

## COUNCIL MEETING - 18 OCTOBER 2022

### (C) QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

1. Councillor Moore to ask the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety:  
Recycling Electronic and Electrical Items

Many residents have medium-sized electronic or electrical items at their homes that they wish to dispose of that are too large for collection with kerbside recycling. These currently can only be taken to the Household Recycling Centre at Smallmead and for some this means this is too much effort or not possible and the items end up in household grey bin waste. In West Berkshire Council car parks, there are electronic/electrical collection banks (much like those we have for glass and clothing in Reading). Is this something we could consider to make it easier for residents to recycle electronic/electrical items and stop them going to landfill, as well as improving Reading's recycling rates?

**REPLY** by Councillor Rowland Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety:

I would like to thank Councillor Moore for his question.

Within the existing Reading Borough Council's Recycling and Waste kerbside collection service, residents are provided with the opportunity to recycle of a wide range of household items. The fortnightly recycling collection service not only provides for the recycling of a wide range of waste packaging materials, but also the opportunity for residents to present small waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) for recycling at the kerbside by putting the item in a carrier bag next to the red recycling bin on collection day.

In consideration of your question, it is not accepted that the West Berkshire service is an improvement on our offer, as unlike Reading, West Berkshire do not provide this small WEEE kerbside collection service.

West Berkshire have a small number of WEEE banks, but they are of textile bank size intended only for small WEEE and so are unable to easily to accept medium or larger sized items. We have avoided this route, because WEEE collection banks can be problematic in attracting additional fly-tipping and even catching fire on occasion with disposed of lithium ion batteries igniting when left in items.

For larger WEEE items, such as Microwaves, Vacuum Cleaners, Televisions etc, Reading residents can recycle these items either by taking them to the Household Waste Recycling Centre at Smallmead or, if they don't have access to a vehicle, we have put in place the well-used free bulky waste provision alongside our paid-for bulky waste collection to dispose of larger WEEE items. Residents can request two free bulky collections per year or if they have used up their free slots they can pay for collection of additional items.

Our options have resulted in WEEE now comprising a scant 2.18 % of our residual grey bin waste. To put that in context, it is crucial to recall that we are now at just over a 50% recycling rate for all waste in Reading. Our continuing work to reduce the food waste remaining in our grey bins at 27% is a far greater challenge although we are continuing to tackle that by expanding bespoke food recycling services into blocks of flats to drive that number down further.

Reading Borough Council's provision where small WEEE items are picked up on normal collection routes, is judged to be the most efficient in terms of both lower carbon impact and cost as opposed to providing additional infrastructure and collection services specifically for WEEE items.

In addition to the Council's provision for recycling larger WEEE items, retailers, under the Waste Electrical Electronic Equipment regulations 2013, are required to provide a "Take Back" scheme when new equipment is being purchased from their store.

Under this regulation, retailers are required to:

- offer free take back on WEEE
- accept WEEE for free from customers supplied with like-for-like products
- provide customers access to written information on the service provided and what they should do with their WEEE

A recent tour of our Re3 facilities exposed me to some of the impressive initiatives on site to further eliminate WEEE from our landfill sites. WEEE is sorted and items that can be reused in the first order are directed to the Precycle programme on Portman Road and exported for reuse.

However, Re3 sends most of our WEEE to a large compliance scheme called REPIC (as part of the arrangements for Producer Responsibility) which ensures that most items are at least recycled for parts. I would actually welcome the opportunity to visit the site with you Cllr McIlroy as I think you would be truly impressed with the work being done at our Re3 facility.

Finally, we are currently exploring working with REPIC to look at promoting WEEE Roadshows within some of Reading's communities to create further awareness about what can be done by residents to properly dispose of WEEE and drive down that 2.18% number to zero.

2. Councillor Moore to ask the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety:

### Kerbside Glass Recycling

According to the last released DEFRA figures, Reading Borough Council is currently 240 out of 338 in the English Councils recycling league table, whereas the top 4 Councils in the same table are all run by the Liberal Democrats. In line with the Council's commitment to a climate emergency and reaching net zero, when is kerbside glass recycling planned to be introduced, a service long-requested by the residents of Reading for many years?

**REPLY** by Councillor Rowland Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety:

I'd like to thank Councillor Moore for his question. For clarity, this question was publicly addressed twice last year by my predecessor but bearing in mind that there are many new Councillors this year, I am happy to clarify where we are on this issue.

Firstly, I'd like to set the record straight regarding your quoted figures. The figures you've quoted are from DEFRA's 2020/2021 data, prior to the inclusion of Reading's food waste collections that saw a significant increase in the Council's recycling rate from 36.1% to over 50%. I am sure that you can see therefore why they have no relevancy with where we are today. At our current rate, with the addition of food recycling, our figures would be placing us in the top quartile of that national list. There is no published DEFRA data available for the period 2021/2022 but understandably I look forward to its publication.

Labour Councillors are committed to maximising recycling and minimising the amount of Reading's waste that is sent to landfill. Glass recycling is a part of the overall waste management service and well used by many residents. It represents up to 5% of our overall 51% recycling rate.

Bottle banks allow residents to recycle at a time that suits them. We have a total of 210 banks at 51 sites across the borough, as well as at Smallmead. However, we are conscious of the needs of some residents, particularly those with mobility issues or those who do not have a car, that could find a kerbside collection helpful. Furthermore, whilst kerbside glass recycling might be well appreciated by those parties and in areas where there are longer distances to travel to a glass bank; the noise of kerbside collections in Reading's densely packed terraced-housing areas would likely involve significant readjustments to machinery and collection methods to try to minimise the potentially harmful noise exposure for staff and residents who very well may not appreciate the additional noise created with these collections.

By way of background, the Environment Act was passed on 15 November 2021. It introduces significant changes to the way waste and recycling will be collected and how those services are to be funded. However, Government has said that the specific detail of those changes and the funding streams will be made clear in further Secondary Legislation. That will be informed by data collected during public consultations last year, but those results have yet to be published. Extenuating circumstances at the national government level aside, it is likely that the complexity of the legislative package for this is the reason for these ongoing delays.

Thus, our issues continue to lie-in-wait for this guidance, with the potential cost implications to be defined from Government and no clear direction as to how this process would be implemented. Along with our partners, Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough, this council foresaw difficulties in preparing an efficient and affordable glass collection service while significant uncertainties remain about the required scope and funding of such a service.

If this council introduced a glass collection service now the additional vehicles, systems and staff would have to be funded from the council budget with little or no chance of claiming-back those costs through any future 'producer pays' scheme which the Government has suggested could be a likely route of recourse. That would inevitably have a knock-on detrimental impact on other services for residents. Despite our proven commitment to increasing Reading's recycling rate, Labour Councillors are simply not prepared to take the financial risk of rushing out a kerbside glass collection before the Government clarify their position with the secondary legislation.

The re3 Board, which has Cllr Page, and myself as Reading's representatives, has resolved to address this question at the earliest opportunity, once Government produces the guidance they have promised. I will be delighted to provide an update on the Council's position once Government has done their part and our RBC and Re3 partnership officers have been able to analyse the detail of that secondary legislation and develop a plan for compliance. All to be advised once it arrives.

3. Councillor Cross to ask the Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety:  
Bin Collections

Residents in several narrow streets in Redlands such as Blenheim Gardens, Cardigan Road, Foxhill Road and Hatherley Road, have experienced numerous missed bin collections. This has understandably caused considerable frustration. Could the Lead Member please provide me with an overview of the issues caused by poorly parked cars blocking the bin crews' access,

and let me know whether the Council will be proceeding with the introduction of an ultra-narrow bin vehicle which could greatly alleviate the issues faced by local residents?

**REPLY** by Councillor Rowland Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety:

I'd like to thank Councillor Cross for his question.

In my Lead Member capacity, I have spoken to many residents living in the affected streets and fully appreciate their frustration as a result of disruption to their waste collection services. All they want is their rubbish and recycling cleared when we promise, and we need to do all we can to ensure that for them.

Although access problems are not encountered every week, occurrences are becoming more common and thus more trying for residents who have had years of collection issues. Our Recycling and Waste Services Team currently service some 1400 residential roads across the borough and experience issues with restricted access in a relatively small number of identified roads.

The affected streets are: Blenheim Gardens, Cardigan Gardens, Cardigan Road, Donnington Gardens, Foxhill Road, Francis Street, Hatherley Road, and Stanley Grove.

The issues experienced result from:

- Historic narrow road design
- heavily used on-street parking
- Larger modern domestic vehicles
- Poor parking practices

Whilst these factors impact the delivery of our waste services, they also present challenges to emergency and delivery services, and a range of measures will be required to fully resolve this.

We have thus set out a programme of long - range and temporary approaches that are currently being worked through to implementation:

- (1) Over the summer we completed a trial of a 12T “ultra- narrow” waste collection vehicle. This is something that Labour has trialed before but due to multiple considerations, it was not the right answer at that time. My immediate predecessor and I were eager to progress this effort again this year. Despite exaggerated rumours to the contrary, the results of the trial of the new narrow road bin lorry were successful this year in its final analysis. It was determined that the vehicle has the potential to realise its role on the fleet, not only to collect on these roads, but also to be utilised for other street cleansing throughout the town- a critical component of its financial justification.

As such, the purchase of the vehicle has been submitted as a capital funding bid in the current funding round. Given our priority to service all residents across the town equally and the on-going detrimental impact of failed collections in these streets, I am hopeful that the bid will be successful and we will be able to introduce such a vehicle in late 2023. But I am also conscious that the Council budget will be under significant strain as a result of inflationary pressures and that all spending decisions will have to be properly considered in a holistic way across the Council. If successful, it will enable

the service to add the vehicle to the fleet from September 2023 (based on current build and delivery timetables).

- (2) Whether or not we are able to pass this in the budget this year, the problem in the interim remains or if it fails to ultimately pass the budget round. Therefore, we've had to look at ways to best address the affected streets. In your ward, those streets are currently serviced on a Friday as a result of historic round scheduling. This means that failed collections require a repeat visit on a Saturday, or the following week, leaving residents frustrated over a weekend and into the early part of the next week. Thus, we are intending to move the most affected streets (Blenheim Gardens, Cardigan Gardens, Cardigan Road, Donnington Gardens, Foxhill Road, and Hatherley Road) collection day to a Tuesday, so in the case of an inability to collect on a road, failed collections can be addressed expediently over the remainder of the week with greater staffing abilities at our disposal.

The change in collection schedule, and its intended benefits, will be communicated clearly to residents with ward Councilors fully briefed. Whilst writing to residents, we will be reminding them of the detrimental issue poor parking can cause and ask for their assistance in addressing this. These actions will alleviate some of the immediate issues and pave the way for the introduction of the new 'ultra-narrow' collection round.

- (3) In partnership with the Council's Highways & Traffic Services team, and the Parking Services & Civil Enforcement teams, consideration will also be given to reviewing enhanced parking control measures in the impacted streets. Proposals arising from this consideration will be presented to and considered at an appropriate Committee (likely to be Traffic Management Sub-Committee) and be subject to public consultation as appropriate, prior to implementation if and where agreeable.

It is hoped that this package of interventions will act to mitigate the issues currently experienced by residents, not only enabling improved consistency of Recycling and Waste service delivery, when it is promised to be delivered, but also acting to address the broader issues experienced by residents with emergency services and third-party deliveries.

#### 4. Councillor Thompson to ask the Lead Councillor for Corporate Services & Resources: Citizen's Advice Reading

For over 80 years Citizens Advice Reading has been helping people through a multitude of financial, employment and personal issues. The booklet *Information for Reading Councillors* provided by the Reading Advice Network little more than two months ago lists Citizens Advice Reading far more often than any other organisation in the town. Citizens Advice is the go-to service, known and trusted by so many of our residents. The breadth and depth of their knowledge here in Reading is unrivalled.

Citizens Advice don't just provide free advice, as I learnt when fellow councillors and I visited their offices in early July. They work with some of our most vulnerable residents to help them unpick complex problems, for example with debt, employment or housing worries. They negotiate on their behalf with landlords, utility companies and other creditors and, in doing so, underpin the wellbeing of those who seek advice and support. They help many of our most vulnerable residents not just to get out of debt but to stay out of debt; to have the skills to cope better with the problems they experience.

The provision of advice and support is quite rightly a key part of the Council's own social inclusion agenda. However, when the recipients of the Council's Closing the Gap funding were

announced earlier this summer, Citizens Advice Reading was not on the list. They have been awarded a second, smaller tranche of Council funding but this is for specific delivery of debt advice and these funds will not cover the Citizens Advice core general service. Without it, all of their specialist services are at risk - services such as the Macmillan team who provide welfare and benefits support to people with cancer and their families.

Tilehurst residents who work at Citizens Advice tell me that morale is at rock bottom. And this matters, because fully qualified, experienced staff in areas such as debt and benefits advice and money management are in short supply across the region. If staff see no future in Reading, they might well move to Citizens Advice services in Wokingham, Newbury or elsewhere.

Five years ago Citizens Advice in Slough closed down after they lost essential funding from their local council. The alternative proved not to be robust and people were left with nowhere to turn. Slough Council has started to fund Citizens Advice again, but the service is a shadow of what it once was.

As families across Reading struggle with the cost of living crisis and turn in increasing numbers to Citizens Advice, this vital service is at risk. Will the Council pledge to do all they can to ensure that Citizens Advice Reading remains able to provide a general service for the people of Reading during this extraordinarily difficult period and for a long time to come?

**REPLY** by Councillor Terry, Lead Councillor for Corporate Services & Resources:

Firstly, let me say that I and I am sure all councillors value the work Citizen's Advice Reading (CAR) has brought to Reading and its residents over many years. The Council has worked successfully with it on many projects and this joint working is planned to continue with the latest Closing the Gap commission and beyond.

The Council allocated over £270,000 a year to support people in poverty as part of an overall investment in the voluntary sector of over £1 million per annum through its recent Closing the Gap commissioning process. This direct financial commitment has been made to maintain a consistent level of support for people at risk of poverty with money management and welfare advice, along with wellbeing and mental health support.

Through the previous Narrowing the Gap commission which ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> October this year, the Council provided Citizens Advice Reading with £100,000 per year of funding to support people who struggle to manage within their income and whom are at risk of falling into crisis. The provision of similar support by Citizens Advice is set to continue following the award within the Closing the Gap commission of £96,000 per annum for the provision of debt advice services for the borough from the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022.

I noted that Councillor Thompson in her long introduction to her question states:

‘these funds will not cover the Citizens Advice core general service. Without it, all of their specialist services are at risk - services such as the Macmillan team who provide welfare and benefits support to people with cancer and their families.’

Without diminishing the fact that the funding to CAR has reduced by £4k, Narrowing the Gap and Closing the Gap commissioned services were not for core funding. I also note that in their accounts ending 31 March 2021 (the most recently published) it stated that CAR received £103,354 from Macmillan for the service they provide.

I think there is some confusion here, the council has not been funding CAR for a general advice service, although to be helpful I understand that in the past whilst the commission was focused on debt and improving income, council officers took a very broad definition of this to include anything that might impact on someone's income, the specification for the provision of debt advice within Closing the Gap is more tightly focused than the previous funding, but a lot of the broader elements are being picked up from the separate services provided by the Tackling Poverty Partnership.

Regarding the reference here to other organisations who will be providing services, I understand that as Councillor Thompson was elected this year, she will not necessarily be aware of the background to the Closing the Gap commission which received cross-party and unanimous support at Policy Committee last December.

25 organisations are currently funded through the existing Narrowing the Gap framework commissioned by the Council, to tackle poverty, discrimination and disadvantage; promote wellbeing, and support thriving communities

On the back of a review of the current programme and consultation with the sector a new outcomes focussed framework was developed which identified 4 Lot's for Providers to bid against:

Phase 1 was advertised on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022 on public procurement portal. The Council offered several sessions to prospective bidders to discuss the requirements, the outcomes-based approach, and the overall procurement process. The scores were determined based on quality (75%) and price (25%) criteria. Thirty bids were received in total, including 6 partnership bids. All assessments were conducted by council officers only.

On the back of Phase 1 10 Providers (including 4 partnerships) were awarded contracts to the value of £849,416 per annum leaving £205,474 remaining. CAR's bid was received in this round, and they bid in Lot 1 (poverty). Their bid passed the quality and price scoring thresholds, but they were the second highest scoring bid.

Their proposal was not affordable alongside the Communicare Partnership proposal (now called The Tackling Poverty Partnership), requiring £96,399 per annum more than was available and would furthermore duplicate services offered through the Communicare Partnership bid

Phase 2 commenced to ensure that "gaps" in the portfolio that had been identified during the Phase 1 procurement were fulfilled. The opportunity was advertised on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2022 on public procurement portal. Six bids were received in total, including 1 partnership bid.

On the back of Phase 2, 3 Providers were awarded contracts to the value of £170,466. CAR secured funding in this round totalling £96,292. The shortfall in total spend due to the fact that 1 service has still not been commissioned.

**Decommissioned Providers** - 4 Providers did not secure any funds through the Closing the Gap process and therefore the council will be supporting them with their decommissioning process in preparation for the end of their contracts on 31/10/22. They will also be considered for the transition fund. These are ENRYCH (£12k), Talkback (£12k), Tuvida (£60k), Berkshire MS Society (£12k).

**Transition Grant** - There is a £75,000 transition grant available for approved NTGII providers that will be decommissioned as of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022. The criteria for the allocation of this grant are being designed by the Social Inclusion and VCS Partnership Manager.

I can confirm that Councillors and Officers of the Council are working directly with Citizens Advice Reading to understand their current operational challenges and to identify options for supporting their long-term sustainability. These discussions are active and continuing but any decisions about the future scope of services offered by Citizens Advice Reading will of course need to be made by CAR's Managers and Trustees based on their understanding of the current and future capacity.

I think it worth noting that in addition to the CTG funding, CAR gets £50k in-kind council support relating to the premises it occupies.

It is also funded for the Ukrainian Advice Centre (£52,421) and CAR have also received a total of £204K from the Household Support Fund for a Utilities Scheme which offers emergency energy vouchers, energy saving advice and energy packs.

As we move towards the winter months and with many families across the borough being worried about the rising cost of living, I would like to be clear the Council's commitment to supporting our residents to remain safe and warm in their own homes, and to enable businesses and local voluntary and community organisations to continue to operate effectively.

In the last week we have updated the Money Matters / Cost of Living page on our website, which includes all the latest information on the advice and support available to residents, businesses, and local voluntary and community organisations. This includes specific advice on income and benefits, support with food and clothing, help with finding employment, and managing your health and wellbeing.

**5. Councillor Cross to ask the Lead Councillor for Housing:**  
**Improvement Works on Hexham Road Estate**

Can the Lead Councillor please provide an update on the planned improvement works on the Hexham Road estate ?

**REPLY** by Councillor Emberson Lead Councillor for Housing:

Thank you for your question. To offer context, you will no doubt be aware that these improvement works form part of the Council's £34 million commitment to retrofitting council homes across the town. The Council continues to focus on improving the thermal efficiency of homes in line with the Council's Climate Change ambitions ensuring homes can be heated efficiently and cost effectively, thereby reducing their carbon footprint and reducing fuel poverty for our tenants.

In relation to works on the Hexham Estate, works to the 4 story blocks have all been completed. This included new windows, replacement of the cladding and improved insulation along with fire precaution works. We are now working our way through the 2 and 3 story blocks. Works to these blocks were due to start last financial year but a combination of delays due to covid have pushed back this work to this financial year.

Whilst this delay is regrettable, it has allowed us to develop the design to enable the works required to be undertaken without the need to decant tenants, reducing the inconvenience and disruption, and significantly reducing costs to the Housing Revenue Account. Works to the



smaller blocks includes replacement of the windows, replacement cladding and improved insulation and new heating systems.

Works also include the installation of Ground-source Heat Pumps to provide heating and hot water. This is being undertaken as part of a feasibility test in the town, to determine if this solution can be rolled out to other blocks subject to suitable funding being available. The contract has been tendered and we are hoping to commence works on site shortly.

The remaining 140 flats will be undertaken over the following 8 years subject to available funding.

**6. Councillor Cross to ask the Leader of the Council:  
Cost of Living Support**

Many residents are struggling with the cost of living crisis in Reading. Can the Leader of the Council please provide a summary of the actions that the Council has taken to provide households with financial support and other forms of assistance in these difficult times; and what further steps does the Council plan to take over the coming year?

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

Reading has, within a small geographic area, not only some of the most affluent neighbourhoods in the whole of the Thames Valley, but also some of the most deprived. We are lucky to live in a thriving town, but we cannot underestimate the likely negative effect of the cost-of-living crisis across the borough and, especially, on many of our low-income residents.

The Council's initial fast response to the crisis has been focused on the wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents and on enabling businesses and local voluntary and community organisations to continue to operate effectively. Central to achieving this aim is ensuring that our residents, businesses, and local organisations have easy access to the support and advice that is available to them.

Officers within the Council have quickly established a new Cost of Living Tasking & Finish Group which meets weekly and will co-ordinate our activities over the coming months to ensure that our residents are able to access all the support that is available to them. This Group reports directly to the Council's Corporate Management Team who will be updating myself and lead councillors on a regular basis. In addition, this group will also investigate and implement any new support that comes available, as well as using local data and intelligence from council services and our partners across the borough to understand where any specific pressures are building.

I would recommend that anyone wanting to find out what support is available visits the Money Matters / Cost of Living page on our website. This includes all the latest information on the advice and support available to residents, businesses, and local voluntary and community organisations. It includes specific advice on income and benefits, support with food and clothing, help with finding employment, and managing your health and wellbeing, and it will continue to grow as the situation and our response, unfolds.

We will also be ensuring that we clearly communicate where people can find this advice and support, including updates via social media and more traditional posters and leaflets in places like GP surgeries, libraries, and community centres.

As a Council, we recognise the important contribution that is made by our partners within the voluntary and community sector to people who are struggling with their cost of living, and this is why we have continued to commit resources to commission direct support for this.

I am proud that we have, during financially challenging times, been able to increase our investment in the voluntary sector through the Closing the Gap commissioning process to over £1m per annum, and particularly to have maintained the level of support we provide to people at risk of poverty.

From 1<sup>st</sup> November, new commissioned services will provide money management, welfare advice, wellbeing, and mental health support within the borough. Their services will make a significant contribution to ameliorating the impact of poverty in the town.

In addition to this direct support, Citizens Advice Reading are continuing to deliver the utilities scheme, which offers emergency energy vouchers, energy saving advice and energy packs.

In terms of more direct support from the Council, we have utilised approximately £290,000 available from the Household Support Fund allocation between April and October 2022 to respond to cost-of-living pressures. Some of this funding is being used to provide an additional £49 Energy Voucher to the same families and care leavers who were provided with this voucher earlier in the year (this includes those with school age children eligible for Pupil Premium Free School Meals, vulnerable children up to nursery age, and approximately 140 care leavers). Letters on how to access these vouchers have already begun to be delivered to eligible residents.

The remaining funding is being used to provide grants for food support for vulnerable families and individuals, winter clothing and warmth support for children and young people, carers, people with disabilities and the homeless, and refugees. This includes a further £40,000 of direct funding for Reading foodbanks.

The Council has utilised its Household Support Fund allocation for October 2022 to April 2023 to support approximately 8,000 households with additional direct financial support of between £100 and £650 to assist with an increased cost of living. Within this, we are providing:

- Cost of Living Vouchers of £125 to approximately 3,800 families and young people, including families with school age children eligible for Pupil Premium Free School Meals, vulnerable children up to nursery age, and care leavers.
- Cost of Living Vouchers of £100 per household to approximately 4,200 older people, including older people receiving the state pension who are on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) or in receipt of housing benefit, and older people receiving the state pension who are in receipt of pension credit or savings credit and not on CTRS.
- Additional to the vouchers listed above, Cost of Living payments for approximately 350 residents receiving Housing Benefit and on CTRS but no other Department for Work and Pensions benefit will be provided with a £650 payment.
- £25 emergency energy vouchers to residents in Council housing who experience issues with their heating and hot water to fund the use of electric heaters whilst the issues

are resolved.

It is almost certain that the cost-of-living experiences of many will change as we move through the winter months. Living costs are likely to continue to rise as inflationary pressures continue. This will require the Council to continually monitor the situation in our communities and adapt its support and advice to protect those most at need.

We will continue to work with our partners across the borough - including our schools, health providers, and community leaders - and listen to their experiences and understanding of how the crisis is affecting people within the borough.

**7. Councillor Carnell to ask the Lead Councillor for Climate Change & Transport:  
Henley Road/Caversham Lakes Junction**

The junction on the Henley Road, where traffic coming from Caversham and wider Reading, turns right for Caversham Lakes is increasingly becoming an accident hotspot. Residents tell us they see regular collisions, some serious, and near misses are an almost daily occurrence. The junction is on the border between Reading and South Oxfordshire. Could the Lead Councillor give me any accident data the Council holds regarding the area around the junction? Could the Lead Councillor also advise me, and the people of Caversham, what actions the Council, working in collaboration with South Oxfordshire Council, will take to make the junction safer?

**REPLY** by Councillor Page Lead Councillor for Climate Change & Transport:

I thank Councillor Carnell for his question.

Reading Borough Council and Thames Valley Police have a close working relationship regarding incidents on the highway involving any casualties. Where serious incidents occur, or involve fatalities, Council officers are often involved in aspects of the Police investigation process.

The Council also receives monthly, retrospective, Police data on incidents involving casualties, which is analysed and may be referred to in some later committee reports.

The Council reviews the results of this Police supplied data to consider whether there are any patterns, or specific factors/causes, that could be addressed by reasonable engineering solutions or highway alterations.

It would not be appropriate, nor permissible, for the Council to share or comment on details and causations of any incidents in a public forum, due to the sensitive information that is involved and the potential for upset that could be caused to relatives and friends of those persons involved.

However, I am advised by our highways officers that a review of the latest 3 year period of data supplied (up to the end of May 2022) shows there has been 1 incident recorded at this junction, which was recorded with a severity of 'slight' - the severity levels being slight, serious or fatal.

I am also pleased to confirm that, following RBC representations and many other objections, South Oxfordshire District Council has recently refused the application for further recreational, leisure and sporting uses at Caversham Lakes. Reading Borough Council Planning Officers provided comments to South Oxfordshire in relation to this proposal and these were reported to and agreed by our Planning Applications Committee on 20th July 2022. These

comments included an objection to South Oxfordshire on highway safety grounds given the insufficient information that had been provided by the applicant. The full reasons for the refusal are appended below.

Highways matters, including road safety, are the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council which consistently, and largely, ignores the concerns of the southern area of the county surrounding Reading, notwithstanding our best endeavours to engage with them.

ENDS

### **Application P/22/S1691/FUL**

Decision - Refusal of Planning Permission on 7th October 2022:

The full extent of the ecological impacts arising from the land clearance and other works associated with the implementation of the unauthorised change of use have not been adequately assessed within the supporting ecological appraisal and the document does not adequately establish the baseline for the assessment. The District Council considers that the unauthorised development and all associated activities have resulted in a net loss for biodiversity and the harm identified by the Council would not be outweighed by public benefits. The proposal is contrary to Policies ENV2 and ENV3 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Insufficient information has been submitted with the planning application to enable the highways, traffic and transportation implications of the proposed development to be fully assessed. The proposal does not demonstrate that the traffic likely to be generated by the proposed use and its ancillary activities can be safely accommodated by the existing road network, without adverse impacts upon highway safety. The proposal is contrary to Policies TRANS4 and TRANS5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposed development would increase the number of vehicular movements along the site access road, which does not contain adequate provision for pedestrians. As significant parts of the proposed improvement works are on land outside the applicant's control, and there is no guarantee that consent for these would be forthcoming, the proposal fails to demonstrate a safe and convenient access route, contrary to Policies TRANS4 and TRANS5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 and the National Planning Policy Framework.