

Runnymede Borough CouncilCOMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE7 November 2019 at 7.30 pm

Members of the

Committee Present: Councillors N King (Chairman), S Lewis (Vice-Chairman), M Adams, T Burton, D Clarke, S Dennett, M Harnden, J Hulley and A Neathey.

Members of the

Committee absent: Councillor J Olorenshaw

307. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Chairman read out the Fire Precautions.

308. PRESENTATION – THE AIR LEAGUE

The Committee received a presentation by Mr Nick West, the Chief Executive of The Air League, who were celebrating their 110th Anniversary. Mr West gave a brief history of the League which had started life as The Aerial League of the British Empire; their patron was Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and in 1938 they had founded what was now called the Air Training Corps.

The Air League promoted aviation and aerospace through scholarship programmes; including 'Soaring to Success' which was the main focus of the presentation. Through a series of activities and other initiatives, the League sought to encourage people, particularly young people aged between 14 and 18 years, to engage with and be excited about aviation, either informally or by actively pursuing a career therein. A case study with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council was outlined to the Committee and the aspiration was to start a similar project with Runnymede. Feedback from Barnsley's participants had been very positive with 73% of the students saying they were likely to consider a career in aviation following the event.

The Committee was keen to become involved with the Air League projects. For example through the newly formed Youth Club in Chertsey. The Chairman of the Committee confirmed his intention to seek funding for a Runnymede 'Soaring for Success' programme in liaison with Officers from Planning Policy and Economic Development and to keep Members updated.

309. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive of its wish that the change listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The change was for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillor removed would be reappointed.

Group	Remove From Membership	Appoint Instead
Conservative	Councillor S Walsh	Councillor J Hulley

The Chief Executive had given effect to this request in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

310. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 September 2019 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

311. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors T Burton, D Clarke and M Harnden declared non-pecuniary interests in the report concerning the Grant Aid Funding Review. Councillors Burton and Clarke were Council appointed representatives on Voluntary Services North Surrey and Councillors Clarke and Harnden were Council appointed representatives on Runnymede Access Liaison Group.

312. GRANT AID FUNDING REVIEW

The Committee considered grant aid funding to four local organisations providing valued voluntary services in North Surrey/Runnymede. These were Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne (CARS) (Core Grant, Home Visiting and Rentstart), Voluntary Support North Surrey, Surrey Community Action and Runnymede Access Liaison Group. The total sum shared between these organisations was £159,415, plus £28,250 in Rent Grant Aid.

Members reviewed the work that each organisation carried out and assessed their contribution to the borough's residents.

In respect of CARS, the Committee reflected on the wide range of issues that affected residents and the type of advice sought in the context of changed legislation and economic factors. It was noted that 46% of enquiries received by CARS were regarding Benefits, 11% concerned Housing, 9%, Debt and 7% employment. These were the top 4 areas where advice and assistance was provided with an holistic approach to problem solving, in person and by telephone. Officers advised that a number of their clients presented with multiple problems and a significant proportion experienced poor mental health which affected their ability to cope in a changing world. Demand on CARS had increased as a result of welfare reform and the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017; nevertheless CARS had managed to gain £351,710 for residents in successful benefit and credit claims/tribunal awards.

Unfortunately, CARS was operating with a substantial deficit of between £40,000 - £50,000 per annum owing to the increased demand but without extra funding, changes in staff and a lack of accounting expertise amongst the volunteers. However, Members recognised the value of their work and wished to support them further by not reducing their funding by £19,000 from the Home Visiting Service as originally suggested but allowing them to redirect that funding to their core service, provided a greater degree of stability and resilience was built into their operation. It was agreed that the new manager of CARS would be invited to give a presentation on their core service to the Committee at its scheduled meeting on 12 March 2020 and the Chairman of the Community Services Committee would write to CARS regarding the accounting and budgetary issues raised at the meeting.

In respect of the proposal to reduce the funding to CARS Rentstart Service, Members concurred that the current service was not as effective as it could be and that the funding should be gradually reduced, in the first instance by £14,143 and the full allocation of £21,215 in subsequent years. It was thought that Officers in Housing Solutions might be able to utilise the Rentstart saving, subject to a business case prepared by the relevant Housing Manager being approved by the Housing Committee at a later date.

With regard to Voluntary Support North Surrey (VSNS), Members recognised their valuable role in supporting the Voluntary sector through advice, training, advocacy and promotion of

volunteering and voluntary organisations. Officers advised that VSNS assisted approximately 400 local organisations providing services to 12,000 residents in Runnymede in 2018/19. They had also registered 259 volunteers and brokered 1,000 days of corporate volunteer days. In terms of funding, the Committee was given a breakdown, including the sum of £31,000 awarded by Runnymede Borough Council. Their total funding amounted to £182,949 per annum. However, there was a shortfall in match funding from central government and the Committee agreed that for 2020/2021 to 2022/2023 an additional £3,000 would be paid directly to VSNS, £2,000 of which would be funded from the annual saving on the disestablished Surrey Community Action Halls Administrator post.

Members agreed that the monetary value of volunteers per annum across the sector which was estimated to be approximately £443,000, represented excellent value for money. To investigate other ways of making savings, Officers were asked to discuss opportunities for more linkage between VSNS and CARS. For example, the potential for sharing premises was suggested.

Officers reported that through discussion it had been identified that Runnymede Access Liaison Group needed to update their website as required by their service level agreement with the Council. To assist them, Members agreed a sum of £2,000 as a one-off payment.

Officers had identified a potential use for some of the savings on the Grant Aid budget amounting to £21,215 for a Homelessness initiative, the details of which would be presented to the Housing Committee by the Housing Solutions Manager at a later date. The Committee was content to recommend that Corporate Management Committee be requested to consider setting aside the savings identified for this purpose.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the grant aid sum of £25,000 for the Citizen’s Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne (CARS) home visiting service be redirected to their core service;**
- ii) the saving of £14,143 on the current financial year’s Grant Aid budget to Runnymede CAB Rentstart be noted;**
- iii) the shortfall on match funding for Voluntary Support North Surrey (VSNS) of £2,000 over the next three years be made up by the £2,000 per annum saving from the Halls Admin post from 2020/2021;**
- iv) the Runnymede Access Liaison Group (RALG) be awarded an additional £2,000 in 2019/2020, only to be used for website support; with a yearly service level agreement so there is an annual review of the service provided, in line with usual practice; and**
- v) Corporate Management Committee be requested to set aside the savings identified in ii) above, and £21,215 per annum, for any proposals agreed by the Housing Committee to address the needs of the Council and those households encountering housing issues such as homelessness and sustainability of tenancies in the private sector**

313. PREVENT STRATEGY – UPDATE

The Committee was asked to approve the Council’s Prevent Strategy, first introduced in 2015 to comply with the statutory provisions of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act, and updated by Applied Resilience in consultation with the Council’s Community Safety Officer, following a recent review.

Members recalled that the Prevent Strategy sought to intercept people vulnerable to being radicalised before any criminal activity took place. Such individuals were assessed by a 'Channel Panel' who would carry out a risk assessment with a view to supporting someone referred to the panel, diverting them from being drawn into terrorism, as defined by the Act and interpreted locally by the Strategy.

In a local context the Strategy impacted on the Council's Safeguarding Policy, Human Resources (provision of mandatory training), and Procurement; including the use of Council owned facilities. Members were interested in the training available and asked Officers to provide the Committee with details of refresher training on the Prevent Strategy which was going to be renewed in 2020/2021.

Officers reported that only minor changes had been made to the Strategy, but agreed that all changes would be 'track changed' when next reviewed in 2021 so as to be easily identified. Officers also agreed to modernise the document's appearance.

Some Members expressed concern that the Strategy did not sufficiently reflect the recent increase in incidents of far right extremism, citing some personal experience and asked Officers to examine how it was being combatted in other boroughs. Officers were also asked to gather information regarding community engagement in this context and to contact Applied Resilience or Inspector Pinkerton for local profiling intelligence on local organisations in this regard and report back to the Committee.

The Committee discussed what level of threat terrorism had in the borough and instructed Officers to check how many and the nature of referrals made since 2018 in the borough and circulate details to the Committee (any personal information redacted).

The majority of the Committee was content to approve the Strategy but considered that its existence was not well known and asked Officers to liaise with the Communications team regarding the Prevent Strategy's profile on the Council's website.

RESOLVED that –

the updated borough's Prevent Strategy be approved

314. FEES AND CHARGES – COMMUNITY SERVICES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT 2020/2021

The Committee's approval was sought for the proposed fees and charges within their remit for 2020/2021.

Members noted that the Council's fees and charges took into account current market conditions, local competition, the likely yield of any fee increase and on-going savings targets and the revenue reduction programme.

There were no major changes in the proposed fees, most being increased by an average of 2%, although some fees were not increased to stimulate demand. For example the yellow bus service and the majority of fees and charges relating to Chertsey Museum.

The Committee discussed the pilot of a new charging structure for the two Council owned Community Halls and some Members reported some drop in usage by local organisations whose feedback suggested that they did not benefit from the new charging packages and deposit requirements. The alcohol policy was also called into question as having a detrimental effect on business. Therefore, Officers were requested to provide the Committee with the actual yield figures and occupancy levels for the Community Halls and details of the new software and bookings system recently introduced into Customer Services. Officers would also provide Members with an update on the one year pilot of the

Community Halls Review as at its 6 months' point at the meeting of the Committee in March 2020, noting the full results would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that –

the proposed fees and charges be approved, to be effective from the dates within the appendix or as soon as practical thereafter

315. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – QUARTER 2 2019/2020

The Committee received for information details of the Community Development Performance Indicators for Quarter 2 of 2019/2020.

Officers advised that pending the final attendance figures, the number of participants in the Surrey Youth Games Training was slightly below target, as were the number of people attending the Living Well Week, owing to there being no launch event to promote it this year. The percentage of Careline calls answered within 60 seconds was on target at 99.86%, and owing to the popular Chertsey Abbey exhibition the visitor figures for Chertsey Museum were very healthy despite the predicted dip during the school holidays.

For this and the following item, Officers were asked to add a traffic lights indicator to the tables.

316. COMMUNITY SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – QUARTER 2 2019/2020

The Committee received for information details of the Community Services Performance Indicators for Quarter 2 of 2019/2020.

Officers highlighted the areas of service that were exceeding their targets; these were meals served, number of hires and users of the Social (Day) Centres, Homesafe, Handyman and Social Prescribing referrals. The Committee joined in commending the Social Centre staff, one Member mentioned Woodham and New Haw Centre having a positive effect on a family member. It was noted that Runnymede utilised fewer resources to deliver high quality services.

Members commented on how rewarding their own volunteering at the Social Centres and in Community Meals had been, encouraging others to volunteer as well. Officers agreed to highlight volunteering opportunities within Community Services to the Committee and publicise dates of Christmas events at the Social Centres in which they could become involved.

317. CHERTSEY MEADS MANAGEMENT LIAISON GROUP – MINUTES – 3 SEPTEMBER 2019

The Minutes of the meeting of the Management Liaison Group held on 3 September 2019, as attached at Appendix 'A' and were received and noted.

318. HOME IMPROVEMENT POLICY AND CHANGES TO MANAGEMENT AND PRACTICE

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Committee was presented with an overview of the Council's current Home Improvement Agency (HIA), its potential areas for development, including a change to the

service approach and management of the HIA. Officers had also updated the Home Improvement Agency Policy, for which approval was sought. To be delivered, additional staffing resources were required and the Committee was asked to endorse those proposals to Corporate Management Committee.

Officers explained that since the HIA function had transferred to Community Services in November 2018, the opportunity had been taken to review the service which included awarding funding from the Disabled Facilities Grant, received from central Government via the Better Care Fund.

The Committee recalled that the aim of the HIA was to provide advice to eligible residents, mainly the elderly and/or people with disabilities, to allow them to continue living independently in their own homes. Grants were available for adaptations, repairs and other improvements; the total grant allocation was £770,000 in 2019/2020. However, not all of it had been spent and Officers across the three relevant business centres had examined the reasons for this and suggested changes that could be made to improve the situation. The key solutions were to increase staffing resources, introduce more flexibility into the grant funding and streamline the administrative journey for residents. This included transferring the Disabled Facilities Grant function currently listed under the Housing Committee in the Council's Constitution to the Community Services Committee in line with the transfer of the Home Improvement Agency in 2018.

A new Home Improvement Agency Financial Assistance Policy was also proposed which the Committee debated. Members discussed the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (statutory obligation under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996) and Criteria for eligibility and the discretionary elements which included the proposal to operate a scheme of discretionary financial assistance in the use of Disabled Facilities Grant monies by virtue of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. Members were also provided with full details of the grant schemes that would become available together with the maximum grants available under each scheme.

It was noted that some of the grant schemes included means testing in the process to which some Members were opposed. Officers were asked to submit an Equalities Impact Assessment, which was currently being worked on in consultation with the Council's Equalities Group, to include further consideration of means testing. This would be considered within the resources report by Corporate Management Committee in January 2020.

The Committee agreed that the Home Improvement Agency played an important role in supporting residents to continue living independently through a range of functions and services; the availability of grant funding to those most in need was supported. Members were assured that the revised service would be more flexible and responsive and Officers would provide a quarterly update to the Committee on the performance of the Home Improvement Agency once the revised service commenced, subject to its approval by Corporate Management Committee.

The Committee welcomed the proposed policy and were pleased to endorse the growth bid for resources. Members were also keen that Officers marketed the newly modelled service and linked to the Runnymede Access Liaison Group website to promote it there.

RESOLVED that –

- i) Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve the proposed revised Home Improvement Agency Policy and the transfer of the Disabled Facilities Grant function to the Community Services Committee; and**

- ii) **the proposed staffing arrangements be endorsed, noting that any growth bids associated with the proposals will be considered as part of the annual Business Planning Programme by Corporate Management Committee in January 2020.**

(The meeting ended at 9.20 pm)

Chairman

Runnymede Borough CouncilCHERTSEY MEADS MANAGEMENT LIAISON GROUP3 September 2019 at 7.30pmMembers of the
Group present:

Councillor D A Cotty	Runnymede Borough Council
Mr G Drake	Chertsey Society
Mr H W Evans	Surrey Bird Club
Mrs F Harmer	Chertsey Meads Residents' Representative
Mr N Johnson	Chertsey Meads Residents' Representative
Mrs H Lane	Surrey Wildlife Trust
Mrs M Nichols	Chertsey Society
Mrs C Noakes	Hamm Court Residents' Representative
Mr C J Norman	Chertsey Meads Residents' Representative
Mr J O'Gorman	Chertsey Meads Residents' Representative
Mr B Phillips	Surrey Botanical Society
Mrs T A Stevens	Chertsey Meads Residents' Representative
Mrs A Teasdale	Hamm Court Residents' Representative

Members of the
Group absent:

Councillor M G Nuti	Runnymede Borough Council
Mr R Deacock	St George's College
Dr J Denton	Invertebrates Expert
Mrs K Drury	Chertsey Meads Residents' Representative
Ms I Girvan	Surrey Wildlife Trust
Mrs J Hearne	Chertsey Meads Residents' Representative
Mr G James	Sustrans
Mrs C Longman	Chertsey Meads Residents' Representative
Mr D Mead	Chertsey Agricultural Association
Mrs S Ritchie	Dog Walkers Representative
Mr D Turner	Chertsey Agricultural Association

Advisory members of
the Group present:

Mr P Winfield	Head of Green Space, Runnymede Borough Council
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Advisory members of
The group absent:

Mr C Dulley	Assistant Head of Green Space, Runnymede Borough Council
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1. Councillor D Cotty was elected as Chairman for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2019/20.

2. The Chairman read out the Fire Precautions which set out the procedures to be followed in the event of fire or other emergency.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the group, held on 26 February 2019, were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr R Deacock, Dr J Denton, Mrs K Drury, Mr C Dulley, Mrs J Hearne, Mrs C Longman, Councillor M Nuti and Mrs S Ritchie.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHERTSEY MEADS MANAGEMENT LIAISON GROUP

The vacancies for a representative for the Conservation Volunteers and the Environment Agency were noted.

[After the meeting, Mrs Teasdale announced that she would shortly be moving house. This gives rise to a vacancy for another Hamm Court Residents' Representative. Mrs Teasdale was thanked for her valued contribution to the Group.]

Miss Pinnock to contact the Hamm Court Board

6. ESSO PIPELINE PROPOSALS

The Group received an informative presentation on the Esso Pipeline replacement project. The pipeline ran across part of Chertsey Meads and the presentation covered the background to the project, technical considerations and a summary of the legal framework and consultation process. There had been a site meeting to discuss the proposed route to avoid the areas with the greatest diversity. The Group asked a number of questions about the project, the answers to which are summarised below:

- The existing pipeline which had been installed between 1969 and 1972 would be left on site but made safe
- The whole project was expected to last about 2 years, the Chertsey Meads element was not set yet but likely to be early 2021, public access would be maintained throughout with local diversions where necessary
- The works would be fenced off for safety and security
- Small excavation and welding equipment would be used and stored securely on site, used by a team of approximately 4 – 5 people with welfare facilities brought in on site for the duration of the works
- Aim was to complete 400m per week
- The existing pipeline was not known to have ever leaked
- Replacing the other pipeline was not foreseen to be needed
- Patches of diversity in the 'stringing out' area would be fenced to protect them
- Esso were official consultees of the proposed Heathrow expansion and would be responding to it by 13 September 2019

Action

- Across the affected boroughs and districts, Esso were dealing with 250 landowners listed in a book of reference of interested parties within the outer boundary of the proposed route
- There would be noise and disturbance to the north of the site where the drill was, but only during the day
- The area would be left bare to re-seed which would be visible until the land recovered
- Dialogue on reinstatement and seeding would continue
- The interplay with the UKPN proposals would be checked
- Need to avoid clashes with various events was noted
- Dialogue on the Environment Investment Programme and suitable projects would continue, such as replacement posts to protect against unauthorised incursions and works to facilitate the re-introduction of cattle grazing

7. ACTIONS FROM THE LAST MEETING

Commercial Dog Walkers

Letters would be sent shortly to some of the Commercial dog walking companies that had been noted as using the Meads. Any further companies should be reported to the Green Space Team. The letters would remind people to behave responsibly otherwise a more formal licensing system would be considered. It was not viable to license the whole borough and its 90 open spaces at the current time. Officers had acted on the issues raised with dog waste and other bins at the last meeting and hoped this had improved matters.

Mr Dulley

UK Power Networks (UKPN) proposal

The Council's Commercial Services team were liaising with the UKPN Network officials regarding the proposed upgrade. Its route crossed with the Esso Pipeline and Esso had been made aware of this. Mrs Drury had emailed about the proposals and Officers were following this up and would advise her accordingly.

Mr Dulley

Signage

Mrs Stevens suggested that some signage to alert people to children crossing the road near the first car park and play area would be beneficial as concerns had been raised about their safety as well as the deer, whose numbers were increasing on the roads. This was supported, pending the outcome of the new height barrier proposals. Mrs Hearne had emailed to support additional deer signage as she was unable to attend the meeting. Mr O'Gorman also reported a missing sign which had been logged with Surrey County Council Highways.

Mr Dulley

Moorings

It was noted that the Council was still pursuing the proposal to introduce a joint Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) with other boroughs to address the problem of over staying moorers. There was some frustration that despite taking legal action one or two vessels remained moored up on the Thames near the picnic area. Officers were liaising with the Council's Legal Services.

Mr Dulley

8. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE MEADS

Action

Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) Status

The Group noted progress with the adoption of the Council's new Local Plan and how that affected the introduction of Chertsey Meads being designated as a SANG, currently estimated to be in June 2020.

Annual Work Programme

Members reviewed the annual work programme which had been annotated with colour coding to show progress. It was reported that some vegetation needed cutting back. It was agreed to add tasks that volunteers might be able to do to the programme. Mr Winfield reported additional funding secured from delayed payments arising from the former HLS scheme which was welcomed. It was agreed to investigate some privet growing on the western boundary to check whether it was the invasive type which would then need to be removed. Some projects such as opening up the pond on the eastern side that was currently overgrown would be looked at next year.

Mr Winfield

Mr Phillips

Boundary Security

Officers had three costed proposals for a more robust replacement of the height barrier which had been allocated funding by the Community Services Committee as part of a borough wide scheme to improve the security of the Council's open spaces. The aim was also to find one supplier who could deal with any issues that might arise instead of relying on co-ordinating up to three different ones. It was hoped that a decision on the final design would be reported at the next meeting.

Mr Winfield/Mr
Dulley

9. EVENTS

Chertsey Show

The Chertsey Agricultural Association representatives were not at the meeting. However, a successful show was reported, including the camels, and Officers thanked Mr Turner for rectifying an area where some accidental oil spillage had occurred.

Annual Site Visit

The annual site visit had been cancelled owing to unforeseen circumstances. However, following on from a discussion at the last meeting, Officers had contacted Dr Denton who had kindly agreed to lead a guided insect identification walk. A date of 4 June 2020 was suggested and Mr Winfield would book him if available as soon as possible. [Note that Dr Denton **has** accepted this date – time to be confirmed at a later date.]

Mr Winfield

Litter Pick

Members noted another productive litter pick on 7 April. A date of Sunday 5 April 2020 was set. It was agreed to hold a second litter pick in the autumn of 2020, noting the amount of people that parked up in the laybys and then fly tipped general rubbish. Once a date had been set it could be publicised at the April event so people could book it into their diaries and the DSO alerted to another collection date to remove what was collected.

Mr Dulley/
Miss Pinnock

Action

10. Any Other Business

The lack of seating at the Meads was discussed. It was agreed that SANG funding could be appropriately spent in this way to enhance the visitor experience whilst maintaining the balance of preserving the open nature of the site.

A vandalised gate in the second car park had been reported to the Police. It was agreed that if the UKPN upgrade took place, enhanced security would be a feasible option.

[In her email, Mrs Hearne had reported sight of a new family of Sparrow hawks as well as the new young deer family which was doing well.]

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted that the next two meetings were scheduled to take place on Tuesday 3 March 2020 and Tuesday 1 September 2020, both at 7.30pm, to be held at the Civic Centre in Addlestone.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm