

Public Document Pack



Council Meeting

20 07 23 - 7.30 pm

Supplementary Summons

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Member Working Parties 2023/24

Synopsis of report:

This report asks members to consider and approve a structure for Working Parties in 2023/4 which provides greater focus on key themes within the Corporate Business Plan and greater focus on the Council's priorities.

Recommendation(s):

The revised Working Party structure be introduced with effect from 1st August, 2023 and be reviewed at the end of the municipal year.

That the Council's Constitution be revised to reflect the changed structure composition of Working Parties.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 Member Working Parties have existed now for three years. The original concept of Working Parties was to explore ways in which the Council's key strategies could be implemented, exchange ideas between officers and members and to understand new challenges and opportunities. Working parties would either debate key policy issues which need to come before Council committees, analyse results of work undertaken by Council staff such as public consultation or discuss the outline content of important reports to be considered in forthcoming business cycles.
- 1.2 Some of the Working Parties have been successful and the work carried out has been valued by members. Working Parties have acted as a basis for moving strategies forward. However, some Working Parties, have lacked focus and have had new tasks added throughout the year and have therefore been perceived as an additional burden in an already very busy schedule rather than focusing on existing Corporate priorities and acting as an essential part of the Council's structure.

2. Report

- 2.1 For the reasons set out above, the Chief Executive has carried out a review of the existing Working Parties with a view to presenting a revised structure to members (see Appendix A). The objectives of the review are as follows:
 - To focus on matters which are most relevant to the Corporate Plan and reflect the Council's priorities;
 - To focus member attention in an area of particular interest to each individual member without working parties becoming over burdensome;
 - To ensure that the Working Parties are serviced by appropriate officers, that each has a work plan and members are aware well in advance of the topics that will be discussed by way of a work programme;
 - To limit the additional workloads for both Members and Officers to a set number of topics that can be delivered within existing resources (both financial and staffing).
- 2.2 The Property and Assets Task Force has a slightly different remit to the others. Although the Council awaits the final report from DLUHC regarding the Council's

property portfolio and borrowings, it is anticipated that the report will suggest enhancement of governance arrangements in respect of oversight of the Council's property assets. This Task Force will therefore add the extra layer of governance required and ensure that there is a forum for confidential discussions which are often of a commercial nature.

- 2.3 These meetings are not intended merely to be talking shops but a way of ensuring early dialogue (before committee reports are produced in the main) on matters of significance to Council strategy. There will be regular progress reports on key projects and initiatives and early notification of matters which may impact on Council services and strategy such as new legislation and Government policy.
- 2.4 The new Working Party structure is not designed to be comprehensive but to reflect the cross-cutting themes which are likely to be of most importance in 2023/4. The emphasis is on themes rather than committees or services. So the work of the Committees will continue largely through the relationship between the service head and Chairman/Vice-Chairman as well as the wider community which makes up the Committee membership.
- 2.5 To avoid over burdening members, it is proposed that 39 members (excluding the Mayor and Deputy Mayor) are invited to become a member of ONE and only one working party. This means that working parties would have a core membership of 7 and no more than 9 members. Any member would be allowed to attend working parties where they are not a nominated member.
- 2.6 Proportionality rules do not have to apply to working parties. It is proposed that the Chief Executive meets with Group Leaders (individually and collectively if necessary) to ensure that each Group gets fair representation and wherever possible, members' preferences for a particular working party are accommodated.
- 2.7 A work programme based around the Corporate Business Plan strategy and workstreams for each of the working parties will be drawn up by the lead officer for consideration at the first meeting. The Chairman will be selected at the first meeting and a discussion will ensue on frequency of meetings. As a guideline, it is expected that there will be no more than 4 scheduled working party meetings per municipal year. Meetings will be able to take place in person, remotely or as a hybrid of the two and will be designed to last no more than two hours. Should additional meetings be required, this will be for each Working Party to debate and the Chairman to decide taking into account the additional workloads required to undertake preparatory work and to service the meetings.
- 2.8 Members are asked to give their approval to the new structure for the current municipal year and to a review of the structure and value of the working parties in April/May, 2024 to be conducted by the incoming new Chief Executive.
- 2.9 The proposed structure can be found at Appendix A, and the terms of reference for each Working Party can be found at Appendix B.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 This structure gives more focus to themes within the Corporate Business Plan.
- 3.2 The aim will be to provide momentum on key initiatives whilst allowing for member debate through the various stages of policy formulation or review.

4. Value for Money

- 4.1 Other than Officer time, there are no direct costs of the working groups. Any work emanating from the groups that requires financing over and above existing resources, will require a full business case and committee approval for any associated supplementary estimate.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Runnymede operates what is termed the Committee system. Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 under such system decisions are made by the Full Council, Committees, Sub-Committees, or officers. Full Council can make all decisions, but it is impractical to convene enough meetings of Full Council to enable all decisions to be made in a timely fashion. Section 101 Local Government Act 1972 enables the Full Council to delegate to Committees, Sub-Committees, or officers its powers to make decisions.
- 5.2 There are rules which require the meetings of Committees and Sub-Committees to be held in public and for reports considered by such bodies to be made available for public inspection, subject to such reports not containing confidential or exempt information.
- 5.3 Under a Committee system seats on Committees and Sub-Committees must be allocated in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and regulations made under that legislation (commonly known as the political proportionality rules). In summary, political groups on a local authority will be entitled to a certain number of seats on such bodies which bears a relationship to the total number of members they have and the number of seats available on such Committees or Sub-Committees.
- 5.4 It is open to local authorities to establish other bodies to assist them with the discharge of their business. Such bodies are known by a variety of names e.g., Working Parties, Working Groups or Task Groups. Whilst such groups can assist in allowing matters to be considered in more detail than say in a Committee meeting and enable sensitive matters to be discussed such bodies have no legal powers to make decisions. The normal approach is that such bodies will formulate recommendations which will be incorporated in reports to Full Council, Committees or Sub-Committees.
- 5.5 The rules regarding the publication of reports and the holding of meetings in public do not apply to such bodies. Likewise, the rules regarding political proportionality also do not apply to such bodies as they are not defined in Schedule 1 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 as bodies to which those rules apply.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010. Section 149 of the Act provides that we must have due regard to the need to;
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - b) to advance equality of opportunity

- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share protected characteristics.

6.2 We should at all times act in a way that is non-discriminatory through our policies and procedures and interactions with people.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

7.1 There are no know environmental/sustainability/biodiversity implications.

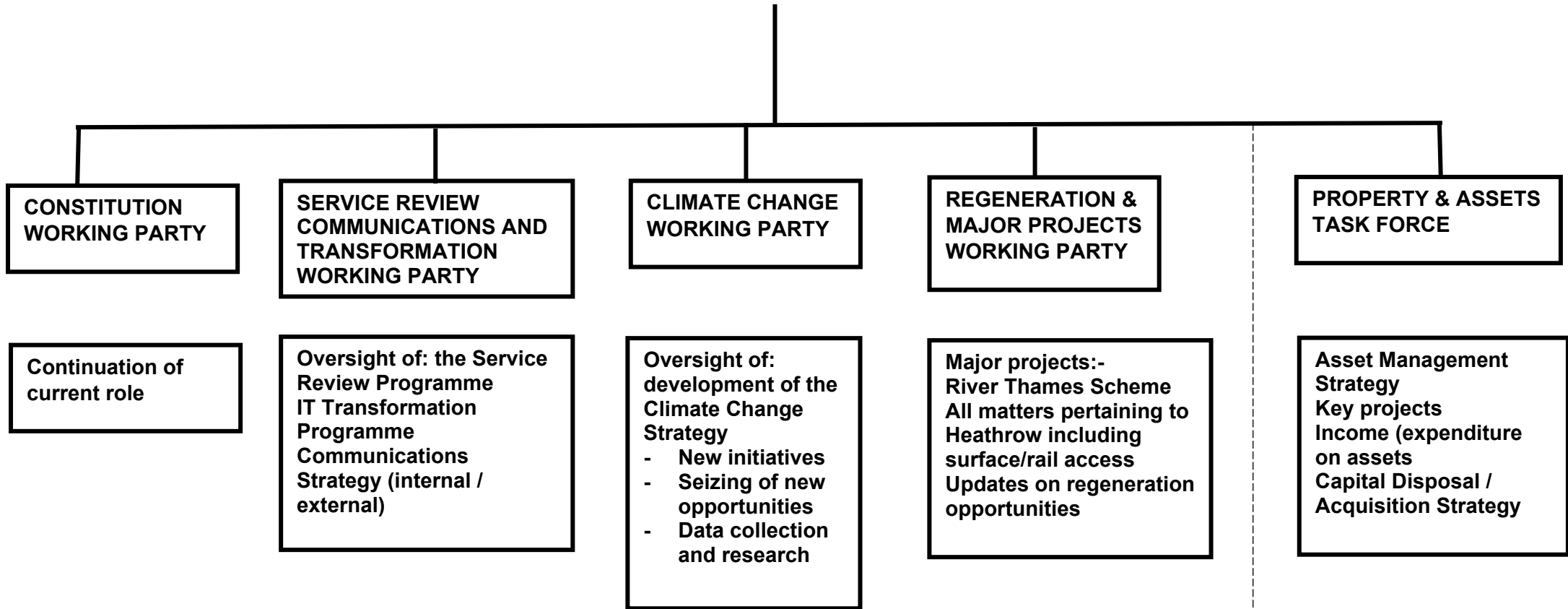
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Background papers

None

Appendix A

PROPOSED WORKING PARTY / TASK FORCE STRUCTURE



* Each Working Party to have 7 - 9 members

* 5 - 6 members

Appendix B

Member Working Party – Terms of Reference

Climate Change Member Working Party

Background

In January 2022, the Council committed to tackling climate change and adopted a target to achieve operational 'Net Zero Carbon' emissions from its services and operations by 2030. In October 2022, the Council adopted its Corporate Business Plan and supporting corporate strategies for the 2022-2026 period. This included the Council's overarching Climate Change Strategy. Within this document, Runnymede's 2030 mission statement is set out which is as follows:

To make an effective and lasting positive impact on Runnymede's climate and environment, and to work with our residents, community groups, stakeholders, and partners in order to achieve exacting environmental standards by 2030.

The Council's mission:

- *To deliver Carbon Net Zero for Council operations by 2030.*
- *To align climate change actions and environmental improvements with economic gain. We will promote and maintain a balanced approach to ensure that our actions are both environmentally and financially sustainable. We will do this by supporting our local economy wherever possible.*
- *To promote the principles of the circular economy (take, make, use, repair, reuse) and decouple from the linear economy (take, make, use, throw) to minimise Carbon emissions and waste, reduce environmental damage and increase biodiversity and health.*
- *To merge our procurement strategy with technology to create effective solutions to deliver strategic aims.*
- *To drive biodiversity net gain and protect our natural assets.*

The Council's Climate Change Strategy also supports that the Council will monitor Runnymede's progress towards the national target of Net Zero by 2050.

Purpose of the Climate Change Member Working Party

1. The overarching purpose of the Working Party is to support the delivery of the Council's Mission Statement as set out in the Runnymede Climate Change Strategy. This will include consideration of all aspects of the Council's operations; to better understand the obstacles faced in achieving the Council and Borough net zero targets, and developing reasonable options to overcome them.

Functions of the Climate Change Member Working Party

1. To assist in the formulation of a realistic, measurable and deliverable Climate Change Action Plan for the Council, and any future iterations of it, together with the monitoring of the targets which the Action Plan sets.

2. To consider the implications of relevant new or emerging policy/guidance produced by the Government and other relevant organisations which may impact the Council's ability to meet its net zero commitments. This may include considering draft proposals and assisting in formulating appropriate consultation responses, and considering how new policy should be reflected in the Council's own strategies and proposals.
3. For members of the Working Party to act as 'climate change' champions by leading by example and advocating action on climate in recognition of the fact that the Council has an important community leadership role to play regarding the 'climate change' agenda.
4. To identify areas for further research and invite presentations, workshops and discussions with experts as appropriate to help inform the Council's policies and actions in response to climate change.
5. To assist in the formulation of a Behavioural Change Strategy which will identify key areas in which the Council could support its communities in responding to the threats of climate change and reach the Borough's 2050 net zero target. This will include consideration of the best ways of engaging with key partners including Government departments, the Environment Agency, Surrey County Council, local businesses, residents and young people to meet the Borough's net zero commitments.
6. To make recommendations to the relevant committees or other organisations that would help to achieve the Council's net zero commitments.

Constitution Member Working Party

Context

The Council is legally required to create and maintain a constitution, which sets out the manner in which it will operate, as well as various codes of conduct, codes of practice and operational rules regarding the conduct of meetings. The creation of a Member Working Party to review this will enable Member input into this process, which underpins the effective operation of the Council.

The Role of the Constitution Member Working Party

1. Receive and consider requests from the Monitoring Officer, Members, the Council or Committees to review specific parts of the Constitution;
2. To receive reports on the implications of new legislation.
3. To review areas in the Constitution to ensure that they are complete, accurate, up to date, clear, lawful and fit for purpose
4. To review the Scheme of Delegation to officers.
5. To receive and consider recommendations on proposed amendments and improvements from the Monitoring Officer, Members, the Council or Committees;
6. To keep under review Codes of Conduct relating to Member and Officer conduct.
7. To make recommendations on proposed amendments to the Constitution to the Council.

Property and Assets Task Force

Context

RBC has a property portfolio worth over £1billion. The portfolio comprises:

- Operational assets important for the delivery of services and community facilities
- Commercial assets both in and out of the Borough which bring in much needed revenue to fund services
- Town centre assets (Addlestone One and Magna Square) important to the vibrancy of our towns but also commercial and residential assets in their own right and important revenue earners

Some of our assets are managed through three companies wholly owned by RBC; RBCI, RBCS, RBC Heatco. Of necessity, there are separate governance arrangements in place to manage the affairs of the Council's companies and this will not form part of the role of the Task Force.

The Council has borrowed significant sums to acquire its capital assets and currently owes in excess of £650m which covers both General Fund and HRA assets. Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) is applied to all of our borrowings. The gross income from all of our commercial assets is over £28m but after application of MRP this reduces to approximately £8.5m net. There is concern on the part of DLUHC as to the magnitude of RBC borrowing and we await a report. This report might restrict our future borrowings or even force RBC to reduce its borrowing level over time. We know that RBC will not be able to borrow substantially going forward and this raises questions as to how a) RBC protects its assets and associated revenue streams and b) can continue to regenerate town centres and outdated housing estates.

The maintenance and enhancement of income streams especially to the General Fund is key to the provision of services as other income streams (Council Tax, Business Rates and Government Grants are limited).

The Role of the Task Force

To provide oversight of:

- The asset management strategy;
- To monitor progress on the generation of capital receipts where sales are expected;
- To oversee income generation from the Council's commercial assets including Addlestone One and Magna square and to seek to maximise lettings income across these developments, keeping vacancies to a minimum;
- To consider new opportunities e.g. re-gearing of leases, potential disposals etc;
- To oversee projects to maintain and enhance operational assets such as the Civic Offices
- To understand both risk and commercial opportunity relating to the Council's commercial property portfolio

- To have oversight of the maintenance and enhancement of operational assets including the Civic Offices, depot and community hall
- To oversee major refurbishment and/or remedial projects involving Council assets such as the Addlestone One cladding project
- To explore ways in which the asset base of RBC might help generate further income for the General Fund and/or capital receipts.

N.B In all matters the Task Force will act an advisory body to the Corporate Management Committee and will make regular reports incorporating recommendations accordingly.

Composition:

The Task Force will comprise six to nine members.

The value and requirement for ongoing work by the Task Force will be reviewed at the beginning of the next Municipal Year.

Regeneration and Major Projects Working Party

There will be 6-8 members of the Working Party which is expected to meet 4 times within the Municipal Year.

1. To receive reports on use of the Council's Shared Prosperity Fund in relation to economic development
2. To receive reports on the potential for town centre regeneration and to recommend actions in pursuance of this objective to Corporate Management Committee
3. To receive reports twice a year on town centre performance including Council owned commercial property.

Note: the performance of Addlestone One and Magna Square (developments owned by the Council) is to be reported regularly to the Property and Assets Task Force but there will be a role for this Working Party in the context of the health of town centres as a whole).

4. To receive reports on key external projects which have a bearing on the regeneration and economic prosperity of Runnymede including;
 - The River Thames Scheme
 - Development of Heathrow airport (and other airports where relevant).
 - Surface and rail access to Heathrow
 - Completion of the Esso pipeline project
5. To act as the conduit for maintaining and enhancing relations with the business sector including Chambers of Commerce and town teams.
6. To guide the development of business awards (begun in May of this year) and the annual event.

Service Review, Communications and Transformation Member Working Party

Context

The Council is a complex body delivering a wide range of services, both statutory and discretionary, to its residents, communities, local business and other stakeholders. Effective communication is a key part of ensuring that all of these stakeholders are able to engage with the Council and have access to relevant information. Effective internal communication supports the operation of services through the sharing of information, policies and procedures.

Digital Transformation supports the delivery of Council functions through technological advances, ensuring that efficient, effective and value for money ICT systems are in place. This is a constantly evolving area of work, with competing demands and priorities.

The Council also has an on-going programme of Service Reviews, as part of a continuous improvement loop, to provide challenge and seek out areas for improvement, whether that be more efficient service delivery, reduction in costs or income generation through business development.

The role of the Service Review, Communications and Transformation Member Working Party

- i. Consider areas for improvement in the Council's Communication strategy, commenting on policy proposals, and making recommendations to Corporate Management Committee
- ii. Continue implementation of the digital transformation programme to create more resource capacity, become less reactive and more proactive e.g. e-invoicing, O365 deployment, web functionality, hybrid meetings
- iii. Monitor progress against the digital transformation programme including hardware refresh, website development and cyber security
- iv. Receiving the output of Service Reviews for consideration and make onward recommendations to the appropriate Committee
- v. Monitor progress of the Service Review Programme
- vi. To ensure the Working Party's programme of work is aligned with actions and initiatives within the Corporate Business Plan
- vii. This MWP has previously also reviewed project portfolio reports prior to presentation at CMC and reviews the corporate KPI set on a Quarterly basis. Going forward, the dashboards for project portfolio and cKPIs will continue to be published to the Members Team area. Queries from members should be directed to the appropriate Service Chair and these will then be picked up by the MWP Chair to bring to the next MWP meeting for discussion.