

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

11 MARCH 2024

COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health:

Improving Reading's Teeth

Reading is a dental desert. Too many Reading residents can't get an NHS dentist.

People are left in pain or if they can afford it having to pay a large private dental bill in a cost-of-living crisis. Children and others entitled to free dental care aren't able to get it. The Conservative government has been asleep at the wheel.

Green campaigner Kate Nikulina submitted a petition on this last year.

According to the minutes of the Council's Health & Wellbeing Board from 2018 Reading Borough Council should be taking the lead on developing an oral health strategy.

Please can the Lead Councillor update me on progress producing this strategy and improving the town's teeth?

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

Since the petition about this was submitted to Council in October 2023 the situation around the oral health strategy has not changed. The Public Health and Wellbeing team currently have limited capacity to progress this prevention work. However Oral Health is integrated within several other existing priorities and areas of work, for example work with ageing populations, awareness raising in schools around the risks of consumption of sugar linked with nutrition and a whole systems approach to healthy weight.

It is important to note that prevention activity like the Oral Health Strategy is separate to the matter of dental care provision which is outside the remit of the Council. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) take the lead on this work and would be best placed to comment further on dental provision. With this in mind, I am expecting an update from the ICB on Dental Services to our next ACE Committee meeting on 20 March 2024.