

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 5 JULY 2022

Present: Councillor Eden (Mayor);

Councillors Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward (via Microsoft Teams), Brock, Carnell, Challenger, Cresswell, Cross, Davies, C Dennis, G Dennis, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Gavin, Gittings, Griffith, Hornsby-Smith, Hoskin, Keane, Keeping, Kretchmer, Khan, Lanzoni, Leng, McCann, McEwan, McGonigle, Mitchell, Moore, Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell, Page, Robinson, Rowland, Singh, Terry, Thompson, White, Williams, Woodward and Yeo;

Apologies: Councillors Hacker, Kitchingham, Lovelock, McElroy and Sultan.

11. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor invited the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brock, to pay tribute to Peter Sloman, the Council's Chief Executive, who would be retiring in the summer. Councillor Brock thanked Mr Sloman for his contribution to Reading over the past five years as Chief Executive and wished him a very happy retirement.

12. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 25 May 2022 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Mayor.

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

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr Cresswell	Air Pollution in Reading Exceeds World Health Organisation Limits	Cllr Page
2.	Cllr White	Welcoming Ukrainian Refugees to Reading	Cllr Brock

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

14. FAIR TAX DECLARATION

The following motion was moved by Councillor Mpofu-Coles and seconded by Councillor Lanzoni and CARRIED:

Resolved -

That this Council notes that:

- The pressure on organisations to pay their fair share of tax has never been stronger.
- Polling from the Institute for Business Ethics finds that "corporate tax avoidance" has, since 2013, been the clear number one concern of the British public when it comes to business conduct.

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- Two thirds of people (66%) believe the Government and local councils should at least consider a company's ethics and how they pay their tax, as well as value for money and quality of service provided, when awarding contracts to companies.
- Around 17.5% of public contracts in the UK have been won by companies with links to tax havens.
- It has been conservatively estimated that losses from multinational profit-shifting (just one form of tax avoidance) could be costing the UK some £17bn per annum in lost corporation tax revenues.

This Council believes that:

- As recipients of significant public funding, local authorities should take the lead in the promotion of exemplary tax conduct; be that by ensuring contractors are paying their proper share of tax, or by refusing to go along with offshore tax dodging when buying land and property.
- Where councils hold substantive stakes in private enterprises, influence should be wielded to ensure that such businesses are exemplars of tax transparency and tax avoidance is shunned.
- Current and proposed new UK procurement law significantly restricts the ability of local authorities to either penalise poor tax conduct or reward good tax conduct, when buying goods or services.

Consequently, this Council resolves to:

- Approve the 'Councils for Fair Tax' Declaration.
- Continue to lead by example and demonstrate good practice in our tax conduct, right across our activities, including ensuring that IR35 is implemented robustly.
- Never use offshore vehicles for the purchase of land and property, especially where this leads to reduced payments of stamp duty.
- Undertake due diligence to ensure that not-for-profit structures are not being used inappropriately by suppliers.
- Demand clarity where practicable on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers, both UK-based and overseas, and their consolidated profit and loss position.
- Support calls for urgent reform of UK procurement law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 7.12pm).