end of the current financial year.
- Overall BFFC spend on temporary agency workers is projected to have decreased by 22% by the end of the current financial year.
- RBC & BFFC combined interim manager spend projected to have decreased by 48% by the end of the current financial year.
- RBC & BFFC combined temporary agency worker spend projected to have decreased by 31% by the end of the current financial year.

	Interim Manager Spend			Total Agency Spend (inc interims)		
	RBC	BFFC/Children's Services	Combined Interim	RBC	BFFC/Children's Services	Combined Agency Spend
17/18	£2,260,878	£2,005,147	£4,266,025	£6,639,836	£7,566,640	£14,206,476
18/19	£1,824,593	£1,613,148	£3,437,741	£5,990,613	£5,934,165	£11,924,778
19/20	£842,279	£1,523,125	£2,365,404	£4,928,740	£5,669,304	£10,598,044
20/21 to end Q3	£665,114	£990,824	£1,655,938	£2,878,953	£4,446,192	£7,325,145
20/21 forecast	£886,819	£1,321,099	£2,207,917	£3,838,604	£5,928,256	£9,766,860

	Interim Manager Spend			Total Agency Spend (inc interims)		
	RBC	BFFC/Children's Services	Combined Interim	RBC	BFFC/Children's Services	Combined Agency Spend
% Decrease 17/18 - 19/20	63%	24%	45%	26%	25%	25%
% Decrease 17/18 - 20/21fc	61%	34%	48%	42%	22%	31%

**3. Councillor McGonigle to ask the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport:  
Double Parking Outside Alfred Sutton School**

Once again it is necessary to raise the issue of double parking outside the shops and Alfred Sutton School on Wokingham Road.

All attempts to resolve the problems so far have failed to stop people from double parking and thereby creating a hazardous situation for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.

The red route camera car only passes approximately once an hour and only for some of the day.

The new pay & display 30 minutes parking is not being enforced.

There is not enough provision for shop delivery vehicles, and people are still parking on chevrons in the middle of the road to visit take-aways.

When a bus passes double-parked vehicles, traffic from the other direction is forced to stop.

Local residents are at their wits end and further measures are required in this small but highly congested area.

We ask RBC to seriously consider installing static cameras plus more effective enforcement in this location.

**REPLY** by Councillor Page Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport:

I thank Cllr McGonigle for her question.

I understand the concerns about parking abuse in this area and officers continue to work to develop our enforcement operations across the Borough.

The red route was introduced to help with enforcement and as technology improves so does our ability to enforce the red route restrictions, not just here but across the whole route.

As you may know we are currently reviewing our parking strategy and enforcement options for the future. Currently our enforcement operations are contracted and officers meet regularly with the enforcement contractor to discuss issues across the Borough. It is through these meetings that the need for an additional enforcement vehicle has been identified. With an additional enforcement vehicle using the latest technologies we expect to see more penalty

charges being issued for the type of parking contravention occurring within this area of Wokingham Road.

We cannot always stop drivers behaving in this way, but we can issue penalties and the message will get through that we will not tolerate this type of inconsiderate and selfish parking that creates problems for other road users.

The pay and display restrictions have just been changed and now require drivers to display a ticket when parked. Enforcement of this new restriction only commenced on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February following two weeks of warning notices.

The loading provision has been explored by officers previously in consultation with ward councillors as has this recent change to the pay and display and the red route. We will keep the situation under review and officers will be more than happy to hear from ward councillors.

Regrettably static cameras are too inflexible and will not solve the issues of irresponsible parking that currently occur in this area. I do know that the latest technology fitted to our enforcement vehicles can pick up cars parked in the middle of the road and at awkward angles on the footway.

Both officers and our current contractor are well aware of the issues here, and at a relatively small number of other locations, and they are determined to bring these drivers to account and achieve improved parking compliance for the benefit of all other road users. So, drivers that continue to park irresponsibly are on borrowed time and will be caught and penalised accordingly.