

COUNCIL MEETING - 8 JUNE 2021

AGENDA ITEM: 6

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

1. Councillor James to ask the Leader of the Council:

Central Club

Would the Leader of the Council please update on the progress of the Central Club site and would he agree that the priority remains to protect the Black History Mural ?

REPLY by Councillor Brock Leader of the Council.

The Black History Mural is an important feature of our town and, as well as its symbolic significance, it has also been a focal point for activism over the past year, including for the Black Lives Matter movement. As a Council, our categoric priority has always been to protect the mural, which is why we will retain the freehold interest in the site alongside legal covenants.

Detailed terms for the sale of the Central Club have now been agreed and once the contract is complete the Council will work with the developer to bring forward a redevelopment of the site with a specific focus on the preservation of the mural. In connection with this, the Council has been engaging with Historic England to ensure that the mural and its importance to the community is fully recognised and secured.

2. WITHDRAWN

3. Councillor McElroy to ask the Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods & Communities:

Fly Tipping

Can the Lead Councillor update me on what has happened to fly-tipping since the smaller bins and food waste collections were introduced ? Can I get the monthly fly-tipping figures for the town for last year and this year so far ? What extra support is the Council planning to offer to help people manage the change to smaller bins?

REPLY by Councillor Barnett-Ward Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods & Communities.

Thank you for your question. The fly-tipping stats are shown in Table 1, I won't read the figures out, but you will see from looking at the table that there has not been a significant change in the trend of monthly fly-tipping incidents since the main roll out of the 140l grey bins and food waste service on the 1st February 2021. Figures fluctuate on a monthly basis, and we expect this to continue. The Council has demonstrated its commitment to increase recycling and combat environmental crime by introducing a team of Recycling and Enforcement Officers in November 2019. Their primary role is to increase participation in recycling, support the roll-out of the weekly food waste and 140l bin service and to carry out environmental enforcement activities.

The Recycling & Enforcement Officers will continue to monitor the figures and identify and target hot-spot areas and places where intervention may be required. Since the team's introduction, and despite the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, officers have issued 527 fixed penalty notices for fly tipping and secured 39 successful court prosecutions for littering, with more prosecutions planned.

The council has expanded the team's ability to monitor problem fly-tipping sites by investing in overt CCTV enforcement cameras. These are currently deployed at three sites across the borough that have regularly experienced fly tipping. They help provide evidence to support the issue of environmental fines and court action.

Illegal fly-tipping is a national problem and this Council is committed to continuing to address this blight which has adverse impacts on all residents and visitors to our town, both visually and environmentally. Reading Borough Council will take every opportunity to penalise the anti-social minority who choose not to manage their waste responsibly.

It is clear from the current recycling rate, which is now over 50% for the first time in Reading's history, that residents have overwhelmingly embraced the new waste collection service and are managing their household's waste with a clear focus on recycling and reducing waste sent to landfill via their grey bin. As well as making significant savings on disposal costs, recycling rather than dumping waste benefits the environment by reducing the release of methane, one of the most damaging climate change gases. The fact that our recycling rate leapt to above 50% in the first month of the new service and has maintained at that level is a testament to our residents' commitment to responding to the climate crisis and I am sure I speak for all Reading's councillors when I say we are profoundly grateful for their efforts.

What extra support is the Council planning to offer to help people manage the change to smaller bins?

The new scheme recognises that a number of different categories of households require extra landfill waste capacity. These include larger households, those with multiple children in disposable nappies and also residents with medical needs. The Council provides additional white sacks to households with demonstrable need. The council also offers a free weekly clinical waste collection service, which is currently provided to over 100 eligible households..

Residents who are recycling more can also apply for a free additional red 240l recycling bin and we are grateful to the more than a thousand households who have applied for additional recycling capacity. The Council also offers 360l red recycling bins for households who need more than 240l capacity but who do not have space for two 240l red bins. A free second food waste bin is also provided on request, and our recycling crews collect used batteries and small electrical and electronic items at kerbside. They will also collect excess recycling at any recycling collection if presented alongside the red bins in a paper bag or cardboard box - although we do ask residents not to present excess recycling in very wet weather as the recycling centre will not accept wet paper and cardboard.

All the Council's provisions to support residents to manage their waste are detailed in the Household Waste Service Standards document, which is published on the Council's website. I would encourage all councillors to read it, so they can advise their residents of what they are entitled to and how to apply. I also recommend everyone use the free re3cyclopedia app's very helpful waste search function to ensure that they are aware of the full range of items recycled by the re3partnership.

Our Recycling and Enforcement team have been carrying out educational activity with residents who need advice on how to sort their waste to maximise their recycling as well as carrying out bin audits and responding to collection crew's reports of contaminated household bins. Once the current restrictions are lifted the team will be able to resume their educational and promotional activities in schools, colleges and with the University.

Table 1

Year	No of Fly-tipping incidents (as per Waste data flow)	Year	No of Fly-tipping incidents (as per waste data flow)
2020-21		2021/22	
April	74	April	128
May	118	May	??
June	223	June	
July	193	July	
August	139	August	
September	136	September	
October	144	October	
November	137	November	
December	111	December	
January	136	January	
February	102	February	
March	115	March	
Total	1628	Total to date	