

Runnymede Borough CouncilCORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE23 September 2021 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Committee present: Councillors T Gracey (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), D Cotty, M Cressey, L Gillham, J Gracey, M Heath, C Howorth, M Maddox, I Mullens, D Whyte, J Wilson and M Willingale.

Members of the Committee absent: None

229 FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Chairman read out the Fire Precautions.

230 NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Groups mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive of their wish that the changes listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The changes were for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillors removed would be reappointed.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Remove From Membership</u>	<u>Appoint Instead</u>
Conservative	Councillor N Prescott (Chairman)	Councillor J Wilson
Runnymede Independent Residents'	Councillor A Alderson	Councillor I Mullens

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

231 REFERENCE FROM HOUSING COMMITTEE – UPGRADE OF HOUSING IT SYSTEM

The Committee considered a reference from the Housing Committee which at its meeting on 8 September 2021 had made five recommendations on an upgrade of the Housing IT System. Additional wording had been added by officers to these Housing Committee recommendations which set out the means by which the supplementary estimates would be funded and the first recommendation had been amended by officers to clarify that it covered modules approved previously and modules now being recommended to facilitate mobile working. The supplementary estimates required the approval of the Corporate Management Committee.

In 2020 the Council had entered into a new contract with the incumbent supplier, Northgate (now known as NEC Software Solutions) for a number of the Council's back-office systems, including the Housing system. Since approval had been granted for the new contract, the Council's Digital Transformation Programme had delivered much needed system upgrades across the entire organisation.

In June 2021, the Housing Committee had been advised of the need to commit additional resources to the IT upgrade project for phase 2 to ensure that a number of essential complex modules could be implemented within the required timescales. Officers had been working with Digital Services and the provider, NEC and the Corporate Management Committee considered a report which advised them of the detailed plan for implementation and the resources required to fulfil this.

The original capital budget had allocated £150,000 for the Housing element of the Northgate project. This was to be spent on software (£50,000), consultancy (£25,000) and backfilling resources (£65,000). £25,000 had been committed for consultancy for phase 1 and a total of £34,650 had been spent on enhancement for implementation duties and backfilling existing posts.

The Housing Systems Roadmap for phase 2 included implementation of modules for Asset Management, Risk Management, Planned Maintenance, Support Services, Task Manager and Communications. NEC had worked with Digital Services and Housing to formulate a project plan and the Committee noted a summary of this project plan at Appendix 'A' to the agenda. Details of the cashable and non-cashable efficiencies delivered by the project were noted as outlined in Appendix 'B' to the agenda.

Capital costs would be incurred of £78,194 for modules previously approved for purchase as part of the new contract which now required capital resources to enable their implementation. Capital costs were also recommended for mobile working modules in the sum of £38,500. Therefore the total capital costs for modules were £116,694. Annual revenue costs of £13,500 were also required for mobile working.

Additional human resources digital costs totalled £129,688 which were needed to provide a project implementation resource. Additional staffing would be brought in to support the implementation of the project. Some additional capacity would also be identified for Housing implementation and testing. A meeting with the Chief Executive, Corporate Heads from Housing, Digital Services and Finance, the Digital Implementation and Delivery Manager and the Head of the Project Management Office would be held to agree what additional capacity was required and where it would be located. Extra capacity would be identified within the maximum human resources cost of £129,688.

The implementation of the Housing Systems Roadmap would be a new project delivered within the Council's project portfolio with the project sponsored by the Corporate Head of Housing and overseen within the Council's Project Management Office. A project team would be set up to oversee the project, which would include a project manager, senior staff from Digital Services, subject matter experts from within the Housing service and consultancy from NEC. A designated project manager would be assigned from NEC who would attend monthly project boards and provide monthly NEC project updates to ensure adherence to timescales. The Service Transformation Member Working Party would monitor the progress of the project via monthly updates.

A waiver to Contract Standing Orders was required as the recommendations in the report would incur costs of a value in excess of £100,000 and the uplift needed for additional services was greater than 10% of the original contract value. As the requirements were intrinsically linked to the Council's Housing System already in place it was agreed that a change control notice be invoked on the direct award contract to account for the additional scope of services being procured and that the Corporate Head of Law and Governance be authorised to enter or execute under seal any contractual documentation to fulfil the change contract.

The Committee approved the expenditure required for the upgrade of the Housing IT system noting that the current level of system upgrade was exceptional due to decades of under investment and that the expenditure would be met from the Housing Revenue Account not the General Fund. In fulfilment of its landlord and statutory duties the Council had to record data on its activities for submission in regular Government returns, to demonstrate compliance with policies if required and to meet increasingly demanding regulatory standards. As the expectations on social landlords had increased beyond traditional landlord functions, it was essential that the Council had Housing IT systems that were able to provide the robust data required for these various purposes.

RESOLVED that –

- i) a supplementary capital estimate in the sum of £116,694 be approved to be used to implement modules approved and implement new modules to facilitate mobile working within the ongoing Housing NEC system upgrade to be financed from HRA revenue reserves;**
- ii) an HRA supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £13,500 be approved for support and maintenance of new mobile capabilities within the phase 2 project;**
- iii) a supplementary capital estimate in the sum of £129,688 be approved to be used to recruit internal resources for the implementation to be financed from HRA revenue reserves;**
- iv) a waiver to Contract Standing Orders be approved to permit the additional services not contracted for in the original contract with Northgate as the uplift required for additional services is greater than 10% of the original contract value; and**
- v) the Corporate Head of Law and Governance be authorised to enter or execute under seal any contractual documentation to fulfil the change contract.**

232 COVID EVENTS

The Committee considered a report describing the plans for ‘thank you’ events for members of the community who either volunteered their support or worked beyond the call of duty during the recent Covid crisis. The Committee asked that its appreciation of the work of the community and volunteers in the Covid crisis be recorded and agreed that an appropriate way should be found to thank those who had been instrumental in the community response. It supported the principle of holding one or more Covid events and agreed that the event or events should preferably be held within the current Mayoral Year and that officers would report back by no later than the February 2022 Corporate Management Committee meeting on the proposed arrangements, budget and invitational details.

The Committee did not support the proposal in the report to hold two separate events in November 2021. It was agreed that the event (s) should be held in the spring of 2022 given the current uncertainties about the spread of Covid and another spike in cases. There had been an overall increase in Covid cases in Surrey recently of 8% and an increase in cases in three Surrey districts of over 20%. There was therefore some doubt about whether it would be appropriate to go ahead with events in November.

On the basis of inviting around 400 people, it was noted that it should be possible to contain the cost of the event to no more than £15,000 and the Committee agreed that officers should proceed on this basis rather than spending £25,000 as proposed in the report. The Committee expressed a preference for the event(s) to be held in a community hall or in some kind of community setting if possible.

The Committee also agreed that further work be done on establishing who should be invited to these event(s). It was noted that many people had volunteered during the Covid crisis who were not members of charities or voluntary organisations. Officers had proposed that attendees at the event(s) be given a small token of appreciation. The Committee did not support a key ring which was a suggestion put forward in the report as it did not consider that this represented value for money and it was agreed that as part of a potential revised proposal, officers should report back on the possibility and cost of providing some other form of gift.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the principle of holding one or more Covid events (preferably within the current Mayoral Year) be supported;**
- ii) given the current uncertainties about the spread of Covid and another spike in cases, the proposed arrangements scheduled for November 2021 be postponed and given further consideration [with a view to event(s) taking place in spring 2022];**
- iii) Officers be instructed to report back on a potential revised proposal to be contained within a budget of no more than £15,000;**
- iv) this Committee receives a report on the proposed arrangements, budget and invitational details by no later than the February 2022 Corporate Management Committee meeting.**

233 REFERENCE FROM COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 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.

The Committee considered a report submitted to the Community Services Committee which at its meeting on 16 September 2021 had considered three options for the future delivery of Befriending services in Runnymede. The three options were to end the Befriending service, to continue to provide it in house or for it to be delivered for a limited period by a partner organisation. Befriending services offered supportive, reliable relationships through volunteer befrienders to people who would otherwise be socially isolated. The Council had introduced a Befriending service during the Covid pandemic and several officers had been redeployed from their normal duties to deliver it in house. In the longer term and with staff returning to their normal roles, options for the future of the service needed to be considered.

The Community Services Committee had noted the important role of Befriending in the community and had agreed that the Befriending services should continue. The Community Services Committee had agreed that providing the service in house should not be continued as this option was not financially viable and had recommended that the option of the service being provided by a partner organisation for a limited period should be pursued.

As part of the Council's response to the Covid pandemic it had received funding from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). A sum from this funding could be set aside for the procurement of a Befriending service for Runnymede. A third party would be procured to deliver the service and the Council would provide resources for the work of that third party through the COMF funding in the sum reported which would be for a two year period only after which the Befriending service would require further funding in order to continue. The partner organisation's performance would be monitored by the Council. This provider would work in partnership with Runnymede Borough Council to ensure that opportunities to seek and obtain future funding were identified.

The Corporate Management Committee recognised the valuable role of befriending services which complemented other services such as Social Prescribing and Homesafe Plus, the Council's hospital discharge service. It was suggested that pet ownership had a similar beneficial effect to befriending and it was noted that officers were reviewing Council Housing policies on ownership of pets and would be reporting on this issue to the Housing and Enabling Member Working Party.

The Corporate Management Committee concurred with the Community Services Committee's recommendation and noted that the COMF funding was for a period of two years and that continuation of the service beyond that period would be dependent on the financial position of the Council at that time and on whether alternative funding had been secured beyond the two year period.

RESOLVED that –

Befriending services in Runnymede be delivered by a partner organisation for a two year period at a cost in the sum reported to be funded from the money set aside for this purpose from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund.

(The meeting ended at 8.09.p.m.)

Chairman