

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 1

Richard Stainthorp to ask the Lead Councillor for Education:

Schools Capacity in September

Can the Lead Councillor for Education please give me an update on what plans the Government has put in place to enable schools to return at full capacity in September?

REPLY by Councillor Pearce (Lead Councillor for Education):

It feels as though we have been here before. June 2020, September 2020, January 2021 and March 2021. At each of these times more pupils were due to physically go back into schools, and each of these times the Government dithered and delayed, put out guidance to schools late and in some cases U-turned all together at the last minute. Our schools, with a week to go before the end of term in most cases, are crying out for some clarity and clear guidance on what is expected of them in September.

Boris Johnson has asked for patience, I think our schools, educators, parents and pupils have waited long enough. At the start of July, over 400,000 pupils were having to self-isolate at home, obviously having an impact on pupils learning, teachers planning and parents work-life, but we have had little help from Government on how we can fix this. Gavin Williamson's idea is to just stop bubbles but this doesn't seem like a solution to me.

We are still waiting for answers to a list of questions that the Government and DfE have refused to answer or help with:

- What funding has been provided to schools to help ventilate classrooms?
- Will mass testing still be required of schools?
- Will pupil Bubbles and the need to self-isolate still be in place?
- How many of those in Education have suffered from the Delta variant?
- What adaptations and changes will be made to examinations in 2022?

As ever, here in Reading we will be doing all we can to help our schools prepare for anything that the Government requires, as we have done throughout the last year, be it distributing laptops, organising mass testing or ensuring kids don't go hungry during the holidays, we have always stepped up. But for once during this crisis, please give schools, teachers, pupils and parents as much notice and as much clarity as possible for them to prepare for September and have a break over the Summer.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

12 JULY 2021

COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1

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

Greenwich leisure memberships more expensive

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) have recently taken over the running of leisure centres in Reading. I understand that people paying their Bronze, Silver or Gold Reading Council membership by direct debit have had this membership transferred to GLL at the same rate. However if you pay your membership monthly but not by direct debit I understand that these memberships have been ended. What's more I understand that at the time of writing this question a comparable GLL membership is a lot more expensive than the previous Reading Council one. One resident has said they pay £15.50 per month for a Reading Council Bronze membership and the nearest equivalent GLL one on their website is £28 per month. Can the council confirm the number of memberships which have been ended? Can the council also provide the old cost for Reading Council Bronze, Silver and Gold memberships and the equivalent new cost with GLL?

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

On 1 July 2021, GLL started to operate all of Reading's four leisure centres on the Council's behalf. This was an important next step in the Council's commitment to delivering modern new leisure facilities and improving health and wellbeing across Reading.

Customers who had active memberships being paid for on a monthly basis by either a cash payment at a centre or through direct debit are still able to use facilities for the same charge. Their memberships have not been ended. However, in future, payment will need to be via direct debit.

Detailed membership costs can be sent through to Cllr White, however, the cost of memberships for transferring members is the same as the former RSL charges and provide the same or more privileges than previously available.

Membership category	RSL charge	GLL Charge
Bronze (Gym only)	£17 (£16 with YRP)	£17 (£16 with YRP)
Silver (Gym + 1 other activity)	£22.50 (£20.50 with YRP)	£22.50 (£20.50 with YRP)
Gold (Gym, swim, classes)	£29 (£26.50 with YRP)	£29 (£26.50 with YRP)
Platinum (gold + Racquets)	£35 (£32 with YRP)	£35 (£32 with YRP)

We are aware that approximately 40 people were paying for memberships on a monthly basis by cash. We will not know how many of these members will renew their memberships until the end of the month. GLL are liaising with these

customers to ensure that they are able to continue to access facilities in a manner that is convenient and cost effective to them.

Members that join from now will be able to choose between a selection of memberships providing access to a wide range of activities and facilities that are being significantly improved over the forthcoming months.

Construction on the brand new Rivermead leisure centre and the new pool at Palmer Park is due to begin this summer with the aim of delivering the new facilities by Spring 2023.

COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 2

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods & Communities:

Closed Public toilets

Some of Reading's public toilets are closed at the moment which is an inconvenience for some but a big problem for many residents. For each council public toilet in the town can the council confirm: if it is open or closed, if closed how long has it been shut for, again, if closed when does the council plan to reopen this toilet?

REPLY by Councillor Barnett-Ward (Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods & Communities):

Reading's public conveniences are valued by most of our residents and visitors, but unfortunately they are frequently targeted by a selfish and destructive minority who vandalise them, making them unusable until the council is able to undertake costly repairs.

I have included a table in my written response showing the status of every facility in the borough.

Nine are fully open. One, the facility attached to Christchurch Meadows paddling pool, has been closed while the pool has been closed to comply with government restrictions and will reopen when the pool does. Another, Thameside Promenade, is being refurbished so is currently partially open and will be fully open when the refurbishment is complete. The Cintra Park facility was vandalised and had to close while it is repaired. These repairs should be complete by the 23rd July. The Hosier Street Urilift recently developed an electrical fault and is awaiting repair, this should also be complete this month.

That leaves five facilities that had to be closed following vandalism and do not yet have a reopening date. This is because the condition of these facilities means that a considerable investment of public money is required to make them fit to use. A public toilet review is currently taking place to assess the use of the borough's public conveniences and the investment required to bring the closed facilities back into use.

Eleven years of National Government-imposed austerity has laid waste to Council budgets. The financial prudence and foresight of this Labour Council means we are in a stronger financial position than many, but we still have to be circumspect in our spending, which is why due process must be followed before authorising the level of expenditure needed to repair and reopen the remaining closed facilities.

I hope Cllr White will join with me in condemning those selfish individuals who repeatedly vandalise public toilets and also in calling on the government to reverse their cuts to local government funding.

The detailed status of Reading's public toilets is below:

Key - **Red** Closed **Yellow** Part Closed/Repair in progress **Green** Open

Site name:	Current Status	Nearby Toilets
Cintra Park	Closed since March 2020 due to the pandemic and vandalism repair raised completion date due 23/7/21	Morrisons Whitley
Northumberland Avenue	Closed since Feb 2020 due to vandalism subject to review opening date unknown	Morrisons Whitley
The Meadway	Disabled only 24hrs a day via Radar key.	
Albert Road	Open 24hrs a day	
Thameside (Caversham Promenade)	Disabled only open 24hrs a day . New doors ordered for male and female, procurement and refurb expected completion date September 21	Forbury Gardens
Forbury Gardens	Open 08.30 to est 17.00	
Christchurch Meadows	Open 08.30 to est 17.00	
Christchurch Pool	Closed until 15th July 21 in readiness for Paddling Pool Opening as part of the Government Phase 4	Christchurch Meadows
Cemetery Junction	Open 06.00 to 17.30 hrs	
Whitley Street	Closed since Feb 2020 due to vandalism subject to review opening date unknown	Oracle Shopping Centre
Prospect Park	Closed since Nov 2020 due to vandalism subject to review opening date unknown	Asda The Meadway
Kentwood Hill	Closed since July 21 due to vandalism subject to review opening date unknown	Waitrose Tilehurst
St Martins Precinct	Open 06.00 to 23.30 hrs Increased opening hours following Cllr enquiry	
Oxford Road	Closed for over 2 year due to vandalism subject to review opening date unknown	Tesco Oxford Rd / Battle Library
Caversham Court	Open 06.00 to 20.30 hrs TBC provide	
Urilift - Hosier Street	Closed due to electrical as of July 21 , repair requested expected completion July 21	Broad St Mall / Uri lift Town Hall

Henley Rd. Crematorium	Open 24hrs a day	
Urilift - Town Hall paved area	Open 24hrs a day	