

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 19 OCTOBER 2021

Present: Councillor Stevens (Mayor);

Councillors David Absolom, Debs Absolom, Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Brock, Carnell, Challenger, Davies, Duveen, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Hacker, James, Khan, Leng, Lovelock, Manghnani, McEwan, McGonigle, Mitchell, Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell, Page, Pearce, Robinson, Rowland, Rynn, D Singh, Skeats, Sokale, Stanford-Beale, Terry, White, Whitham, J Williams, R Williams and J Williams and Woodward.

Apologies: Councillors Ballsdon, Hoskin, Maskell and McElroy.

16. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Black Lives Matter

At the invitation of the Mayor, Councillor James addressed the Council in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

(b) Sir David Amess and Geoffrey Mander

The Mayor referred to Sir David Amess, the MP for Southend West, who had been tragically murdered in a horrendous crime at his constituency surgery in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex on 15 October 2021.

The Mayor also asked the Council to remember the former Labour Councillor for Katesgrove 1973-83, Geoffrey Mander, who sadly passed away on 18 August 2021.

The Council stood in silence in their memory and as a mark of respect.

(c) Appointments to Committees & Sub-Committees

The Mayor reported that the Monitoring Officer had exercised his delegation on the recommendation of the Conservative Group Leader to make the following changes to Committee appointments:

Councillor Mitchell replaced Councillor Stanford-Beale on the Policy Committee; and

Councillor Carnell replaced Councillor Stanford-Beale on the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

17. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

18. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 10

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr McElroy	Rat Populations in Reading	Cllr Barnett-Ward
2.	Cllr Lovelock	Utility Companies	Cllr Page

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3.	Cllr White	Devastating Cut to Universal Credit	Cllr Brock
4.	Cllr White	Increased Cost of Sports Centre Memberships	Cllr Hoskin

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

19. READING'S BID FOR CITY STATUS

The Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhoods submitted a report seeking approval to submit a bid for City Status as part of a competition that had been launched by the Government to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. An outline bid which set out some of the key points in support of the bid was attached to the draft report at Appendix 1. The report also sought delegated authority for officers to complete and submit the text of the final bid, prior to the deadline for submission of bids on 8 December 2021, in consultation with the Civic Board.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That the submission of a bid for City status by the deadline of 8 December 2021, based on the outline content attached in Appendix 1, be endorsed.
- (2) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services be given delegated authority to refine and agree the final bid text and content in consultation with the Civic Board.

19. BERKSHIRE WEST HEALTH & WELLBEING STRATEGY

The Executive Director of Adult Care & Health submitted a report seeking approval to adopt the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Berkshire West. The Strategy set a basis for commissioning plans across both the local authority and the current local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). It was a joint strategy across Berkshire West local authorities and its development to date had been driven by the Health and Wellbeing Boards in each authority. The report recommended that the Health & Wellbeing Board should be given responsibility to approve the implementation plans and future monitoring arrangements. The report had attached the draft Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030 (Appendix A); the associated Public Engagement Report (Appendix B); and the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix C).

The report explained that the consultation exercise had identified five priorities as being the foundation of the 2021-2030 Strategy. The Strategy would be used to drive the content of the action plans and delivery boards had been identified to shape the action plans and report on outcomes. The action plans were currently in development and the Health and Wellbeing Board would be asked to approve these plans when completed on behalf of the Council.

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

Resolved -

- (1) That, having considered the feedback from the formal consultation on the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which was set out in Appendix B to the report, the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy be approved as attached to the report at Appendix A.
- (2) That the development of the Reading Health and Wellbeing Action Plans be noted and that the Health and Wellbeing Board be authorised to approve the development of the Health and Wellbeing Action Plans on behalf of the Council.

(Councillor Stanford-Beale declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item. Nature of interest: Councillor Stanford-Beale was the Chief Executive of Autism Berkshire)

20. OPPOSITION TO THE UNIVERSAL CREDIT CUT

Pursuant to Notice, a motion was moved by Councillor Terry and seconded by Councillor Mpofu-Coles and CARRIED as set out in the resolution below.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor White and seconded by Councillor J Williams and LOST:

‘Add the following wording to the end of the original motion:

“A report on Reading employers and the real Living Wage will be brought back to a future Policy Committee detailing the current situation and how the Council can work with Reading UK CIC, Reading BID and other organisations and employers to increase the number of employers paying at least the real Living Wage.”

Resolved -

This Council notes that:

- The Government has ended the £20 uplift in universal credit (UC)
- On 2 September 2021, 100 organisations across the UK joined together in urging the Government not to go ahead with this cut, making it clear that even before Covid, a decade of cuts and freezes had left it (UC) unfit to provide the support families need (see <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/keep-the-lifeline-open-letter-to-the-prime-minister>).
- Since then the cost of living rises, potential food supply problems, rises in energy costs and the increase in National Insurance contributions will make life even harder for the many people in work who rely on UC as well as for the many for whom work is not a choice because of illness, disability and caring responsibilities. The choice will be to eat or heat among the many miserable choices this cut and decades of austerity will force people to make.

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- The number of children in poverty will significantly increase with figures quoted ranging from 200,000 to 290,000 on top of the 4.2 million children already living in poverty

This Council believes that:

- It is unacceptable that being in work does not enable people and families to be able to afford the basics and have a decent standard of life
- It is unacceptable that UC does not provide people who do not have the choice to work with enough to keep them out of poverty and have a decent standard of life
- The future of the country is negatively affected when so many children are living in poverty given the potential harm that this is likely to cause their health, well-being and economic potential

Consequently, this Council resolves to:

- Require the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to convey our concern around the impact of the cut on Reading's residents and request the reinstatement of the £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit.
- Call on all employers across the town and beyond to accept their responsibility to pay a real living wage (currently £9.50 UK and £10.85 London, as defined by the Living Wage Foundation) as opposed to the Government's so-called national living wage of £8.91.

21. CUTS TO READING'S COMMUNITY SAFETY FUNDING

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Barnett-Ward and seconded by Councillor Davies and CARRIED:

Resolved -

This Council notes that:

The Conservative Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner recently announced that Reading's community safety funding will be cut by more than half over the next three years.

This Council believes that:

- The Council's Community Safety Partnership is an important tool in preventing crime and tackling its causes in Reading.
- This savage cut in funding will result in Reading's communities being less safe in future.
- The cut to Reading's funding is politically motivated since Wokingham Borough Council will receive a 46% increase in community safety funding while both Labour Councils in Berkshire, Reading and Slough, lose out by 53% and 40% respectively.

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Consequently, this Council resolves to:

Require the Chief Executive to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner of the Thames Valley asking him to restore Reading's community safety funding in full so that we can maintain our valuable partnership preventing crime in Reading and work to keep our communities safe.

22. RESPONSIBLE USE OF FIREWORKS

Pursuant to Notice, the following motion was moved by Councillor Leng and seconded by Councillor Emberson and CARRIED:

Resolved -

This Council notes that:

Although the majority of people use fireworks in a responsible manner - bringing a great deal of enjoyment to people in the celebration of many events and festivities - there remains an issue with irresponsible use across the country.

This Council believes that:

- The anti-social behaviour caused by inappropriate use of fireworks is a significant problem for communities in Reading and has an especially profound impact for certain groups of people, including children and older people.
- Sensible and simple actions can be taken by all firework users to ensure the minimisation of distress and disruption upon people and animals.

Consequently, this Council resolves to:

- Require all public firework displays within the local authority boundaries to be advertised in advance of the event.
- Actively promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people - including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks.
- Request that the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State, urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays.
- Encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock 'quieter' fireworks for public display.
- Continue, and promote, the excellent work of the Council's Regulatory Services team in tackling the illicit sale of fireworks across the Borough.

(The meeting closed at 8.47 pm).