



Dear Resident

Last Saturday three people, all enjoying the evening sunshine and beautiful surroundings of the Forbury Gardens, were killed in a brutal and senseless attack. Like you, my thoughts remain with the loved ones of the victims, and with anyone and everyone affected by the attack.

It is, I feel, very important that we maintain our focus on those who have lost their lives and on allowing ourselves time to reflect on an incident that feels very intimate to all of us in Reading. Every single one of us will have been shocked and appalled by these horrific murders in our beloved Gardens. I am certain we will all be reeling for some time.

In this sad context, I am tremendously proud and impressed by the way Reading's residents have demonstrated that characteristic civic pride. It is something which sets our town and community apart from so many others in our part of the world. The voluntary sector has been swift to respond to the attack and its aftermath. As it became known that the three people killed all belonged to the LGBT+ community, organisations like Support U and Reading Pride were there to help everyone and provide reassurance, even as their own staff, trustees and supporters were grieving those killed. Similarly, No5 Young People were quick to expand their operations to help those in need. Many, many other organisations did likewise. I extend my perennial gratitude to all of them. Reading's faith groups have come together to offer a message of unity in the most difficult of circumstances. Our flourishing civil society is the foundation of Reading's unique strength of feeling - like a 'Little Big Town', something that all of us who live here know to be our best kept secret.

Reading's civic sense of itself is also reflected in the work of our local media, who have shown empathy and been sincere in their work to inform residents. While the area around the Forbury Gardens and elsewhere became home to intense international media scrutiny over the past few days, I do not doubt it will be reporters from the Reading Chronicle, Berkshire Live, BBC Radio Berkshire and BBC TV South, ITV Meridian, That's Thames Valley, the Wokingham Paper and our Local Democracy Reporters that will remain when other media have left, covering our community's recovery and strides forward. Sometimes we may be guilty of complacency around the value of our local media, but they have been a tremendous asset to our community, both during this past week and throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic. We should all do what we can to support them.

Finally, I want to thank all residents for their dignified and compassionate response. Acts of violence and terror are designed to divide us. It is natural that we will feel some apprehension and anger. I can certainly say that I do. But we must always remember that Reading is built on partnership, on its community cohesion, and on an overwhelming sense of togetherness. I am so proud to see people holding fast to these values and rejecting the politics of hate and division. Thank you, always.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "JB Brock". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "JB" followed by the name "Brock".

Councillor Jason Brock
Leader, Reading Borough Council