

Runnymede Borough Council

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

16 September 2021 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee Present: Councillors C Howorth (Chairman), M Adams (Vice-Chairman), R Bromley, T Burton, M Harnden, J Hulley, S Lewis, and C Mann

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors D Clarke and S Walsh.

Councillors L Gillham and I Mullens also attended the meeting.

208 **Fire Precautions**

The Chairman read out the Fire Precautions.

209 **Presentation – Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne**

The Committee received for information, an informative and detailed presentation by Becky Whale, Chief Officer of Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne (CARS).

The Committee was informed about how the Council's financial contribution to the organisation had been utilised to assist Runnymede's residents, including the recruitment of a dedicated case worker for the borough.

Members were advised that in the first quarter of 2020/2021 CARS assisted 1092 people with 3539 issues; this was a huge increase, bearing in mind that in 2019 there had for example been 30 Social Prescribing referrals compared with 30 in the last month alone.

The Committee studied a detailed breakdown of cases and Equalities related statistics across the borough and ward based information which Members found very interesting and were appraised of the range of funded projects that CARS had undertaken which demonstrated their clear social value to the community as well as their quality of work which met the 'advice quality standard' based on the principles of being client focussed, looking for continuous improvement and consistency.

Members were impressed by the fact that for every £1 invested in their local service in 2020/2021, CARS had generated £27.50 in public value. CARS had realised savings of £71,622 to local authorities through the prevention of homelessness and housing evictions, £711,365 savings to the NHS and DWP through reducing use of mental health and GP services, and keeping people at work, £699,274 in financial gains for people CARS had helped and the wider economic and social benefits provided to the local community totalled £6,494,908.

In terms of training, volunteer advisors took an intensive on-line course and operated with paid supervision to ensure their advice was correct. This was vital given the range of topics on which people in the community needed assistance; from homelessness to FCA regulated debt advice often engaging other issues such as poor mental health, domestic abuse and poverty.

Being part of the National framework for Citizens Advice gave good opportunities for support and information, networking and regular meetings. It was confirmed that over the last two years the way in which their service was delivered had changed and in particular moving away from the 'one venue' concept towards satellites with partner organisations and a new freephone advice service.

CARS were thanked for their presentation which provided a fascinating insight into their work, including targeted campaigns on timely issues such as the increase in 'buy now pay later' and the consequential challenges for some of the most vulnerable members of society.

210 **Notification of Changes to Committee Membership**

The Committee 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.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Remove</u>	<u>Appoint instead</u>
Conservative	Councillor D Coen	Councillor J Hulley

The Chief Executive had given effect to the change to Committee membership in accordance with section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

211 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 June 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

212 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor D Clarke.

213 **Thorpe Green – Proposed Enhancements**

The Committee's in principle approval was sought for a proposal to enhance part of Thorpe Green, a Council owned open space, which had fallen into disrepair, specifically an area close to an old sports pavilion (on land adjacent to Thorpe Green) and tennis courts.

Members were advised that a long standing local judo club, Core Judo Academy, had acquired the sports pavilion and gained planning permission to demolish it and replace with a two storey sports club for recreational purposes and associated works to make improvements to the car parking arrangements. This included two electric vehicle charging points.

As part of the development, Core Judo had approached the Council's Green Space team with a scheme to re-purpose the old tennis courts and provide some new outdoor fitness/leisure facilities which would complement those being housed in the new pavilion. Officers were fully supportive of the proposals, and the Committee was able to view the detailed drawing that had been submitted with the planning application. Members recognised the benefits for local residents as well as improving the visual amenity and environmental aspects of the site.

The Committee learned that other organisations such as football clubs could be attracted to the site who would be able to use the new changing and shower facilities in the pavilion. It was understood that a café was also part of the plans which would be a welcome addition to the area for walkers, cyclists and other users of Thorpe Green.

A word of caution was expressed with regard to the site's vulnerability to flooding in the winter months, and with the likelihood of increased footfall and vehicles, Officers were asked to clarify the responsibility for future maintenance of the access road to the site and how that would be financed together with further details of the proposed works, any potential reinforcement of roadside verges and legal agreement in the future report to the Committee.

If necessary, an Equalities Impact Screening Assessment and Access audit would also be completed in consultation with the Runnymede Access Liaison Group and the Council's Equalities Group and reported to the Committee.

Members noted the legal implications in the report. These included the need for specific consent for the Judo Club to make changes to Council owned land. In addition, it was confirmed that Thorpe Green was a Common administrated and managed under a scheme dated 15 December 1964. This allowed the Council to undertake some works, but consent for some of the proposed works might be needed from the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This was yet to be determined in consultation with Officers from Legal and Commercial Services.

The Committee was pleased to support the proposals and the positive initial work undertaken so far and looked forward to receiving a detailed report in due course.

RESOLVED that –

the Committee supports in principle the proposals for improvements to facilities at Thorpe Green as outlined in the report and asks that Officers continue to develop the proposals further with stakeholders and to bring a more detailed report back to the Committee in due course.

214 **Enhanced Security – Update**

The Committee received an information report on work completed to enhance boundary security measures in 28 prioritised parks and open spaces across the borough following a series of incursions in 2018 and 2019.

Members recalled that a programme to restrict unauthorised vehicular access to the Council's parks and open spaces was approved in January 2019, costing approximately £330,000 if works were carried out at all 42 sites. With a budget of just over £250,000, Officers had conducted a borough wide risk assessment, resulting in works to 28 sites. These were tailor made to suit the sites and locations and ranged from the installation of new metal railings, gates and fixed or removeable bollards, adjustments to height barriers to the maintenance of ditches and bunds. Some minor improvements such as upgrading padlocks had been funded from existing revenue budgets.

Whilst Officers could not guarantee that the improvements would totally prevent future incursions; it was agreed that the opportunity for potential attempts was reduced.

Officers agreed to provide the Committee with details of the remaining 14 sites in the borough where it was considered no further works were necessary as the risk of incursions was judged to be very low and expenditure could not be justified.

215 **Recommendation of Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee/Crime and Disorder Committee - Call-in of Decision – Public Space Protection Order, Egham Hythe**

The Committee was asked to approve that a future report be submitted to Members regarding anti-social behaviour reporting in the context of considering the suitability of addressing issues in the community through the use of Public Space Protection Orders.

Members recalled that the decision made in respect of Egham Hythe not currently being felt in need of a PSPO so resolved at the previous meeting of the Committee on 17 June 2021 had been 'called in' and considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 July 2021, noting the extract from the minutes which was appended to the report.

The Committee was content that a future report would come forward and the opportunity to discuss all the issues would be presented.

RESOLVED that –

a future agenda item that investigates the manner in which anti-social behaviour and criminal behaviour is reported to enable it to be better informed when considering the making of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO)s be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee

216 **Community Development Key Performance Indicators Quarter 1 2021/2022**

The Committee noted the Quarter 1 results of the performance indicators for Community Development.

Members were pleased to note that Safer Runnymede had continued to operate to a very high standard throughout the pandemic, taking 9,563 Careline calls on top of CCTV monitoring and other duties. Officers agreed to consider some different performance indicators in respect of Safer Runnymede to illustrate their high social value and impact on the community.

The Committee was advised that as the two community halls were continuing to be used as vaccination centres there were no usage figures available. Chertsey Museum had re-opened and was engaging well with visitors and education programmes. Members were encouraged to visit the forthcoming exhibitions and details would be circulated to the Committee.

It was noted that Egham Orbit had also re-opened, and had taken 5 FAC referrals in Quarter 1.

Teams across the business centre were thanked for their valued work.

217 **Community Services Key Performance Indicators – Quarter 1 2021/2022**

The Committee noted the Quarter 1 results of the performance indicators for Community Services.

Officers paid tribute to staff who had continued to deliver a wide variety of services as well as responding to the demands of the pandemic, which in turn had increased the workload across the health and welfare agenda in Social Prescribing, Homesafe Plus and Community Alarms.

Members were advised of forthcoming recruitment to vacancies and new posts in the Home Improvement Agency which continued to be very busy. Officers reported a slower recovery in Community Transport but that three of the four Day Centres in Runnymede and Surrey Heath had re-opened.

The Committee noted that Parking Services no longer appeared in the table as it had transferred to Customer Services.

The Community Services Partnership with Surrey Heath started in Quarter 1 and was proving to be positive and teams across the business centre were thanked for their valued work.

218 **Urgent Action – Standing Order 42**

The Committee noted a copy of proforma 979 detailing action taken after consultation with the Chairmen of the Community Services and Housing Committees. This concerned the recruitment of two additional posts shared between Housing and Community Services and working in partnership to deliver a Rough Sleeping Initiative, following a successful bid for funding in the sum of £130,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

It was noted that a progress report would be submitted to each committee after 6 months (from the signing of the SO42). Amongst other things, this would detail the success of the approach, including a breakdown of the number of rough sleepers, the number of cases alleviated and the number (if any) of recurrences, the continued need projected for the remaining period of the intervention (six months from the signing of the SO42), and if the issue of rough sleeping was not deemed to have ceased after 12 months, what measures were recommended and how they would be funded.

The Chairman asked Officers to note that the Urgent Action procedure should not be used instead of a report to the committees to extend the terms of the additional posts beyond the initial 12 months should this be considered necessary at the half-way point.

219 **Procurement of a Befriending Service for Runnymede**

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 paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

Members considered three options in respect of providing a Befriending Service in Runnymede. This had started life as a service delivered by Age UK Runnymede and Spelthorne, but which had ended in 2016 when that organisation closed. The Council had introduced a service during the pandemic, as requested by Members and several Officers had been redeployed from their normal duties to deliver it in house and they were thanked for their success.

However, it was recognised that in the longer term and with staff returning to their substantive roles, options needed to be considered. Members agreed that it was usually the case by the nature of Befriending, that the most suitably placed and appropriate organisations to deliver such a service, if it continued, were voluntary groups and charities in the heart of the community and with correct ethos to meet the needs of people who were likely to access a Befriending Service.

The Committee noted the important role of befriending to the community which extended beyond a response to the pandemic and discounted the option to end the existing service. Members concurred with the Officer view that providing the service in-house was not viable financially or in terms of sufficient staffing and that a voluntary/community organisation was the most appropriate body but that the Council should play a role in partnership with the successful tenderer to ensure opportunities to seek and obtain future funding were fully taken. This was because the Council had secured funding from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund in the sum reported to Procure a service for an initial two year period only after which the Befriending service would need to be independently sustainable. It was thought that the planned appointment of a new post of Bid Writer in the Council might be able to assist with this. Members noted that funding was agreed for a period of two years with continuation of support dependent on the financial position of the Council at the time.

The Committee was aware of local organisations capable of delivering the service and noted the legal implications in the report with regard to Contract Standing Orders. The Chairman agreed to seek clarification of the Procurement rules from the Principal Projects and Procurement Manager in consultation with the Corporate Head of Community Services in the context of ensuring social value and prudent use of public funds to deliver a successful partnership with a non-commercial local community based service.

Officers were happy to discuss with Members a suitable and appropriate matrix for performance indicators for the future service.

Members were very supportive of the preferred option to be recommended to Corporate Management Committee.

RESOLVED that –

Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve the proposals for the future delivery of Befriending services in Runnymede as set out in option 3 of the report at a cost of (as reported) to be funded from the money set aside for this purpose from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund.

220 **Woking Council - Careline**

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 paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Committee's approval was sought to pursue a new contract to transfer the Careline Service provided by Woking Borough Council to Runnymede from April 2022 to generate additional income for Safer Runnymede and support its future viability.

Members noted that Runnymede Careline had provided monitoring, assessment and installation services in the borough and to neighbouring authorities for over 20 years, and their reputation and consistently high standards was well recognised and appreciated.

Recently, Runnymede had embarked on a required digital transformation of its telecare offer with a new approach to integrated service delivery which facilitated the proposals as outlined in the report and would give further opportunities for expansion in the future subject to being sufficiently resourced. The financial and legal implications were noted and Officers were asked to clarify the terms of the lease/contract when confirmed and agreed.

As part of the report Members were also advised of a development in risk management which gave Runnymede an opportunity to take the lead in Disaster Recovery, fully endorsed by the Council's Head of Business Planning and supported by colleagues in Digital Services.

Officers in the Careline team were thanked for their continued work and the support they gave as a team to deliver Careline and Safer Runnymede

The Committee was pleased to support the recommendations accordingly.

RESOLVED that –

- i) Officers continue negotiations with Woking Borough Council on the transfer of their careline service to Safer Runnymede;**
- ii) a sum (as reported) is charged to Woking based on 1,700 clients, should they decide to move to Safer Runnymede;**
- iii) a sum (as reported) is allocated towards the purchase of an additional software licence if the transfer takes place; and**
- iv) a one-off sum of up to (as reported) is allocated from year one income to facilitate the migration of client data to Safer Runnymede.**

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman gave a vote of thanks and good wishes for the future to The Corporate Head of Community Development; Chris Hunt and Peter Winfield, Head of Green Space, both of whom would shortly be leaving the authority.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.22 pm)