

Runnymede Borough Council

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

15 January 2019 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee Present: Councillors Miss M N Heath (Chairman), N M King (Vice-Chairman in the Chair for part of the meeting), M D Cressey, S L Dennett, Ms F Dent, T J F E Gracey, Mrs M T Harnden, S A Lewis, A P Tollett and Mrs G Warner.

Members of the Committee absent: None.

416. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Chairman read out the Fire Precautions.

417. PRESENTATION – YOUR SANCTUARY

The Committee received a presentation on Domestic Abuse from Fiamma Pather, the Chief Executive of Your Sanctuary. The purpose of the presentation was to advise Members of the new Surrey Against Domestic Abuse strategy 2018-23 which was being given to all of the district councils in Surrey. The presentation sought to raise awareness and understanding of Domestic Abuse and outline actions which could be taken to reduce its prevalence and the far reaching effects on the individuals involved, their families and the wider community. This include the mental, emotional, physical, social and financial consequences of domestic abuse. The strategy's vision took an holistic and wide ranging evidence based approach from supporting survivors of domestic abuse to holding perpetrators to account and change their behaviour. The Committee noted a number of initiatives and programmes delivered with partners, using a number of expert and specialist services. Members reviewed some Surrey focussed statistics which they found interesting and troubling and how these correlated to Domestic Abuse costing Surrey approximately £111m per year. The effect of Domestic Abuse on young people was noted and how taking a 'whole family' approach helped towards ending abuse. The Committee was informed about what they as Councillors could do as well as what each individual could do to promote nurturing and healthy relationships. Inevitably, the service was being affected by direct funding cuts by the County Council as well as changes to Children's Services. Members were keen to become involved and receive regular updates and were advised of the potential for further partnership work with Your Sanctuary through promotions and campaigns that would complement the Council's Community Safety projects. It was agreed to circulate the presentation to the Committee after the meeting.

418. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 November 2018 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

419. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT – UPDATE

The Committee received an update on annual projects and on-going work in Community Development. These ranged from the annual Surrey Youth Games to a number of health and wellbeing related activities in the borough. With regard to Specsavers Surrey Youth Games, Officers reported that most sports were well subscribed although there was room for more participants in Lacrosse, Rugby and Table Tennis. It was anticipated that once Egham Orbit was open that swimming figures would improve, should it be reintroduced

back into the event. The games had been successful and Runnymede teams had won medals in Judo, Boys Hockey and Girls Rugby. Other sporting events included Parkrun, the Runnymede Sportability Festival and a mixture of sporting activities to celebrate the International day of Persons with Disabilities which was delivered in partnership with Achieve Lifestyle. Members were particularly impressed by the annual Living and Ageing Well week and congratulated Officers on its delivery, a full report of which was included in the agenda papers. Officers were asked though to consider opportunities for greater participation in the Living and Ageing Well week for residents in Woodham, New Haw and Englefield Green and to check whether Chertsey Stepgates was a named partner in the follow up reports and publicity material. Officers also highlighted other parts of Community Development including Chertsey Museum, Community First, Community Safety and Green Space whose work was also highly valued by the Committee and aligned to delivering important priorities in the Corporate Business Plan.

#### 420. THORPE VILLAGE HALL – LEASE

The Committee's approval was sought to renew the lease to the trustees of Thorpe Village Hall for a further 15 years from April 2019 to enable them to build on the successful first 5 years of their lease and access external funding for further improvements.

Members were presented with a detailed progress report from the trustees who had set up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation to run the hall in 2014 on securing the initial lease from the Council as recommended by the Committee at that time. It was clear that everyone involved in running the hall had invested much time, effort and dedication to making the hall a lively and vibrant community based facility, much loved and valued by its users. A number of letters in support of renewing the lease were also noted.

Officers provided usage figures which demonstrated how well used the hall was and illustrating the wide range of groups of all ages. The trustees had turned round an under-used facility, making a loss of £10,000 per year, to one with reserves of £30,000. This had been partly helped by having a peppercorn rent as part of the lease agreement but Members also recognised the significant achievement of all the volunteers who had a sound strategy expertly realised. The Committee agreed there was much to be learned from their story and Members were also impressed by the physical improvements made to the building which had made it welcoming and inclusive while retaining its character as a grade II listed building of historic interest in the borough.

Members discussed how best to ensure the hall's future in the capable hands of the trustees. Currently, it was thought that there were no local Ward Councillors on the board of trustees but it was something that could be considered in consultation with the trustees and those Councillors if it would be beneficial. The Committee was keen for the trust to have favourable terms to ensure the hall's continued sustainability. Therefore Members agreed with the Chairman that it would be productive to have sight of the draft lease terms and grant aid arrangements that Officers would be asked to negotiate prior to it being finalised and agreed with the Thorpe Village Hall trustees. Officers confirmed that some of the terms of the renewal had been discussed by Commercial Services with the trustees subject to the renewal of the lease being approved.

#### **RESOLVED that –**

- i) the lease with the Thorpe Village Hall Trust be renewed for a further period of 15 years to allow for external funding to be applied for to make further improvements to the building; and**

- ii) **the terms of the new lease to be negotiated by Officers and a draft of the new lease to be finalised in consultation with local Ward Members and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee**

[Subsequent to the meeting a detailed note on the principle of leases to Community Groups was circulated to Members by the Director of Commercial Services.]

421. COMMUNITY FIRST ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The Committee noted, with thanks to the Partnership and Policy Development Officer, the annual report on Community First projects, which included action plans for all the targeted areas in the borough and the work of the health and Wellbeing task group.

Members noted the current IMD scores for the five targeted areas and were provided with a detailed account of the main initiatives taking place to address deprivation in education, employment and other socio economic factors. There was some discussion about the indices and the effect that changes in service provision had on the most vulnerable residents in the borough. Members were asked to note that the indices were due to be updated in the next 12 months and details would be provided in the next annual report, or sooner, if confirmed earlier. Councillor T Gracey was interested in having some more detail with regard to the scores by criteria for Runnymede which Officers agreed to provide in the context of national comparisons. Officers highlighted some of the statistics affecting children, young people, the unemployed and families, many of which were unlikely to improve with further cuts to funding particularly of Children's Services. Despite this there were a number of significant achievements delivered at minimal cost. The Committee was keen for local communities to benefit from every opportunity to access funding and sponsorship. For example, Officers were asked to consider whether it would be useful to widen the invitation to the Runnymede Business Breakfast events to other Councillors in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

With regard to youth provision where there was recognised demand, particularly for 13 – 16 year olds, Officers were asked to confirm if there had been any progress with opening of a youth café in Addlestone and to provide Councillor Lewis with details of the new YouthBox activity sessions.

Officers invited feedback on the newly launched website for tourism featuring a number of items related to the Runnymede River Celebration, aimed at promoting the River Thames and boosting income for the borough.

As touched upon in the previous item on the agenda, Officers confirmed that they would bring a report to the Committee on the review of Grant Aid to Community Organisations and the associated rent policy.

422. RUNNYMEDE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

The Vice-Chairman assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

The Committee received an update on the Runnymede Armed Forces Covenant and armed forces partnership working. This included an account of the activities that had taken place during the year, many of which Councillor T Gracey, the Armed Forces Champion was leading. The Committee noted the updated action plan detailing some of the year's achievements, including the placing of 10 silent soldiers around the borough; some had been paid for through Heritage Lottery Funding, others by local Borough and County Councillors. The new War Memorial at Virginia Water had been successfully installed and there had been a number of ceremonies and services which local Councillors had attended.

Officers confirmed that a progress report on achieving the Silver Level Award Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee. Members noted that although the Council had materially met the requirements of the Silver award, to attain it in practice, more pro-active engagement and assistance in the community to demonstrate the policy in action would be required. This was currently being discussed with the Head of HR and other relevant Officers.

Officers were thanked for their continued work on the Covenant within very limited resources and the Curator and her staff at Chertsey Museum in particular for the painstaking and dedicated research, exhibitions, installations and associated events to commemorate the Centenary of the ending of the first World War.

423. HOMESAFE PLUS

The Committee was advised of an initiative in Community Services which sought to complement the existing Homesafe service to people leaving hospital, helping them settle back at home with support from relevant services. The Council was providing Homesafe Plus because the previous organisation from the voluntary sector was unable to. The Council was covering North West Surrey and had an active role in the North West Surrey Integrated Care Partnership model of care. This included Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership, the local NHS Trust and CCG.

Officers described how Homesafe Plus benefitted from having a single point of access to borough services, a model favoured by those bodies making referrals from one of three locality hubs, Rapid response or Re-ablement teams. There were three referral pathways to the borough's services including Community Alarm and Telecare, Meals at Home, handyperson and Home Improvement Service and Social Prescribing. Housing and Homelessness assistance was also offered where relevant.

Members were very impressed by the number of referrals that had already been made in the first two months of its operation (approximately 73). There had also been over 180 referrals received by the Social Prescribing Service since its launch in April 2018. Much had been achieved by a very small team and Officers confirmed that with further investment it might be possible to make more improvements, noting that funding was in place until March 2020 and a cross borough review would be taking place in February 2019. Officers would bring an update on the service and options for its expansion to a future meeting of the Committee. This could include expansion to Surrey Heath and the Royal Surrey County Hospital in Guildford, promotion of the service to additional referral sources and the inclusion of a shopping service.

Officers were commended on a very successful start to the service and were asked to quantify the benefits to other agencies, such as the NHS, through its provision.

424. ST ANN'S HILL LODGE, CHERTSEY

The Committee's approval was sought to undertake preparatory work in order to privately rent a property at St Ann's Hill in Chertsey, formerly occupied by a member of staff and now standing vacant and in need of some modernisation and improvement.

Members were presented with the history of how the property (the Lodge) came into the possession of the Council when St Ann's Hill was given to Chertsey Urban District Council in 1927 by Sir William Ewert Berry. It was not known when the Lodge had been built exactly, but a property of some form was in that location at the time. A condition of the gift was that St Ann's Hill be used for recreational purposes, a covenant was entered into and other restrictions were placed on the land's use. The site was also a Grade II listed scheduled Ancient Monument under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953.

Officers reported that the last occupant of the Lodge moved out in late 2017. Since that time options for its future use had been considered. In July 2018, Officers from Commercial Services were consulted on the options and a local estate agent had valued the property in the range of £450,000 to £500,000, although in its current state the estimate was revised downwards to between £425,000 and £450,000. In order to improve its value, Members noted that works in the region of £35,000 would be needed, as estimated by colleagues in Housing. In theory, the property could either be sold, rented out to a private tenant, used by Housing for Temporary Accommodation or sold and the proceeds used to buy property to be let through Magna Carta Lettings. Members noted that the last two options had been discussed and discounted.

The Committee was informed that in order to move forward with any option, it was firstly necessary to finish the process of registering St Ann's Hill Open Space trust with the Charity Commission, whose permission would be required if the property was eventually sold. The detailed legal implications with regard to the trust, restrictive covenant issues and other considerations regarding the potential sale of land used for charitable purposes and on open space and the role of the Charity Commission were noted. In particular, the issue of ownership was appreciated and the various conditions that would have to be met if the trust decided to sell the property.

Members agreed that the property was an asset to be retained and the best option was to refurbish it for private rental and register it as a charity with the Charity Commission. It was considered that private rental would yield a guaranteed on-going income of at least £1,600 to £1,700 per month to the trust for the exclusive benefit of St Ann's Hill and maintenance thereof. The Committee was also content with the mechanism for funding improvements by way of a loan to the trust to achieve this.

**RESOLVED that -**

- i) Officers complete registration of the St Ann's Hill Trust with the Charity Commission;**
- ii) Members of this Committee agree that the Lodge be refurbished and made available as private rented accommodation;**
- iii) Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve a supplementary capital estimate of £35,000 for a loan to the Trust to carry out capital works to bring the cottage up to the appropriate rental standard;**
- iv) Officers within the Housing Business Centre procure a contractor to undertake the works; and**
- v) Upon completion for commercial services to manage the letting of the property for the Council and to return all income from the letting to the Council having deducted the costs of repaying the loan, interest, management costs at 5% and the costs of letting the property and the full cost of property maintenance from year to year**

**425. ENHANCED SECURITY MEASURES FOR PARKS AND OPEN SPACES**

The Committee's approval was sought for a set of measures to improve security at the Council's parks and open spaces.

Members recalled the disproportionately high number of unauthorised encampments that had taken place during 2018 and the amount of Officer time, as well as expenditure in dealing with them. Officers estimated that approximately £96,500 had been spent since

2017 including £26,000 on Legal Counsel and £20,000 on bailiffs which was not sustainable. The cost in Officer time had not been quantified. As a result, Officers had undertaken a detailed, costed survey of all potential sites assessing their vulnerability and/or attractiveness to potential unauthorised access and what security measures would help to reduce the risk in future. Members were asked to note that whatever measures were taken the risk could not be eliminated only lessened and that physical works had to be balanced with facilitating the continued enjoyment of the open spaces by members of the public; this point was appreciated by the Committee.

The Committee noted that an Equality Impact Screening Assessment had been completed in consultation with the Council's Equalities Group. This highlighted that restricting unauthorised vehicular access might also affect ease of access for people with mobility issues. However, on balance it was agreed that undertaking the works was necessary and Officers had carefully sought solutions that were in keeping with the open spaces. For example introducing more robust gates and barriers at existing locations.

Members reviewed the list of sites, which owing to budgetary constraints, were presented in priority order. It was reported that with the previously approved capital estimate of £250,000 that had been built into the 2019/20 Medium Term Strategy and Capital Programme, the first 21 of the 42 sites could be progressed, but that the balance of approximately £83,000 needed to complete all the sites would be subject to approval at a later date at which point a progress report would be submitted to the Committee.

There was some concern that it would not be possible to complete the works in a timely manner which Officers confirmed was dependent on the procurement process being executed but that their aim was to start the work as soon as possible, subject to approval by Corporate Management Committee at its meeting on 24 January 2019.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) the list of enhancements to boundary security at parks and open spaces as set out in Appendix 'L' of the report be approved; and**
- ii) Corporate Management Committee be asked to approve a capital estimate of £250,000 to fund the first phase of these improvements.**

426. RUNNYMEDE PLEASURE GROUNDS ESTIMATES

The Committee's approval was sought for the proposed financial projection and fees and charges relating to Runnymede Pleasure Grounds for 2019/20. The Council as Trustees of the Pleasure Grounds, and the trustee function, delegated to the Committee was noted.

Members were advised that the new ANPR system as approved by the Committee in November 2018 would help maximise income by ensuring the users of the car park paid the appropriate fee. Although there was a one off cost of £50,000 and an annual charge thereafter of £14,000 to run the system, Officers were confident this would be offset by the predicted additional income of £25,000. Officers were asked to clarify whether the new ANPR system at the pleasure grounds would accept cash and/or card payments, noting the potential inconvenience if this was not the case.

Officers confirmed that the estimates did not include any costs associated with the proposed improvements to the Pleasure Grounds. When the final costs were known a report to the Committee would be made accordingly.

The Trust was still operating with a surplus and the unrestricted reserves as at 31 March 2018 were £132,922. From this the cost of the ANPR would be deducted and there would be a slight reduction in the rental income from the café in 2019/20 owing to the

redevelopment. Officers confirmed therefore a loss of approximately £17,000 in 2018/19 and a surplus of £8,000 in 2019/20. In addition, the trust still held £40,000 in a restricted reserve in case of future flooding on site.

The Committee was advised that to date £12,500 of the agreed contribution of £25,000 had been received from Runnymede Magna Carta Legacy Limited towards the maintenance of the Queen Elizabeth II Statue for a period of five years from its installation in 2015.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the proposed financial projection for Runnymede Pleasure Grounds be approved**

427. RUNNYMEDE PLEASURE GROUNDS IMPROVEMENTS – PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a progress report on the proposed improvements at Runnymede Pleasure Grounds.

The Committee was informed that owing to advice received as part of the pre-planning application the proposed plans had been adjusted to make it acceptable to both the Planning Authority and affordable, as currently it was over the agreed budget.

Members noted that an uncosted stage 2 design was approved by Corporate Management Committee in November 2018, subject to the final cost and design being agreed. Officers confirmed that subsequent discussions between AECOM, the appointed employer's agent and the Council's Planning Officers and also with the Environment Agency as part of the Flood Risk Assessment process had identified some necessary alterations which were being considered.

Officers were pleased to report that the play space specialists, Davies White Ltd, had been making progress with their plans and engaging pupils from St Jude's Primary School in the emerging scheme.

Members were keen that as much of the Pleasure Grounds should remain open and accessible during the improvement works. It was confirmed that careful phasing should ensure that the key features of the site were available as the new ones were introduced.

Officers had hoped to bring revised and costed plans to the Committee for approval but this had not been possible. Therefore, it was agreed to note the progress to date and Officers would arrange a special meeting before the next scheduled meeting in March 2019, if necessary, to approve final costed proposals and keep the project on track.

There had been some slippage, therefore, Officers were asked to provide an updated timeline plan to the Committee when available. It was confirmed that the plan was still to open the new Pleasure Grounds in the summer of 2020.

428. RESPECT THE WATER – RUNNYMEDE WATER SAFETY PLAN

The Committee's endorsement was sought of the first Runnymede Water Safety Plan entitled 'Respect the Water.' This was a multi-agency, tri-borough document aimed at raising awareness and reducing the number of water related incidents in the borough. It included an action plan tailored to Runnymede produced through the Runnymede Community Safety Partnership. The plan would be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Officers advised that the plan had been informed by a review of recent water related incidents, using information supplied by the emergency services, including drowning, which was among the leading causes of accidental death in the UK. The UK Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016-26 had also been a key reference document as was the RNLI

'Respect the Water' campaign. The aim was to raise awareness of water safety, look at the risks associated with water, relevant statistics around self-harm, attempted drowning etc and use resources for pro-active drowning prevention. Officers had looked at demographic and socio-economic factors which indicated where preventative work could be focussed and educational opportunities taken. For example around alcohol awareness, swimming ability and ill-judged behaviour amongst teenagers and people in their 20s. The Committee fully supported the plan, endorsing this approach.

In terms of resources, Officers confirmed that the majority of work had been carried out within existing resources, mainly Officer time and this would be kept under review. Seeking external funding was also an option.

Officers were asked to check why a fatal incident at Woodham Lock in July 2017 was not included on the incidents map, the raw data for which had been provided by the Fire and Police Services. [An email from a local Ward Councillor subsequently clarified the location of the incident within the southern boundary of the borough and the incidents map would be updated accordingly.]

**RESOLVED that –**

**the respect the Water; Runnymede Water Safety Plan be approved**

429. FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMME ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee noted the annual report on the Family Support Programme; a joint project with Surrey Heath, which commenced in 2013 under the 'troubled family initiative' and helped a number of families across both boroughs.

Members recalled that the Family Support Programme gave intensive support to families where they met the criteria of the scheme; including Children not in School, Unemployment, Crime/Anti-Social Behaviour, Domestic Violence, Children in Need and Health Problems. In 2017/18 the team had worked with 96 families, 47 of which were in Runnymede. These figures were consistent so far with those in 2018/19.

Officers gave examples of some of the scenarios in which the team worked and provided feedback by the helped families which was positive, demonstrating the worth of the programme.

The Committee was advised that owing to a re-design in Surrey County Council (SCC) Children's Services and the cessation of central Government funding for the programme in March 2020, its future was uncertain. Officers would monitor the situation and bring a report to a future meeting on implications for the Family Support Programme following the outcome of the review of SCC Children's Services, with particular regard to financial viability when funding was reduced.

430. SURREY HEATH PARTNERSHIP – UPDATE

This item was withdrawn from the Agenda and an explanatory email had been sent by the Head of Community Services prior to the meeting. The Chairman was assured by Members that they had received the email and were aware that Officers planned to bring a report to the scheduled meeting of the Committee in June 2019.

Chairman

(The meeting finished at 10.20pm)