

Runnymede Borough CouncilCORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE24 June 2021 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Committee present: Councillors N Prescott (Chairman), T Gracey (Vice-Chairman), A Alderson, D Cotty, M Cressey, L Gillham, J Gracey, M Heath, C Howorth, M Maddox, D Whyte and M Willingale.

Members of the Committee absent: None

Councillors D Clarke, R King, M Kusneraitis, P Snow, J Sohi and J Wilson also attended.

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Chairman read out the Fire Precautions.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Cotty had an Other Registerable Interest in respect of the item on the Committee's agenda on the Southampton to London Pipeline (SLP) Project which arose from his appointment as a Runnymede Borough Councillor on the Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group.

The Council's Monitoring Officer had granted Councillor Cotty a dispensation under paragraph 11.2 of the Code of Conduct for Members to remain in the room when the item on the Southampton to London Pipeline (SLP) Renewal Project was considered and to speak in relation to that item, if called by the Chairman to do so, and participate in the vote. This dispensation applied only for the duration of this Corporate Management Committee meeting.

AGILE WORKING EMPLOYMENT POLICY

The Committee considered a proposed Council employment policy on agile working. An officer project group had been considering the Council's approach to agile working. The group had considered a more flexible approach to work location and working style, the ICT implications, particularly telephony and the potential leasing out of part of the Civic Offices to bring in further income to assist the Council's financial position as well as enhancing joint working with public sector partners. The proposed Agile Working Policy had three categories of worker, namely agile, fixed and mobile and was a policy developed to provide the framework for the employment aspects of agile working. It had been considered by the Council's officer Senior leadership Team and Corporate Leadership Team and by the Human Resources (HR) Member Working Party. Consultation had begun with UNISON with the intention that the policy be introduced formally on 1 April 2022 and that an informal trial of agile working would commence from September 2021.

The layout of the Civic Offices would need to be re-organised to enable hot desking and maximise space utilisation and to take into account that post – Covid, many staff would expect to work partially at home and partially in the building. Agile working benefits included reduced time spent commuting and reduced pollution from travel.

UNISON had been positive about the policy in initial discussions and were seeking the zoning of hot desking so that staff engaged in a particular Council activity were located in the same zone. A Member suggested that not zoning staff according to their work area could have benefits in making staff aware of the work being done by other parts of the organisation. Another Member suggested that the policy should be person orientated and should make provision for those members of staff who might not be able to work from home.

The Committee approved the policy in principle subject to continuing consultation with UNISON and agreed to receive further reports on the outcome of the consultation, any further resource and/or legal implications, an Equality Screening/Impact Assessment and a Privacy Input Assessment

**RESOLVED that -**

- i) the Policy at Appendix 'B' to the agenda be approved in principle, subject to continuing consultation with UNISON; and**
- ii) the Committee receives further reports on the outcome of the consultation, any further resource and/or legal implications, an Equality Screening/Impact Assessment and a Privacy Impact Assessment.**

**2023 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES**

The Committee considered whether a submission should be made on behalf of the Council to the Boundary Commission for England on the proposed revised Parliamentary Constituencies. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) had published its proposals for the redrawing of the new parliamentary constituencies which would come into effect in 2023. As part of this process the Council had an opportunity to make a submission to the BCE.

The new proposals set out a new constituency containing the Runnymede wards apart from Egham Hythe and Egham Town which would be redistributed to form part of a new Windsor constituency and including four wards from Elmbridge Borough Council. The proposed name of this new constituency was Weybridge and Chertsey.

The Committee agreed that a submission would be made on behalf of the Council to the BCE on the proposed revised Parliamentary constituencies and that the Constitution Member Working Party would meet to define the scope and the framework of the submission. It was also agreed that the Council's Communications section should make the public aware of the review and seek their views through social media and any other appropriate means. Members were also asked to consult with residents in their wards to seek their views on the BCE's proposals. The Council could make representations on the geographical extent of the new constituency and also the proposed name for the new constituency.

The Committee indicated that the Council should oppose the loss of the word "Runnymede" in the proposed new name for the constituency and should oppose the loss of the two Egham wards proposed to be included as part of the new Windsor constituency. The Council would have to put forward proposals which would take into account the effect on neighbouring constituencies. Any proposals submitted would have to stay within the maximum and minimum population totals for each constituency set by the BCE.

**RESOLVED that -**

**a submission be made on behalf of the Council to the Boundary Commission for England on the proposed revised Parliamentary Constituencies.**

## DISESTABLISHMENT OF PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered a report recommending the disestablishment of the Property Acquisitions Sub-Committee.

At the Annual Council meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021, Council had noted that a report would be made to the 24 June 2021 Corporate Management Committee meeting seeking authority to disestablish the Property Acquisitions Sub-Committee. The function of the Property Acquisitions Sub -Committee, as set out on page 33 of the May 2021 Constitution of the Council, was to consider and approve property acquisitions up to a value of £10M. As any future property acquisitions with a value of less than £10M would be considered and approved by the Corporate Management Committee, the Property Acquisitions Sub-Committee no longer had a function and the Committee agreed that it be disestablished.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the Property Acquisitions Sub-Committee be disestablished.**

## VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY SCHEME PROGRAMME

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 considered a report setting out the overall financial position and details of the Council's Voluntary Redundancy initiative with recommendations on how to proceed and details of new posts recommended for addition to the establishment to be funded from some of the savings identified.

As a result of the Covid pandemic, the Council had suffered financial losses which would not be reimbursed by central Government. Savings of £2m would have to be made, either in efficiencies or income generation, in order to maintain a safe and sustainable level of reserves going forward. £1m of savings needed to be made in the current financial year. One way of making a significant amount of the £1m needed was a voluntary redundancy programme.

The Committee noted the results from the recent voluntary redundancy exercise and a table at Exempt Appendix '1' to the report summarising the financial position if officers' recommendations were approved. The Committee agreed to approve the officers' recommendations.

The savings generated by the voluntary redundancy programme would allow reinvestment in key posts and the Committee agreed that the posts set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report be added to the Council's establishment. As an alternative funding stream had been found for two Joint Enforcement Team officers, the resources set aside for those two posts for the next two years would be allocated instead to fund two Parking Enforcement Officers.

Arising out of the voluntary redundancy programme, the Committee authorised consultation to take place on the merger of the Community Development and Community Services Business Units and on a re-organisation of the Chief Executive's Office. A further report would be submitted to the Committee on the outcome of that consultation.

Reviews of the Council's Parking and Green Spaces Business Units were already taking place. The Committee also agreed that reviews be undertaken of key services over the next 6 to 9 months in the service areas as set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report. All of

these reviews would be overseen by the Service and Transformation Member Working Party and reported on to that Working Party and to the Corporate Management Committee.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) the results of the recent Voluntary Redundancy initiative and the financial implications, be noted;**
- ii) the list of staff to be informed that their voluntary redundancy applications have been successful or refused on service grounds, be approved;**
- iii) the funding of the costs of the Voluntary Redundancy exercise in the sum reported to be met in 2021/22 from capital resources, be agreed;**
- iv) the full year revenue saving to the General Fund be noted in the sum reported and the net full year revenue saving resulting from the approval of the posts in paragraph 4.2 of the report, be noted; and**
- v) the posts set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report be added to the Council's establishment at a full year cost in the sum reported.**

ADDLESTONE ONE UPDATE

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 report was withdrawn under Standing order 27.7. A revised report would be considered by the Service Chairs Member Working Party and would be submitted to the Corporate Management Committee meeting on 22 July 2021.

BARBARA CLARK HOUSE

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 considered a report recommending the sale of the Barbara Clark House site to a provider of affordable housing units in accordance with the terms set out in the report.

In January 2020 permission had been given by the Committee enter into a construction contract in respect of the land formerly known as Ashdene House and now known as Barbara Clark House. However, the costs of the construction contract had increased for various reasons which were set out in the report and it was no longer financially viable. Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the construction contract documents should not be signed.

An offer had been received from a provider of affordable housing to buy the Barbara Clark House site and build out the scheme in accordance with the planning permission granted. The terms of the offer made were noted. It was noted that it would not be viable for the Council to build out the scheme. The legal and financial considerations relating to the method of disposal were noted and an external valuer recommendation would have to satisfy the criteria set out in the report in order for the sale to proceed. The Committee agreed that the offer be accepted along with a restriction on the title that any properties developed on the site were only to be used for affordable accommodation.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) provided that the external valuer recommendation satisfies the criteria set out in the report, the freehold site of Barbara Clark House be sold for affordable housing to the provider specified for the sum reported along with a restriction on the title that any properties developed on the site are only to be used for affordable accommodation; and**
- ii) upon receipt of the external valuer recommendation, provided that the criteria set out in the report are satisfied, delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, Corporate Head of Law and Governance and Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration to sign off the transaction at resolution i) above in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.**

**LEASEHOLD SURRENDERS**

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 considered a report proposing that two commercial leases be surrendered and took into account professional advice provided to Commercial Services regarding these surrenders.

One of the surrenders would allow the Council to achieve a new letting at a rent equivalent to or higher than the existing rental. For the other surrender, the offer by a new company (which had been allowed to trade by the Administrator following voluntary liquidation) to continue in occupation on the terms reported was acceptable, in view of the significant effect on sales resulting from the Covid crisis and the difficulty in letting the unit in the current market.

The revised budget for 2020/21 approved by Members in February 2021 included a provision for bad debt on commercial property allowing unrecovered rent to be offset, thus avoiding the need to draw on the General Fund for transactions such as lease surrenders and the writing-off of rents. The Medium Term Financial Strategy had made a small provision for lost future income on the assumption that any post Covid reletting would be at lower rental levels.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) the surrender of the lease for the tenant as specified in the report be agreed in return for the tenant paying the Council a surrender premium in the sum reported and the rent that would have been payable to the end of the original lease term in respect of this tenant be written-off; and**
- ii) the surrender of the lease currently held by the Administrator for the tenant as specified in the report be agreed and all rent that cannot be recovered in respect of this tenant be written-off.**

**RECRUITMENT FOR APPOINTMENT OF NEW ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (RESOURCES)**

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 considered the arrangements for the appointment of a new Assistant Chief Executive (Resources). The Appointments Sub-Committee had been unable to make an appointment to this post which administered Runnymede's financial affairs under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Committee considered various options for appointing a new Assistant Chief Executive (Resources) and agreed that recruitment should be undertaken on the basis of a more precise job description and person specification based on Finance and Section 151 functions rather than seeking a more generic manager. It was noted that this might result in a need to amend the functions of other senior managers in the Council.

The Council's current Personnel Policies and Standing Orders required, in the case of a Chief Officer appointment, that the Committee appoint an Appointments Sub-Committee. The establishment of the Appointments Sub-Committee approved by the Committee in February 2021 did not specify that it would continue to operate should an appointment not be made and it was agreed that the former Appointments Sub-Committee be disestablished and a new Appointments Sub-Committee be constituted from the newly appointed Members of the Corporate Management Committee following the recent elections. The Committee agreed that the Sub-Committee should consist of seven Members drawn from the membership of the Committee, consisting of 4 Conservative Group Members and one Member from each of the Runnymede Independent Residents' Group, the Liberal Democrat Group and the Independent Group Members of the Council. This satisfied the political balance requirements.

It was agreed that the Sub-Committee would make a recommendation as to the candidate to be offered the position which would be reported to the Corporate Management Committee. Following the assessment process and interviews, a meeting of the Council would consider the recommendation for appointment to the post of Assistant Chief Executive (Resources). The Committee approved the details of the appointment process to be followed as set out in the report. The sum set aside for a consultancy to assist the Council in recruitment could be recouped from the underspend on the full time salary of the existing Assistant Chief Executive (Resources) who had agreed to continue in post on a part time basis.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) a sum as reported be set aside to employ an appropriate consultancy to assist the Council in the recruitment of a new Assistant Chief Executive (Resources);**
- ii) the Council appoints a new Assistant Chief Executive (Resources) on the basis of a more precise job description and person specification based on Finance and Section 151 functions rather than seeking a more generic manager;**
- iii) the process for recruitment be noted and approved;**
- iv) the former Appointments Sub-Committee be disestablished;**
- v) a new Appointments Sub-Committee be constituted comprising seven Members and**
  - a) the Appointments Sub-Committee will conduct interviews of suitable candidates after a shortlist has been prepared by appropriate senior**

**staff, specialist recruitment and consultancy services and/or other appropriate persons who shall act as advisers to the Sub-Committee;**

**b) the Appointments Sub-Committee will make a recommendation as to the candidate to be offered the position;**

**c) the Sub-Committee's decision will be reported to the Corporate Management Committee; and**

**d) following the assessment process and interviews, a meeting of the Council will consider the recommendations for appointment to the post of new Assistant Chief Executive (Resources).**

### SOUTHAMPTON TO LONDON PIPELINE (SLP) RENEWAL PROJECT

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 considered whether to accept the proposal from Esso regarding mitigation of the impact of the Southampton to London Pipeline (SLP) project by way of a series of agreements and noted a report which set out the terms of the agreements in detail.

Esso were renewing a pipeline containing aviation fuel which ran underground from Southampton to London. This renewal was known as the Southampton to London (SLP) project. The pipeline crossed over land that was owned and managed by the Council and in particular, Chertsey Meads. As a landowner, the Council was entitled to be compensated by Esso for laying a new pipeline beneath Council land. The Council had instructed a firm of specialist surveyors to act on behalf of the Council in this matter in order to obtain an appropriate settlement. Officers had negotiated with Esso and had now obtained a final proposal from Esso which was recommended for acceptance. The firm of specialist surveyors instructed by the Council had advised that, in their professional opinion, the terms were the best that could reasonably be negotiated in the market and represented best value.

The Committee agreed to accept the proposal from Esso set out in detail in the report and authorised officers to finalise and approve a Deed of Easement, an Options Agreement and an Environmental Investment Payment Side Letter (EIP) Side Letter. It was also agreed that the Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group would be provided with a copy of the Minute on this item at the earliest opportunity.

Officers agreed to check on the arrangements for signage associated with the project on Chertsey Meads and advise the Committee. It was agreed that the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the Ward Councillors for Chertsey Meads would receive a communications plan for the project. Officers would advise Members whether a leisure facility on the plan at page 118 of the agenda would still be available during the project and it was agreed that local residents would be advised of a contact person at Esso if they wished to report any concerns in connection with the project.

It was noted that the payment to be received by the Council that was set out in the EIP Side Letter had to be expended on environmental projects for Chertsey Meads. It was suggested by a Member that the Council might consider whether all payments received by the Council arising out of these agreements should be ringfenced for environmental projects.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) the proposal from Esso regarding the Southampton to London Pipeline (SLP) as set out in the report, be agreed;**
- ii) the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Head of Law and Governance be authorised to finalise and approve the following documents:
  - a. Deed of Easement**
  - b. Options Agreement**
  - c. Environmental Investment Payment Side Letter (EIP) Letter; and****
- iii) the Membership of the Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group be provided with a copy of the Minute on this item at the earliest opportunity.**

(The meeting ended at 9.13. p.m.)

Chairman