

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 24 JUNE 2025

Present: Councillor Mpofu-Coles (Mayor);

Councillors Gittings (Deputy Mayor), Asare, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Cresswell, Cross, Davies, Dennis, Eden, Edwards, Emberson, Ennis, Griffith, Goss, Hacker, Hornsby-Smith, Juthani, Keane, Keeping, Lanzoni, Leng, Lovelock, Magon, McCann, McElroy, McEwan, McGoldrick, McGrother, Mitchell, Moore, Naz, Nikulina, O'Connell, Rowland, R Singh, DP Singh, Stevens, Tarar, Terry, Thompson, White, Williams, Woodward and Yeo

Apologies: Councillors Gavin and Hoskin

15. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following announcement:

On behalf of the Council and the people of Reading I wish to express our heartfelt condolences to the people of India, the Indian community in Reading and all those affected by the tragic plane crash in Ahmedabad.

16. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

17. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

	Questioner	Subject	Answer
1.	Cllr R Singh	Street Cleaning	Cllr Rowland
2.	Cllr R Singh	Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse	Cllr Griffith
3.	Cllr O'Connell	Trans Rights and Gender Policing	Cllr Terry
4.	Cllr Moore	Trans Rights and Data Management	Cllr Terry
5.	Cllr Thompson	Engaging with Trans-Led Organisations	Cllr Terry
6.	Cllr Thompson	Homes for Reading	Cllr Yeo
7.	Cllr White	Welcome to Reading	Cllr Terry
8.	Cllr White	Council Spend on Free Food and Alcohol at AGM	Cllr Terry
9.	Cllr White	Winter Fuel Payments U-Turn	Cllr Terry

As there was insufficient time, pursuant to Standing Orders 10(4), written replies to Questions 6-9 above would be provided in accordance with Standing Order 11(3).

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 24 JUNE 2025

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

18. **RBC CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

Further to Minute 32 of the meeting of Council held on 28 January 2025, the Chief Executive submitted a report on the setting up of an independently chaired Children's Services Improvement Board as part of the transfer of Children's Services from Brighter Futures for Children Limited (BFfC) to being provided in-house by the Council. Draft Term of Reference for the Board were attached to the report at Appendix 1 and a Governance Framework at Appendix 2.

The report noted that the Board would provide advice and support to the delivery of BFfC's significant transformation programme in place to mitigate demand and manage cost pressures, as well as the action plan to address issues identified in the 2024 inspection of Children's Services. The findings of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection of the multi-agency response to children who were victims of domestic abuse in Reading, which had taken place in March 2025 and been published on 6 May 2025, further reinforced the need for an Improvement Board to be established.

The report set out the proposed terms of reference for the Improvement Board, its constituent members, its governance, reporting arrangements, and the process and timeline to recruit the Independent Chair.

The following motion was moved by Councillor Terry and seconded by Councillor Griffith and CARRIED:

Resolved –

- (1) That the draft Terms of Reference for the Children's Services Improvement Board as attached at Appendix 1 be agreed;**
- (2) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Lead Councillor for Children's Services be authorised to appoint an Independent Chair of the Improvement Board following a member appointment panel;**
- (3) That the proposed governance structure for reporting, as set out in Appendix 2, be agreed.**

19. **ADDRESSING DELAYS TO DRIVING TESTS**

Pursuant to Notice, a motion was moved by Councillor Moore and seconded by Councillor Thompson.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Ennis and seconded by Councillor Woodward and CARRIED:

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 24 JUNE 2025

'Delete all after 'This Council notes' and insert:

- That learner drivers in Reading and across the country have faced unacceptably long delays in securing driving test appointments for a number of years due to the inactivity and lack of interest in supporting learner drivers from the previous Conservative Government, with average waiting times far exceeding the DVSA's target of nine weeks.
- This has caused significant distress and disruption to young people, students, apprentices, and those seeking employment who rely on obtaining a driving licence for work or education.
- This Council welcomes and places on record their thanks for our three Labour Members of Parliament in successfully campaigning to obtain a new permanent and expanded driving test centre at Pacific House, South Reading
- That this new Labour Government has taken urgent action to bring down waiting times for practical driving tests and ensure fair access for all learners with plans to increase driving test capacity and make available an additional 10.000 tests per month at centres across the country as well as cracking down in test-buying bots.
- That the practice of third-party software companies bulk-booking or reselling test slots is being addressed and this will benefit learner drivers in Reading and elsewhere
- That local young people in Reading will benefit from the new test centre and this will create advantages for education, employment, and social mobility.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Work with the Labour Government and the Department for Transport to maintain and develop the clear action plan to reduce waiting times for driving tests nationwide, specifically in Reading.
2. Request the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, and to Reading's Members of Parliament, thanking them for taking immediate steps to resolve this Conservative caused crisis for learner drivers.
3. Promote awareness of this issue and achievement of the new Driving Test Centre in Reading locally and thank the local Labour MPs for campaign for fair access to driving tests for all.'

The amended substantive motion was then put to the vote and CARRIED as follows:

Resolved -

This Council notes:

- **That learner drivers in Reading and across the country have faced unacceptably long delays in securing driving test appointments for a number of years due to the inactivity and lack of interest in supporting learner drivers from the previous Conservative Government, with average waiting times far exceeding the DVSA's target of nine weeks.**
- **This has caused significant distress and disruption to young people, students, apprentices, and those seeking employment who rely on obtaining a driving licence for work or education.**

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 24 JUNE 2025

- **This Council welcomes and places on record their thanks for our three Labour Members of Parliament in successfully campaigning to obtain a new permanent and expanded driving test centre at Pacific House, South Reading**
- **That this new Labour Government has taken urgent action to bring down waiting times for practical driving tests and ensure fair access for all learners with plans to increase driving test capacity and make available an additional 10.000 tests per month at centres across the country as well as cracking down in test-buying bots.**
- **That the practice of third-party software companies bulk-booking or reselling test slots is being addressed and this will benefit learner drivers in Reading and elsewhere**
- **That local young people in Reading will benefit from the new test centre and this will create advantages for education, employment, and social mobility.**

This Council therefore resolves to:

- 1. Work with the Labour Government and the Department for Transport to maintain and develop the clear action plan to reduce waiting times for driving tests nationwide, specifically in Reading.**
- 2. Request the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, and to Reading's Members of Parliament, thanking them for taking immediate steps to resolve this Conservative caused crisis for learner drivers.**
- 3. Promote awareness of this issue and achievement of the new Driving Test Centre in Reading locally and thank the local Labour MPs for campaign for fair access to driving tests for all.**

20. CONTRIBUTION TO READING OF SIR JOHN MADEJSKI AND SUPPORTERS TRUST AT READING

The following motion was moved by Councillor Ennis and seconded by Councillor Barnett-Ward and CARRIED:

Resolved –

This Council is pleased that the ownership of Reading Football Club has been secured and we place on record our thanks and appreciation to the supporters, local MPs and organisations, such as the Sell Before We Dai campaign, led by Caroline Parker and Sarah Turner, Chair of STAR. It is their sheer commitment and energy that has saved our football club and it is right and fitting that we have a civic reception for the leaders of the campaign to save Reading Football Club as a thanks from the people of Reading.

We should also place on record our thanks to Sir John Madejski, a Freeman of the Borough, for his philanthropic work over the decades to make Reading a better place. Reading has benefitted from the work and generosity of Sir John Madejski with the building of the new football stadium in 1998, the establishment of the John Madejski gallery at the Reading museum in 1999 and the creation of the John Madejski Academy in 2006.

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - 24 JUNE 2025

This Council notes with dismay the announcement by the Greenshaw Trust's to remove Sir John's name from the Academy that he funded and of which he is rightly proud. It strongly disapproves of this attempt to airbrush from history the contribution to Reading of Sir John Madejski and resolves to seek alternative means by which his legacy to our town can be preserved.

(The meeting closed at 8.30 pm)