

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

13 MARCH 2023

Petition from Sarah Magon:

Tackling Wokingham Road rubbish

Opposite Alfred Sutton primary school waste is out of control. Often trade waste bins are overflowing and spilling out onto the road. The council's bag collection system isn't working well so waste from flats above the shops piles up. Despite the new bollards the area around the pedestrian crossing opposite the Crescent Road junction is chaotic. Reading Council please can you tackle these issues.

RESPONSE by Councillor Rowland (Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety):

I would like to thank Ms. Magon and those that signed the petition for their community concern, and for the opportunity to provide an overview of the work that our Neighborhood Services Teams are currently undertaking, and have planned, to address the issues experienced outside of retail premises on the Wokingham Road, and indeed in similar retail centres around the town.

Environmental Enforcement:

Over the winter season, all business properties on the Wokingham Road have been visited to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for the collection and disposal of waste. These inspections were completed under S.34 of the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990, by our Environmental Enforcement Team.

Each business was given time to provide evidence of their waste arrangements, to satisfy legislative requirements.

As a result of inaction by some of these shops, seven business owners were issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN), requiring a response prior to 17th February.

One of the businesses paid their FPN but have to date failed to provide the required evidence of appropriate waste arrangements and therefore remain subject to escalating Enforcement action. The other six businesses have been referred to the Council's Legal Services Team to progress further prosecution action.

All waste bins belonging to those businesses that did engage meaningfully in the process of inspection have been labelled to indicate responsibility/ownership and aid future dialogue/inspection.

A regular program of follow up inspections on the Wokingham Road is currently taking place twice per week and any business that fails to adequately contain their waste will be served an improvement notice, and failure to comply with these notices may lead to issuance of a FPN under S.47 of the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990.

Additionally, the Environmental Enforcement Team regularly conduct inspections of excess waste deposited around public bins. Where evidence attributing the waste to a named individual or business premise can be found, the team may take enforcement action in the form of a fixed penalty notice and/or prosecution.

Where there is a pattern of behaviour or recurrence of issues in a specific location, the team may choose to erect signage to act as a deterrent to the behaviour. This signage advises of the offence and the penalties that those that engage in the activity of Fly-tipping may face. New stickers have been designed to be placed on litter bins as a deterrent for leaving rubbish next to public litter bins.

The team have printed educational material that is shared with residents to encourage responsible waste disposal behaviours such as using household waste bins, bags as supplied or taking excess rubbish to the tip. Recycling guides have been translated into multiple languages including Romanian, Polish and Nepalese. In a diverse town such as Reading, multiple language communications are essential and something we are looking to expand further.

Highway Implications:

The issues that you have raised regarding Highway implications and public safety concerns have been raised with the Council's Highways Maintenance & Traffic Services Manager.

The Council's Highway Inspectors are currently conducting a series of inspection visits along the Wokingham Road. These inspections will seek to identify any obstruction of the highway, both footpath and roadway. Any party found to be responsible for placing obstructions on the highway will be the subject of enforcement action.

Any proposed changes to existing on-street parking arrangements would require the underlying Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to be modified, with statutory consultation and reporting processes followed.

This wider intervention work along the Wokingham Road is leading to a review of existing safety measures, such as bollards and barriers to ensure their effectiveness, alongside the clearance of temporary infrastructure from outside retail premises, aimed at allowing more effective cleansing of the area by street sweepers.

Waste collections:

Reading Borough Council has a small number of Trade Waste arrangements on the Wokingham Road and each of these has been reviewed to ensure that the collection frequency is adequate to prevent excess waste from arising. This is the same action that we are asking from arrangements with third-party refuse removal suppliers.

Domestic waste collections take place weekly on a Tuesday, with residents instructed to place their household waste, in provided white refuse sacks, in designated areas the evening before or on the morning of collection. All residential properties have been written to by the Environmental Enforcement Team to remind them of their responsibility to present their bagged waste appropriately for collection. Ultimately, given the complexity of the shop and residential mix in the area, this body of work may lead to modify and align residential collections in terms of collection locations, limited timing for the presentation of rubbish and how often collections need to be.

Future implications:

Although your petition is in respect of the Wokingham Road retail shop area, the work we are undertaking there is part of a much wider body of work that our Waste Services Enforcement and Street Cleansing teams are working on retail shop areas throughout the town where there are issues with non-compliance in rubbish collection and complex situations with residences above shops. Concurrently, over the winter, the team has stepped up trade waste duty of care inspections under S34 of the Environmental Protection

Act 1990 at businesses along Whitley Street, Pell Street, Basingstoke Road, London Street and the Oxford Road.

Recently, Battle ward Labour Councillors initiated a multi-department, senior officer walk-about with Councillors from Coley and Abbey ward along the Oxford Road to ensure that many of the same complex issues that exist along that route are addressed.

As a result of that work, we are now in the process of scheduling a review with APSE (the Association for Public Service Excellence), to undertake a broader and more comprehensive study of how we can best improve retail areas throughout the town with similar challenges to the Wokingham Rd. This study will use an area of the Oxford Road as an exemplar model and will ultimately seek to advise a plan that can be repeated and applied in other retail areas throughout the town. The individual shops in these secondary retail areas have a duty to cooperate with the Council in following the rules of basic rubbish collection in their areas. In working together with the Council, I feel positive that we will all find a better environment and shop owners will see improved retail success. This work that we are undertaking along the Wokingham Road and in these secondary retail centres are all embedded within the Council's Corporate Plan for Healthier Environments, Thriving Communities, and a more Inclusive Economy for all.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 1

Ann Dally to ask the Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health:

Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health

As Councillors may be aware the *Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health* (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/prevention-concordat-for-better-mental-health>) is underpinned by a prevention-focused holistic approach to improving our resident's mental health, which in turn contributes to a fairer and more equitable society.

The Concordat emphasises collaborative cross-sector working to deliver the best evidenced-based practise to support wellbeing and good mental health within the whole population, for those at greater risk and for those currently receiving treatment. Could you tell us what plans have been made for Reading Borough Council to sign up to the updated *Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health*, with its commitment to promote good mental health for all by strengthening protective influences while reducing risk factors?

REPLY by Councillor McEwan (Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health):

Reading Brough Council Public Health have been working to progress and refine the approach to a range of Public Mental Health and Prevention related agendas including the Prevention Concordat.

Internal discussions and scoping of the Public Mental Health agenda as a core part of local works, and consideration of the "refreshed" Prevention Concordat opportunity was underway from mid-2022. Alongside this a Mental Health Needs Assessment is being developed to inform local Mental Health service offers, including the local Public Mental Health approach.

Significant focus for the prevention agenda and changes in the national Mental Health and Prevention agenda was provided by works and collaborations flowing from the Pan-Berkshire Suicide Prevention (SP) Partnership across 2022.

In December 2022 the Pan Berkshire Suicide Prevention Partnership published a Consultation Draft of the refreshed Pan Berkshire SP Strategy. One element of this set out the potential for local areas to consider signing up to the Prevention Concordat as a supportive Public Mental Health offer, and following on from conversations with the Berkshire West Suicide Prevention lead a series of initial engagement events focussing on the Prevention Concordat and broader Public Mental Health agenda were developed. The session details and themes are set out below:

- **Session i: Feb 23rd - Exploring the Updated Concordat**
- **Session ii: March 9th - Case studies and best practice in supporting the Prevention Concordat**
- **Session iii March 29th - Workshop on engaging with the Concordat process - what is involved? what is the process? - challenges and learning**

With additional support from the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities regional team, the Berkshire West Hub are facilitating these initial conversations and will be providing support for local areas that might wish to explore the opportunities presented either collectively as a community of practice or as standalone initiatives.

Reading Brough Council Public Health are actively participating in these discussions and have also had side conversations to explore the details of the refreshed Prevention Concordat and evolution with the wider local and regional Public Mental health agenda. Public Health will continue to consider the options for engagement, challenges and resource implications and is actively engaged in the Berkshire West-led process, given its immediate and obvious value in supporting and framing local works.

COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor Thompson to ask the Lead Councillor for Children:

Occupational Therapy for Children

Parents in Tilehurst are very concerned at the lack of occupational therapists to provide much-needed services as part of their children's Education, Health and Care plans. We appreciate that there is a severe shortage of OTs in the UK at this time, but would like to know what is being done to ensure provision of occupational therapy for children in Reading?

REPLY by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Children):

I would like to thank Councillor Thompson for her question about such an important issue. Councillor Thompson is right to make reference to the national shortage of occupational therapists (OTs) which is part of the country's health and social care staffing crisis. Occupational Therapists were added to the Home Office 'shortage occupation list' in 2019 but the fundamental problem, like so many health and care roles, is that we are not training enough people to fulfil need.

The government's response to the growing health and care workforce crisis has been woeful but the question rightly asks what we are doing in Reading to address the issue. Improving recruitment and retention of Children's OTs is a priority with Reading's SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Action Plan. This is a partnership action plan which includes the NHS.

Whether the delays are caused by shortage in the NHS or social care will depend on the circumstances of Cllr Thompson's constituents. The Children with Disability Occupational Therapy (OT) service within Brighter Futures for Children's Children Social Care contribute towards EHC Plans where the young person is known to Social Care. All schools (both special and mainstream) receive OT support within the school environment for children with an EHC Plan, or those applying for one, via Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Children and Young People's Integrated Therapy service (CYPIT) team.

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has reported Occupational Therapist recruitment challenges both nationally and locally. BfFC are working at a strategic level with colleagues in the Health Service through the local Berkshire Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Partnership to secure improvements in the delivery of occupational therapy for all children with EHC Plans. In the meantime, the BfFC SEND Team are actively supporting our health colleagues to identify Occupational Therapists in private practice who could be commissioned to meet gaps. Shortages of Occupational Therapists nationally and locally has also reduced availability of the private market. BfFC will continue to work with colleagues in the NHS to resolve short-term and longer-term pressures in OT provision.