

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE

18 NOVEMBER 2019

Petition presented by Carol Froud:

Petition Requesting the Council to Continue to Guarantee Swimming Concessions for Retired People

Most Council Tax payers are aware that Reading Borough Council are investigating the options of selecting a 'partner' to manage our leisure centres, to include 'The Meadway'. This petition is prompted by concerns raised by, and for, our elderly residents; their concerns are that this is their primary access to exercise and social interaction and they fear losing it.

We ask our Council to guarantee continued support for concessionary swimming for older people, and to ensure that this is written into any contract with 'Partner' or 'Management Companies', thus allowing retired residents to continue this valuable exercise and access to social interaction.

RESPONSE by Councillor Hoskin (Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing & Sport):

Thank you to Ms Froud for submitting this petition, which calls on the Council to guarantee support for concessionary swimming for older people and ensure it is written into any contract.

Concessionary access to sport and leisure facilities for target groups is very important to this council as we strive to support Reading people to lead healthier and happier lives. We're proud of our record of maintaining generous concessionary schemes in the face of huge government cuts to the council's budgets since 2010.

Furthermore, as a key part of increasing take up in sports and leisure activity in our town, the Council is fully committed to investing in and delivering modern sports facilities in Reading.

In January 2019, the council published its specification for the leisure contract which includes major investment in leisure facilities and two new swimming pools for our town.

Within this potential bidders have been asked to include:

- promotional offers and concessionary pricing for each of the council's key target groups.

The council has defined these groups as including those aged 60+ years old. Potential bidders have been asked to identify and implement a scheme that will ensure that disadvantaged, vulnerable, or similar groups are able and encouraged to access facilities as effectively as the current arrangements. Indeed, we are looking for schemes that will increase access and participation amongst groups including older people.

The specification also included the introduction of membership and customer schemes allowing access to all Council facilities.

Bids have been received and once these have been assessed, a report on the next stages of the process including recommendations will be made to this Committee. It is expected that a potential contract start date will be in early 2020.

Increasing access and participation in leisure, sport and physical activity is a particular passion of mine and to this end we are currently reviewing our public health budgets to see whether, despite government cuts, we can redirect some spend to invest in exactly this area.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 1

Richard Stainthorp to ask the Lead Councillor for Education:

Ofsted Framework

Can the Lead Councillor for Education please update me on what the recent changes to the Ofsted framework mean for Reading schools?

REPLY by Councillor Pearce (Lead Councillor for Education):

The Ofsted framework has yet again recently been changed. The changes include changes to the timings of visits, changes to the judging criteria, different use of data as well as some more specific requirements.

These changes undoubtedly add yet again to teacher workload, or as the National Education Union general secretary recently said will see teachers "drowning in Ofsted workload tsunami".

Some of the specific changes will mean that secondary schools can no longer achieve an Outstanding grade if they offer a 3 year Key stage 4 or GCSE. So we now have Ofsted, supposedly non-political, telling schools what their curriculum must be. This has led to wildly inconsistent reports under the new framework so far that appear incredibly subjective.

The framework changes will undoubtedly mean some of our schools here in Reading see changes in their categorisation, but Brighter Futures for Children have already been working with schools to prepare for the new framework.

Ofsted needs drastic reform but these most recent changes are not the changes required by the education system. The system currently does not reflect past performance, funding, prior attainment, social and economic issues and is a very narrow measure. Are we really saying all of these things have no impact on a child's experience of school? It has no weight in an Ofsted inspection.

Ofsted needs to be a tool with which to help schools improve and not a stick to beat them with, as is currently the case.

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PUBLIC QUESTION NO. 2

Richard Stainthorp to ask the Lead Councillor for Education:

Ofsted Ratings

Can the Lead Councillor for Education please update me on how Reading schools are currently faring in terms of Ofsted ratings?

REPLY by Councillor Pearce (Lead Councillor for Education):

Locally maintained Schools	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Special Measures	No grade
Nursery (5)	5 (100%)	0	0	0	0
Primary (27)	3 (11%)	22 (82%)	2 (7%)	0	0
Secondary (1)	0	1(100%)	0	0	0
Special/ PRU (3)	0	2 (67%)	0	1 (33%)	0
% good or better	92%				
Not locally maintained	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Special Measures	No grade
Nursery (0)	0	0	0	0	0
Primary (12)	3 (25%)	6 (50%)	2 (17%)	0	1 (8%)
Secondary (9)	3 (33%)	3 (33%)	2 (22%)	0	1 (12%)
Special/ PRU (2)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0	0	0
% good or better	85%				
LA Sept 19 (59)	15	35	6	1	2

The Ofsted outcomes for Reading schools are shown in the table above. There are differing results for different types of school as can be seen, but in general our schools rated good or outstanding have increased from 77% last year up to 85% this year. Whilst we are obviously pleased with this, we must stress that schools are more than just a one or two word Ofsted outcome. Our schools work incredibly hard with a wide range of pupils with varying backgrounds and abilities. School settings need to be seen in action to see if they are a right fit for a particular child.

Having said that, it adds to an overall picture of improvement in our schools. More parents are choosing our schools in admissions with capacity soon to increase, exclusions are down and pupil results are, on the whole heading in the right direction. These Ofsted improvements are just confirmation of that.

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COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods and Communities:

Increase in fly tipping blighting Reading roads

Green councillors have opposed cuts to the team which tackles fly tipping. We think this has been short-sighted and has resulted in an increase in fly tipping. Can I get fly tipping figures for the last 5 years? I also understand that the council has now recruited new members of staff to rebuild the team that tackles fly tipping - which we welcome. Can I get an update on the composition of this team, their work so far and future plans for them?

REPLY by Councillor James (Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods and Communities):

Fly-tipping figures for the past 5 years are as follows:

Year	No of Fly-tipping incidents
2015 - 2016	2596
2016 - 2017	3066
2017 - 2018	2509
2018 - 2019	1574
2019 - 2020 (to date)	822

The Recycling and Enforcement team has been established to help increase the current recycling rate from 32% to 50% by 2020, to re-establish the Council's environmental enforcement function and support the introduction of weekly food waste collection and the change to 140l domestic bins in October 2020.

The new team is comprised of six Officers: a team leader, four recycling and enforcement officers and a part-time communications officer. The four new members of staff are now in post and have started work. The teams' main aims are:

1. To increase the recycling rate by 4% per annum and help the Council achieve its target of 50% recycling by 2020.
2. To reduce the cost of waste.
3. To reduce contamination in recycling bins.
4. To carry out enforcement activity for environmental crimes such as fly-tipping, commercial trade waste compliance and persistent abuse of the domestic waste service standard.

5. To change behaviour to increase participation in recycling through educational activities by engaging directly with residents on the doorstep, carrying out bin audits and engaging with community groups.
6. To support the introduction of the kerbside food waste service and the introduction of 140l bins in October 2020.

In the first two weeks of the team being in place they have been carrying out door knocking in areas where contamination has been reported, investigating fly-tipping and starting work on solving particular problems such as bin capacity on the Oxford Road. They will continue and expand this work and will be fully warranted to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN's) and Community Protection Notices (CPN's) from mid-December, in line with the priorities outlined above.

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COUNCILLOR QUESTION NO. 2

Councillor White to ask the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport:

Reading residents living in Fuel Poverty

No one should have to choose between heating and eating, unfortunately a large number of our Reading residents live in fuel poverty. Green councillors are concerned about this issue as the Conservative government have not been giving a high priority to tackling it. Please can I get data for the last 5 years on the number of our Reading residents living in fuel poverty? Please can I get an update from the Lead Councillor on plans to tackle this important issue?

REPLY by Councillor Page (Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport):

I thank Cllr White for his question.

The Government's most recent dataset on fuel poverty shows that in 2017 of the 67,112 households in Reading, 7,290 or 10.9% are classed as fuel poor (defined using the Low Income High Costs Indicator). Of the 326 Local Authority Areas listed, Reading is in the third quartile at 205th.

For the four years previous to this, 2013 to 2016, the percentage considered to be in fuel poverty was 11.2%, 10.8%, 13.9% and 11.9%, respectively.

Of Reading's 91 defined sub-areas there are 50 that have less than 10% of houses in fuel poverty and 41 that have higher than 10%. Of these 6 have higher than 20% in fuel poverty and 1 has 30% of houses in fuel poverty.

Reading has a number of services that deliver energy efficiency and fuel poverty work. These include the continued upgrading of insulation standards in our own housing stock, a service called Winter Watch for residents vulnerable to fuel poverty and a range of grants, loans and funded measures available to landlords and private home owners.

The Council recognises that a more comprehensive retrofitting programme will be required in order to achieve the aim of becoming a net carbon neutral Borough by 2030 and to eliminate fuel poverty. This will require the introduction of new national initiatives, schemes and programmes which the current Government has failed to address. Insofar as we have the resources and powers we will be setting out our local proposals in the Council's new housing strategy and Reading's third climate change strategy, currently being developed by the Reading Climate Change Partnership.