

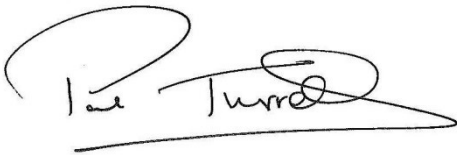
18 September, 2020

Dear Councillor

SUMMONS TO AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

I hereby summon you to attend the Extraordinary meeting of the Council to be held on **Monday 28 September, 2020 at 7.30pm.**

This meeting will be held remotely via MS Teams with audio access to the public for the Part 1 items via registered dial-in only.



PAUL TURRELL
Chief Executive
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NOTE:

If any member of the public wishes to hear the debate by audio via MS Teams you must register by 10am on the day of the meeting with the Democratic Services Team by emailing your name and contact number to be used to dial-in to democratic.services@runnymede.gov.uk

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

If Members have an interest in an item, please record the interest on the form circulated with this Agenda and email it to the Democratic Services Manager by 5pm on the day of the meeting. Members are advised to contact the Corporate Head of Law and Governance prior to the meeting if they wish to seek advice on a potential interest.

3. MOTION BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - RE-ORGANISATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Members will be aware that the Government has given notice that it intends to publish a White Paper on Devolution, recovery from Covid and Local Government Re-organisation.

Before the White Paper has been published, Surrey County Council (SCC) has made its position clear. It favours one single unitary authority for the whole County representing nearly 1.2 m people. SCC has commissioned Price Waterhouse Coopers to develop a business case in support of the single unitary model. It is quite clear now that SCC has been working on this model for some months, without the knowledge of districts and boroughs.

District and Borough Leaders unanimously agree that this pre-emptive move is designed to prevent analysis of all of the options that could and should be considered. These include:

- The status quo;
- 'Super districts and boroughs' with more devolved powers;
- One, two or three unitary authorities for Surrey (bearing in mind that the Government's stated preferred option is for unitary authorities serving between 300,000 and 600,000 people).

KPMG have been commissioned to examine all of these options and there will be a workshop involving all Leaders and Chief Executives in early October to analyse what would work best for Surrey residents. We will have in mind democratic representation and accountability, the characteristics and identity of the various parts of Surrey as well as value for money and efficiency. My strong view is that we must balance producing good quality services, allowing people access to services and to the elected Members that represent them with the potential savings that could accrue. This is not just an argument about saving money but about building on what works well.

I intend to report back to all Members on the findings from the first workshop. The outcome from that workshop is the distillation of all options into a single preferred model upon which a business case can be built. Later in October, there will be a second workshop to consider the business case around that option. Members-I am sorry that that this is all happening so fast and against a backdrop of uncertainty about when and how the White Paper will be published. However, Surrey CC have shown their intent to submit their business case to the Secretary of State at the earliest opportunity and we need to be prepared to submit an alternative proposal should that be the outcome from the workshops.

I call upon this Council:

- To fully support the work stated by Districts and Boroughs to examine a series of options for the future organisation of local government in Surrey;

- To note the timetable and that I will keep Members informed of progress through the workshops organised by KPMG; and
- To support the business case preferred by Districts and Boroughs to be brought back to full Council in November for debate and approval.

4 **RUNNYMEDE TRAVEL INITIATIVE**

Report to follow separately.

5 **BUDGET UPDATE**

Report to follow separately.

6. **PETITIONS**

To receive any petitions from Members of the Council under Standing Order No 19.

7. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 13**

No questions have been received from Members of the Council by the deadline.

8. **NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 15**

No Notices of Motion have been received from Members of the Council under Standing Order 15 by the deadline.

9. **MINORITY GROUP PRIORITY BUSINESS**

- To consider the item of Minority Group Priority Business registered under Standing Order 23 as set out below:

Community School Bus Service

Minority Group Priority Business presented by Cllr Michael Kusneraitis & Cllr Stewart Mackay from the Runnymede Residents and Community Group (RRCG):

As we are all aware, the Yellow Bus service contract has after nearly twenty years finally come to an end.

The financial constraints on RBC has led to Councillors on the Corporate Management Committee, despite the Community Services Committee expressing a 100% vote to support the service, having to take the unfortunate decision to not look into the renewing of the Yellow Bus contract.

This has left a massive hole in the provision of school transport, leaving many parents distraught, angry, and upset, with little option on how to have their children make the journey to school.

At the RRCG we have listened to the many discussions that our fellow Councillors have been having, we have attended meetings with parents via zoom calls, supported fellow Cllr Nigel King as the then Chairman of Community Services Committee.

We like others were supportive, in his desire to preserve one of the finest non-discretionary services we at RBC have provided.

Through these discussions, the idea of a provision of a community bus arose, whilst it was sadly not a council project, which means it has had to be progressed without officer support so far.

To his credit through our discussions Cllr Prescott has opened the door, allowing Conservative Members, and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Community Services Committee available for discussions.

First objective we needed to establish, if the need for the service existed.

After contacting the schools of Runnymede the response has been outstanding with nearly 400 children's parents responding, responding with a very strong desire to use such a service, this number has been achieved in less than one month! almost a third higher than the previous service of 20 years.

Director level Contact has been made with a suitable bus company that has the ability to meet the demands and needs of such a service, they have a modern fleet of ULEZ compliant buses, through the constant dialogue there has been a set of bus routes and timetables constructed, all of which are in the document which will have been circulated to you all via email prior to this meeting.

There are many issues for us all to consider ranging from the carbon foot print of the extra vehicles now being forced to deliver the children to their schools, considerations to the risk of affecting the 999 ambulance responses surrounding St Peters Hospital, which is in the direct routing from Salesians School.

To date the buses are ready to go, contact has been made with some of the boroughs community groups to consider passing the management structure to them.

So we as elected Members should discuss can we make this a viable project to replace the uneconomical not eco green friendly yellow buses, whilst the Council is exploring the option of bringing the service in house as a community travel initiative surely we have a duty to explore all options.

I would suggest we explore the option that the Council should become a partner to the community service, in this light we can have a clear financial position with a fixed financial outlay, instead of the previous bottomless pit of nearly half a million pounds, to this end we would suggest a minimum of £30K per term (current budget £95,000 per term) this would allow the community service to become cost affordable and viable to parents.

It is important as we are all acutely aware, that we jointly all work to reduce the Council's carbon footprint, and keep the children attending these schools in a safe school bubble, the alternative to using public transport with the high risk of cross contamination as they will be using buses, trains, cycles and footpaths, shared by those trying to return to work, elderly trying to go shopping, in the winter months do we really desire to see the roads being used in this fashion? With children arriving at school cold wet and possibly hungry. Already here in Runnymede with the first week of return to school, we are seeing cases of Covid related incidents occurring in our schools.

When for a small fixed investment, we can return a school dedicated service with many other fringe benefits to the schools and us as a Council, with officer support we would have an excellent option to see if using this contracted service via the community may even be far more cost saving than purchasing in house buses.

We would like to see the two services compared in a full report, as for example the current plan to buy 16 seat mini buses we believe simply could not cope with the volume of interest being shown here, these numbers will undoubtedly expand as more parents see the value of such a service.

Using a simple equation of 400 pupils divided by 14 seats equals 28.5 mini buses (I have used 14 as the seats of the mini bus as common best practice the two seats in front are not normally used to avoid distractions to drivers) the contracted service is for a fixed price for the service, with zero

cost to RBC for maintenance, no staffing cost or hiring of drivers, no pensions, as well as zero fuel cost and no storage costs for parking, no Insurance costs or taxation of vehicles. with another upside of this deal being that bus company is willing to provide use for school trips at very attractive rates.

Again, this we feel, needs the consideration of full Council, so we may provide clear guidance to officers of our visions and aspirations as a Council.

We will also be asking this as an agenda item is attended with a recorded vote.

We would like to send the message from full Council that the community bus scheme should go back to officers with enough resources to verify the information within the business plan that we should all have now seen and read.

Then this option be presented alongside any initiative to bring this service "in house". We would like both presentations to be presented side by side at an extra special full Council meeting arranged as early as possible but ideally not longer than 1 month from this meeting.

We feel this option is important, for as a Council clearly we have duty to find best value for money for our Council and our residents.

10. **PRESS AND PUBLIC TO BE EXCLUDED BY RESOLUTION**

To consider any items so resolved at the meeting.