

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

16 SEPTEMBER 2026

PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 1

Dr Hirantha to ask the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport:

Repairing Potholes and Damaged Roads

When does Reading Borough Council plan to repair the potholes and damaged roads across Reading, including the severely damaged section on Castle Street near the Council offices? These road defects are causing damage to tyres, suspension, and other vehicle components, resulting in increased repair and maintenance costs for motorists. What is the timeline for these repairs, and what criteria are used to prioritise road maintenance?

REPLY by Councillor Ennis (Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport):

I thank Dr Hirantha for this question and can proudly report that the Council has invested over £17m of our own capital funding since 2020/21 financial year to bring our ageing public highway network into an acceptable and steady state condition, which helps to reduce the number of potholes forming in the first place.

Over 900 residential roads have been resurfaced during this period and over 300 sections of main roads with another 19 sections currently been resurfaced.

This has seen a significant improvement in our unclassified residential roads condition from 35% 'Green / Good' condition in 2019/20 to 79% 'Green / Good' condition today, with our Classified 'main' roads in a steady state of 5%, which is the condition where we would consider them for resurfacing programmes.

I can also report that pothole numbers have also reduced significantly Boroughwide from over 5,000 in 2019 to 1,492 last year.

With regard to Castle Street, I can confirm that the road is regularly inspected and although showing signs of light scabbing in localised areas, there are currently no defects that meet the Council's investigatory level for action at this time.

Please be assured that any defect that warrants action will be addressed by the Highways Team and that Castle Street remains on our list for future road resurfacing and will be considered along with all the other high-priority sites, as we need to ensure that the roads with the highest risk are treated first.

Regarding prioritisation of road resurfacing, all roads are surveyed in accordance with UKPMS inspection regime and scoring criteria and those with the highest scores are prioritised for treatment. Classified 'Main' Roads receive an annual SCANNER survey, as well as a PAS2161 survey, with Unclassified 'Local' Residential Roads receive a visual inspection and scored accordingly.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 2

Dr Hirantha to ask the Leader of the Council:

Council Tax

Council Tax has continued to increase, yet many residents do not feel they are receiving value for the money they pay. How does the Council justify these increases, and what measurable improvements in local services have been delivered to residents as a result of the additional Council Tax revenue?

REPLY by Councillor Terry (Leader of the Council):

The decision to increase Council Tax is always difficult but is necessary if we are to protect those front-line services relied on by the people of Reading.

Most of the increase was put into supporting our most vulnerable residents who need support from our Adult and Children's Social Care services. Whilst this can fluctuate from year to year, around 70% of the council budget is spent on these services.

Despite the fact that most Council Tax payers in Reading are not in receipt of Children's or Adults social care support, those 2 services were ranked at number 1 and number 3 in the list of priority services in last years' budget consultation.

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s38506/Budget%20MTFS%20Report.pdf>

I hope Dr Hirantha agrees with me, and with the people who completed the survey, that those vulnerable residents need and deserve our continued support.

However, I am also acutely conscious that many of our residents are struggling financially. That is why we provide support to over 7,200 households through our Local Council Tax Support scheme, and why I have asked officers to bring forward proposals to simplify the scheme for working-age households to make it easier for residents to get the support they need.

This Council delivers a huge range of services with the Council Tax our residents pay. Our Council Plan sets out the improvements that we plan to make over the next few years, as well as some of our many achievements, including:

- A substantial road resurfacing programme, with 60 major roads resurfaced last year
- Protecting 2 weekly bin collections
- Tackling litter & fly Tipping enforcement with more patrols and on the spot fines
- Over £1.1m invested in our playgrounds
- Investing £1.3m into a fleet of 24 new electric buses

- Opening our brand new Central Library here in the civic centre, with construction underway for the Hexagon Theatre Studio – in total more than £33m has been invested in these improvements
- Delivered over 150 new homes under the Local Authority New Build scheme
- Invested £1.7m in 3 new children's homes
- Delivering the Public Spaces Protection Order tackling illegal ebikes/scooters, and other anti-social behaviours together with the Police

These are some of the improvements being made on top of delivering everyday services. I have attached to the answer the details from the 'Your Services' section of the Council Plan. As you can see the range, and quantity of services is significant. As with people's everyday budgets, the council's budget each year has to allow for inflationary and contractual cost increases, fuel and energy costs, pay increases.

The need to increase Council Tax was set out in detail across more than 200 pages of budget papers that were presented to Budget Council in February. You can find it here: <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s38506/Budget%20MTFS%20Report.pdf>

I won't repeat all of that now, but I do recommend the papers as a comprehensive assessment of the Council's finances, and why the Council Tax increase was necessary.

Council Tax in Reading is lower than the average household bill across the Berkshire authorities, but despite that we have managed to avoid the financial difficulties experienced in Slough, West Berkshire and Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM).

Those 3 Council's have had to get permission to borrow more than £121m this year, just to set a balanced budget. And previous decisions made by RBWM to keep Council Tax artificially low led to them imposing a 7.49% increase this year, on top of an 8.99% increase the previous year.

We haven't had to do that in Reading.

Your services (2025)

Your council is proud to deliver a wide range of services for our town, including:

Helping those who are older or living with disability, or physical or mental illness, to maintain their independence and well-being. This includes residential and nursing care, supported living, care at home, and preventative services.

In 2025 we provided support to **1,167** residents, with **491** going on to receive long-term support. This included **121** new admissions to nursing or residential care.

Ensuring we have the right school places to meet the needs of our population, including provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Supporting 2,088 children and young people (aged 0-25) with special educational needs and disabilities with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP).

Providing fantastic culture and leisure opportunities, including loaning out **484,796 books** last year through our libraries and receiving **1,542,342 visits to our leisure centres**.

Working with children and families who need support and protecting vulnerable children from harm. Across the year we delivered services to **1,938** children through our early years and youth work. Our children's social care teams work with **3,533** children and undertook over **1,100** child protection enquiries last year resulting in **624** children being placed on a protection plan. We have **294** children in our care, mostly in fostering placements.

Providing high quality education and training for nearly **1,510 adults a year across 302 courses through New Directions College**.

Providing a Public Health and well-being service to help prevent and reduce health inequalities, delivering a range of public health services, including sexual health services and services aimed at reducing drug and alcohol misuse.

Processing over 1,000 planning applications a year, including major developments.

Co-ordinating and influencing the delivery of strategic infrastructure to meet Reading's needs and accommodate its growth.

Supporting thousands of families to say goodbye to loved ones through our burials and cremation service and **presenting 2,194 people with their new British Citizenship certificates**.

Providing Housing Benefit and Council Tax support and delivering a broad range of advice and support for residents and businesses experiencing financial difficulties, in conjunction with our voluntary and community sector partners.

Managing important internal functions, including the Council's finances, legal processes, and contracts with suppliers, ensuring that the Council as an organisation runs efficiently and effectively.

Providing Town Centre Services to make it cleaner and safer for residents and visitors, working closely with the Police and the Business Improvement District.

Managing traffic, parking and public transport services across the town and delivering improvements to roads, cycling, and walking infrastructure.

Maintaining 55 parks and open spaces and 58 play facilities for Reading's children – mowing the grass, tending plants and trees, maintaining play equipment, protecting our nature reserves, and maximising rewilding and biodiversity in our parks.

Working with key stakeholders through the Water Safety Partnership to make safety improvements to our waterways.

Looking after streets and neighbourhoods, emptying **6,851,873** bins last year and maintaining **18,500** streetlights and illuminated signs.

Processing over **59,800 tonnes of household waste** a year, including 10,000 tonnes of kerbside mixed dry recycling, 5,400 tonnes of garden waste, and 7,000 tonnes of food waste.

Providing nearly 7,000 affordable, good quality Council-owned homes to tenants and providing housing advice and support to prevent and relieve homelessness to over 627 households in 2025.

Providing electoral registration services, **registering 15,863 people to vote.**

Responding to 415,370 enquiries a year through our Customer Fulfilment Centre, from Council Tax enquiries to housing repairs.

Administering important life events with **8,942** registrations for births, deaths, and marriages last year.

Supporting 175 apprentices and 36 work experience students in 2025 on our corporate programme.

In partnership with health and the voluntary sector delivering **1,794 NHS Health Checks in the community.**

Providing temporary accommodation for 484 households.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 3

Nigel Keeble to ask the Lead Councillor for Education:

Whitley Park Primary and Nursery School – Memorial Benches

With the Whitley Park Primary and Nursery School redevelopment now underway, can the Council confirm the current status and future plans for the memorial and donated benches that were previously located on the site?

Several of these benches were originally gifted by Friends of WP, and others were installed in memory of individuals who have passed away — including the bench dedicated to The Late Cllr. Jim Hanley, who died in February 2011.

Given that the nursery was completed in 2012 and the area is now being redeveloped again, can the Council provide assurance that these benches have been safely stored, will be reinstated, or that families and donors will be contacted before any permanent decisions are made?

REPLY by Councillor Eden (Lead Councillor for Education):

Thank you for this question, it is one that I am very pleased has been raised as I personally remember Cllr Jim Hanley with great fondness, I learnt a lot from him as my ward colleague and more widely he was a very much respected and liked Whitley councillor. I know that the other memorial benches also commemorate much loved local people, so it's important to be able to reassure people about these benches

The memorial and donated benches have not been moved as part of the works carried out on the school site this summer. As part of works scheduled for next year, it is proposed that ten benches be repositioned slightly further back in the same location and order to align with the new line of asphalt. The three benches closest to the office will remain in their current locations, including the memorial bench dedicated to Cllr Hanley.

Should a further phase of works be carried out in 2028, the locations of the benches may be reviewed and, if deemed necessary, they may be relocated to a suitable alternative location within the site. In that instance, any proposed relocations will be discussed and agreed with the school in advance.