

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

10 December, 2020 at 7.30 pm via MS Teams

The Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor E Gill) in the chair.

Members of the Council present Councillors M Adams, A Alderson, D Anderson-Bassey, J Broadhead, T Burton, I Chaudhri, D Clarke, D Cotty, M Cressey, S Dennett, R Edis, J R Furey, E Gill, L Gillham, J Gracey, T Gracey, M Harnden, M Heath, C Howorth, J Hulley, N King, R King, M Kusneraitis, S Lewis, M Maddox, I Mullens, A Neathey, M Nuti, J Olorenshaw, N Prescott, P Snow, J Sohi, P Sohi, S Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte and M Willingale

Members of the Council absent: Councillors M Brierley, B A Clarke, S Mackay and J Wilson.

342 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made her announcements.

343 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22 October ,2020 were confirmed and signed as correct record.

344 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Wilson.

345 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 12

Question from Deborah Long, a local resident: -

'Three quarters of UK local councils have declared a Climate Emergency, with more than half committing to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030 or sooner. Why is Runnymede Council still stalling on this vital declaration? When will you declare a Climate Emergency?'

Cllr Heath, Chairman of Environment and Sustainability Committee, gave a comprehensive response to the question which would be forwarded to both public speakers and all Members of the Council after the meeting.

Cllr Heath reported that the Council had been working on reducing our carbon footprint and being more sustainable for a number of years.

Cllr Heath commented that any work the Council did on climate change was bigger than an emergency, it had to be long-term, strategic, and it must be result driven, not rhetoric and not soundbites. Whilst Cllr Heath was not strongly against the notion of this Council declaring a climate change emergency, she considered it was more important to demonstrate to residents' real action and a plan to deliver more. She was unconvinced that declaring an emergency would actually move the Council forward in any way and there were numerous examples of councils who had declared an emergency and yet had not delivered much. The priority for Runnymede would be to get on with making things happen in many different small and large ways and that is

what Members had directed officers to do. Cllr Heath accepted that the Council could have been clearer about the work which was being done which could alleviate concerns that the Council was not taking climate change as a top priority.

Cllr Heath accepted that there was a pressing need for individuals, businesses and organisations to take urgent action to limit the existing negative effects of climate change. Members accepted this was a resident priority. Actions to reduce our effect on the climate and environment were integral to the Council's work.

The Council was in the process of bringing its existing climate change policies and actions into an integrated climate change and sustainability strategy. This was due for completion before Spring next year and all Members would have the chance to shape that Strategy.

Alongside that Strategy, Cllr Heath flagged up some of the recent steps the Council had taken to demonstrate its commitment in the areas of Planning, Environmental Impact assessments, Asset Management, Housing stock, Waste Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Major Infrastructure Projects and these would be fully set out in the response to public and Members.

In response, Ms Long asked about Biodiversity loss and what Policies and budget the Council had in relation thereto and where these could be viewed. Ms Long also asked whether the Council still used pesticides on roadsides and verges and if so, whether to reduce maintenance costs they should be substituted by rewilding.

Cllr Heath mentioned that Policies were interwoven into Local Plan Policies and that the Council had reduced pesticide usage. A fuller written response including budgetary information would be sent to the public speaker after the meeting.

Question from Aileen Owen Davies, a local resident: -

'With Climate Change becoming ever more irreversible, creating disaster on a worldwide scale, will the Council now declare a Climate Emergency?

Up and down the land councils have done so and are now adjusting their policies to the National Commitment to attain Zero Carbon by 2030. Why hasn't Runnymede also declared a zero-carbon commitment and the full recognition of the Climate Emergency?'

In support of her question, Ms Davies sought information on carbon reduction targets and associated timeframe, the Borough and County Council budget allocation on Sustainability and Guidance on green energy (e.g. solar panels) for new builds.

As the question was similar to that asked by the previous speaker, Cllr Heath referred to her earlier answer which would be sent out after the meeting. Cllr Heath would ask Officers to obtain the budgetary information and confirmed that the future Climate Change Strategy would address the issues raised by Ms Davies.

346 PETITIONS

No petitions had been submitted by Members of the Council under Standing Order No 19.

347 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 13

Question from Councillor S Whyte to the Leader of the Council

'I note that the Natural England guidelines (2008) which we are planning to use as guidelines for the creation of SANG's in Runnymede, does not explicitly include accessibility for wheelchair users and other mobility aids.

Whilst I understand that these are national guidelines, does the Leader agree with me that with the number of new dwellings planned in the current Runnymede Local Plan, that

Runnymede Borough Council should be setting an example to other Local Authorities and ensure that any new SANG's created in the borough are as inclusive as possible for all residents and will have suitable access for users including those that rely on mobility aids such as wheelchairs?'

In response, the Leader of the Council stated that The Natural England guidance for SANG creation and repeated in the draft Thames Basin Heaths Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) did not make reference to provision of parking spaces for those with limited mobility. However, the County Council's parking standards (January 2018) require 5% of total parking spaces be provided for non-residential development. This would appear to include parking provided at SANG. An explicit reference to this could be made in the Council's draft Parking SPD when approved for public consultation to confirm that this 5% requirement applied to new SANG created in the Borough.

Cllr Whyte noted the answer but reported a problem of access at the SANG at Chertsey Common. Cllr D Whyte also asked for a commitment that all SANGS had proper access for persons with mobility difficulties.

The Leader of the Council would consult Officers and respond to the Councillors concerned after the meeting.

Question from Councillor Neathey to the Leader of the Council

'In Runnymede there are many heroes of the Corvid 19 pandemic including of course NHS workers, Council Officers, Teachers, the Police and other key workers like our local retail workers. Does the Leader of the Council agree with me that all of them deserve our thanks and ongoing support both during and after the pandemic? '

The Leader of the Council expressed his thanks to all involved and Officers /Members who had assisted the community since March and confirmed that appropriate ways would be found to recognise those who had assisted.

In response Cllr Neathey drew attention to national statistics which showed that shopworkers had been subjected to increased abuse and assaults during the pandemic and asked what RBC could do to help address this problem.

The Leader of the Council did not have statistics for the borough but was not personally aware of any particular issues. However, he would ask the local chambers of commerce if they had any information thereon.

348 RECOMMENDATION FROM LICENSING COMMITTEE – 10 NOVEMBER 2020 - LICENSING ACT 2003 – STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY 2021 – 2026

Council considered a recommendation from the Licensing Committee which had met on 10 November 2020 regarding approval of an updated Statement of Licensing Policy to address all matters under the remit of the Licensing Act 2003

Officers and Members of the Licensing Committee were thanked for their work on the Policy, and it was.

RESOLVED that –

the amended Statement of Licensing Policy be adopted from 7 January 2021 to 6 January 2026.

349 RECOMMENDATION FROM CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE -19 NOVEMBER 2020- PAPERLESS TRANSMISSION OF AGENDAS AND SUPPORTING PAPERS

Council considered a recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee which had been held on 19 November 2020 for a policy on increased roll out of paperless transmission of agendas and supporting papers and the working up of a business case for the Mod.Gov Committee management system which offered a paperless meeting app and other governance features

Since May 2015 all Councillors had been receiving agendas electronically for all Committee meetings. Hard copy distribution had continued for those Members who requested receipt of hard copies. In September 2019, the Corporate Management Committee had agreed to allow for preparation and consideration of a business case for the introduction of Mod. Gov from January 2021 and a move to the paperless process from that date and for the contract with the current supplier (Blue Mushroom in Chertsey) to be extended until 31 December 2020. This project had been included in the project portfolio for the financial year 2020/21 but in view of the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's financial position, this project had subsequently been deferred by the Committee to the 2021/22 financial year, subject to an extension of the current print contract with Blue Mushroom for another year until December 2021. Blue Mushroom had indicated in informal discussions that they would be prepared to extend the contract for another year on the existing rates. The Corporate Management Committee had expressed their appreciation of the excellent service provided by Blue Mushroom.

Since that decision and separate from the Mod.Gov initiative, the Service and Digital Transformation Member Working Party and the Leader of the Council had recently asked for the Council to progress going paperless for agendas and supporting papers. To achieve this objective, Corporate Management committee proactively invited Members to consider opting in under the law to receipt of papers electronically from 1 January 2021 and to agree to receive all papers electronically from May 2021. This phased approach would allow Group leaders to canvass opinion within their respective Groups and officers to assess take up from Members as this would dictate the residual requirement for hard copy printing and give Members time to adapt to this new way of operation.

In view of the likelihood of Committee meetings continuing on MS Teams until May 2021 and the work that was being undertaken on webcasting meetings, and as implementing Mod.Gov would impact the whole Council organisation, a substantial lead in time up until 31 December 2021 would be required to prepare a business case for the introduction of Mod.Gov on 1 January 2022. In the interim period, Members would be proactively encouraged by other Members who had moved to a paperless way of working to also agree to work in that way. In order to ensure that residual print requirements could be assessed and statutory requirements for agenda despatch were met during the interim period, and as the current Multi-Functional Devices in the Civic Centre would not be suitable for large volume print jobs and it would be detrimental to service delivery for officer time to be spent printing hard copies of agenda, it was proposed that the contract with Blue Mushroom would be extended until 31 December 2021 on the existing rates. The proposed policy's potential impact on anyone with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 had been considered and an Equality Screening Assessment had been undertaken which was noted by Members.

Under the law, no Member could be compelled to consent to receive agenda electronically and a Member could withdraw any consent given. Nor could any person be prohibited from standing as a Councillor because they refused to receive agenda papers electronically. Since Committee and Full Council meetings had been held remotely by MS Teams from April 2020 following the outbreak of Covid, the Member demand for paper copies had increased slightly as some of the 12 Members who had accepted electronic copies hitherto had found it unwieldy to both be present on MS Teams and also to access the agenda papers on the same device at the same time.

The Leader of the Council advised Council that eight of the other eleven Surrey district Councils had either moved to Mod.Gov or were moving towards Mod.Gov. He advised that Members would find it easier to access pages electronically under the Mod.Gov system. At present some Members found it difficult to work electronically at Committees when there were a number of

different papers to look at rather than all of the paperwork being in one or two complete packages. It was understood that referring to a number of different documents at a Committee would be less problematic under Mod.Gov.

Training would be provided for Members if the paperless approach was adopted which would also assist some Members in making full use of the digital devices which they had received. Members were advised that they should contact Digital Services if they required training on any information technology issue.

Members were generally supportive of encouraging a greater move to digital, but some Members did have concerns over receiving Planning Agenda papers digitally in view of their size and content.

RESOLVED that -

- i) Members be encouraged to opt into receipt of electronic agendas and supporting papers from 1 January 2021, and from May 2021 all Members consider agreeing to receipt of all agendas and supporting papers in electronic form only;**
- ii) officers be authorised to prepare a business case on the Mod. Gov Committee management system with a view to its introduction on 1 January 2022; and**
- iii) to ensure residual print requirements can be assessed and statutory requirements for agenda despatch are met during the interim period whilst work is undertaken on i) and ii) above, the contract with Blue Mushroom in Chertsey be extended until 31 December 2021 on the existing rates.**

350 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 15

Council received and considered the following Motion submitted by Councillor Neathey, which was seconded by Councillor R King who also asked for the names of those voting to be recorded under Standing Order 25.2.

Labour and Coop motion: Fair Tax Mark

That the Corporate Management Committee form a report and recommendation for full council before the end of the municipal year which considers the following plan of action as recommended by the Fair Tax Mark organisation:

1. Approve the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration:
<https://fairtaxmark.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Declaration-19-09-.pdf>
- 1.1. Lead by example and demonstrate good practice in our tax conduct, right across our activities.
 - 1.1.1. Ensure contractors implement IR35 robustly and pay a fair share of employment taxes.
 - 1.1.2. Not use offshore vehicles for the purchase of land and property, especially where this leads to reduced payments of stamp duty.
 - 1.1.3. Undertake due diligence to ensure that not-for-profit structures are not being used inappropriately as an artificial device to reduce the payment of tax and business rates.
 - 1.1.4. Demand clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers and their consolidated profit & loss position.

- 1.2. Promote Fair Tax Mark certification for any business in which we have a significant stake and where corporation tax is due.
- 1.3. Support Fair Tax Week events in the area and celebrate the tax contribution made by responsible businesses who say what they pay with pride.
- 1.4. Support calls for urgent reform of EU and UK law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies.
2. In addition to the actions recommended by the Fair Tax Mark the report should also explore the following:
 - 2.1. Use the Social Value Act to integrate tax status further into our procurement process.
 - 2.1.1. The Fair Tax Mark would be used as positive evidence of social value above the PPN 03/14 standard.
 - 2.2. Work with Runnymede businesses to encourage the use of the Fair Tax Mark
 - 2.3. Go further than the declaration to ensure all council owned businesses are Fair Tax accredited and the council itself is as close to accreditation as is possible as a public sector organisation.
 - 2.4. Encourage other public sector bodies to adopt a similar approach.
 - 2.5. Council asks the officers to publicise this policy and to report on its implementation annually as part of the budget.

The Leader of the Council responded and considered that the requirements of the Motion could be unnecessarily burdensome in relation to the procurement process and he was satisfied that appropriate diligence checks were already built into the process.

Some Members felt the matter could more appropriately firstly be dealt with by the appropriate MWP.

An Amendment was moved and seconded that the matter be referred to Corporate Management Committee for consideration, but without a preliminary expression of Council opinion.

The Amendment was put to the vote and the voting was recorded as follows:

For (9): Councillors Adams, Chaudhri, D. Clarke, Furey, Gill, J Gracey, Harnden, Kusneraitis, Mullens.

Against (25): Councillors Alderson, Broadhead, Burton, Cressey, Dennett, Edis, Gillham, T Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N King, R King, Lewis, Maddox, Neathey, Nuti, Prescott, Snow, J Sohi, P Sohi, Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte, and Willingale.

Abstention (3): Councillors Anderson-Bassey, Cotty and Olorenshaw

The Amendment was declared to be lost

The original Motion was then put to the vote and the voting was recorded as follows:

For (7): Councillors Burton, Cressey, R King, Mullens, Neathey, D Whyte and S Whyte

Against (24): Councillors Adams, Alderson, Anderson -Bassey, Broadhead, Chaudhri, D Clarke, Cotty, Dennett, Edis, Furey, Gillham, T Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley,

N King, Kusneraitis, Maddox, Nuti, Prescott, Snow, J Sohi, P Sohi, and Willingale.

Abstention (6): Councillors Gill, J Gracey, Harnden, Lewis, Olorenshaw and Walsh

The Motion was declared to be lost

351 **SURREY & BORDERS PARTNERSHIP NHS FOUNDATION TRUST (MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION TRUST)**

Two nominations were made to fill the vacancy on the above Trust, namely Cllrs D Clarke and R King. The Nominations were put to the vote and having received the majority of votes Cllr Clarke was duly nominated.

RESOLVED that

Cllr D Clarke be nominated to fill the vacancy on Surrey & Borders partnership NHS Foundation Trust

352 **MINORITY GROUP PRIORITY BUSINESS**

No items of Minority Group Priority business had been registered under Standing Order 23.

(The meeting ended at 9.08 pm)

Mayor