

Runnymede Borough Council

Corporate Management Committee

Thursday, 12 December 2024 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors R King (Chair), L Gillham (Vice-Chair), T Gracey, C Howorth, S Jenkins, C Mann, J Mavi, R Milstead, S Ringham, M Smith, P Snow and D Whyte.

99 **Notification of Changes to Committee Membership**

There were no substitutions.

100 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2024 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

101 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

102 **Declarations of Interest**

Agenda item 8 – Grant Funding Request for St Paul's Church, Egham Hythe

Councillor R King declared that he had an interest and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

103 **Council Tax Support Scheme**

The Committee supported the principle of a banded scheme, appreciating that it enabled the highest levels of support to be targeted at those most in need. There was debate over the maximum level of support that could be provided to eligible claimants. Some members felt that due to the financial challenges being faced by the Council, a higher level of support was not sustainable. Others felt that higher levels of council tax support would result in longer term resource savings to the authority and that it was important to support residents with the cost of living. The continued work of the Council's financial inclusion officer was welcomed and support for this post continuing was expressed.

It was **resolved** that the following recommendations be put to the Council:

- 1) That an income banded scheme, for those in receipt of universal credit, be agreed.
- 2) That for those not in receipt of universal credit, an assessment for council tax support under the existing means tested scheme, be agreed.
- 3) That a maximum entitlement of 80% support for those of working age, and 90% for those classed as vulnerable, be agreed.

104 **Council Tax - Determination of Tax Base and Estimated Collection Funds Surplus or Deficit**

The change in the number and nature of properties for which council tax was collected, when compared to the previous year, was noted. Clarification on how council tax was distributed between boroughs and districts, and the county council, was provided.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The tax base (showing the estimated number of Band D equivalent dwellings within the Borough for the financial year 2025/26) be approved at 35,814.4.
- 2) The estimated surplus on the collection fund for 2024/25 be declared at £924,858, to be split amongst precepting authorities as set out in the report, in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements.

105 **In Principle Decision to Dispose of the Egham Hythe Centre**

The Committee reviewed the proposal to continue discussions with the prospective purchaser of the site, who had now sought confirmation that the Council was willing to enter formal discussions over the terms of the sale. Members were supportive of exploring the opportunity to provide new high quality healthcare provision in the Egham area.

A review of the options available to the Council, for the services currently delivered from the Egham Hythe Centre, would form part of later detailed feasibility work. A further report, to be prepared at the conclusion of discussions with the prospective purchaser, would be presented to the Committee in due course.

It was **resolved** that the in principle the sale/disposal of Egham Hythe Centre, and the continued formal discussions with PRIME PLC and its NHS partners, be agreed.

106 **Grant Funding Request for St Paul's Church, Egham Hythe**

[Councillor R King left the room and Councillor Gillham took the chair for this item.]

The Committee discussed the request for grant funding. Whilst it was supportive of the work that St Paul's Church was undertaking in the community, the Committee also needed to consider whether providing grant funding was practical in light of the Council's current financial challenges.

A contrary view was expressed, where it was felt that enhancing the services St Paul's Church offered locally would benefit the residents of Egham as well as the Council.

A request to defer consideration of this item was made in accordance with Standing Order 34.9(b).

Having considered the request to defer consideration of the item, the Chair determined that the timing associated with considering bids for funding via Your Fund Surrey did not lend itself to the Committee considering the matter at a later date. Additionally, it was felt that it was important to provide a decision to St Paul's Church as soon as possible, to enable them to hold further discussions with Surrey County Council or other organisations (such as the Church of England via the Diocese of Guildford) who might be able to assist with funding.

The Committee noted that this request was for new capital funding, and in considering this request, the Committee was reminded of the priority evaluation criteria for capital schemes, as set out in the Council's Capital and Investment Strategy.

It was **resolved** that the request from St Paul's Church, for 'backstop' grant funding, not be approved.

The Committee requested that the Corporate Head of Community Services inform St Paul's Church of its decision as soon as possible.

107 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting during the consideration of the remaining matters 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 as set out in Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

108 **Council Chamber Upgrades and Streaming**

The Committee discussed proposals to update the audio visual systems installed in the Council Chamber, and the option to supplement this with the ability to webcast meetings of the Council and its committees.

The Committee was supportive of the proposal to update the audio visual system in the chamber, noting that the current facility was becoming expensive and time consuming to maintain, and difficult to obtain parts for, due to its age.

When discussing incorporating webcasting into the project, there was acceptance that by not having such a facility, Runnymede Borough Council was the exception among Surrey's districts and boroughs. It was further stated that webcasting represented an important tool for ensuring that members were accountable for their decisions and that decision making was conducted openly and transparently. The availability of such a facility also meant that individuals who were unable to travel to the Civic Centre were able to engage with the decision-making process. Webcasting also enabled the Council to engage with organisations whose purpose it was to publicise the existence of open and transparent decision making.

Some members questioned whether the capital and revenue costs of installing such a facility represented value for money and whether there was interest in the community for such matters. The additional cost, in the context of the Council's financial challenges, was also mentioned. It was felt that the quality of the minutes was sufficient to provide a good overview of the discussions that had taken place.

It was **resolved** that

- 1) The commencement of the procurement process for the combined hardware replacement and committee meeting streaming contract, for the amount stated in the officer's report, be approved.
- 2) A capital estimate for the sum stated in the officer's report, for the combined replacement of council chamber hardware and new streaming hardware and software in 2024/25, to be funded from a combination of money from the hardware replacement fund and capital receipts, be approved.
- 3) A supplementary revenue estimate, for the amount stated in the officer's report, associated with the streaming implementation, to cover ongoing licensing, hosting, and additional out of hours staffing costs be agreed.

109 **Civic Centre Component Works**

The report outlined various works required to maintain and repair the Civic Centre and its components.

The Committee noted that the report's publication had been delayed due to the complexity of the work involved in its preparation. It was stated that deferring consideration of this item would affect the budget preparation process. Further delays in undertaking maintenance were also likely to increase the cost of necessary works. Members noted that

the Committee was being asked to put its recommendation to the Council and that a further debate at that meeting was possible, once members had had time to assimilate the content of the report. The offer of a member briefing, in the lead up to the meeting of the Council, was made.

There was agreement that urgent works were required on the Civic Centre and that these were necessary because of a combination of some components reaching the end of their expected lifespan, and previously delayed maintenance. There were however some questions over the form of some projects, particularly where there was scope to reduce the Council's climate impact. It was confirmed that there were a number of potential climate change related works for both the Civic Centre and the wider Addlestone One campus being considered as part of another workstream, which would be reported to the Committee in due course. A tender document relating to replacement fire doors, along with mechanical and electrical components, was currently open to bidders. The exercise had been adapted to include some accessibility improvements to the Civic Centre.

Members discussed the lifespan of various Civic Centre components, noting the building's relatively modern design. It was stated that many components had performed as expected over time, with emphasis placed on the importance of a well-structured preventative maintenance programme to prolong the life of various parts of the building.

It was **resolved** that the following be recommended to the Council:

- 1) That a revised capital estimate, for the amount set out in the officer's report, for the replacement component parts to the Civic Centre, to be funded from the property repairs and renewals reserve, be agreed.
- 2) That the works be procured in accordance with the Council's procurement processes and procedures

110 **Operational Condition Survey Outcome and Costings**

The report provided details of various condition surveys for assets across the borough, with a view to informing the prioritisation of maintenance works, to be delivered within the next five years.

The Committee noted that the report's publication had been delayed due to the complexity of the work involved in its preparation. It was stated that deferring consideration of this item would affect the budget preparation process. Members noted that the Committee was being asked to put its recommendations to the Council and that a further debate at that meeting, once members had had time to assimilate the content of the report, would be possible. The offer of a member briefing, in the lead up to the meeting of the Council, was made.

The comprehensiveness of the condition surveys was appreciated by the Committee.

Members noted that officers would continue to work on draft capital proposals and that a report would be brought back to the Committee in Autumn 2025, following the assessment of all ongoing commitments.

It was **resolved** that a supplementary revenue estimate, for the amount set out in the officer's report, relating to the overspend on current budgets, be agreed, to ensure that assets remained legally compliant.

It was **resolved** that the following be recommended to the Council:

- 1) The Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) be amended to reflect the additional revenue costs of £50,000 from 2025/26 to deliver on the ongoing planned and reactive

needs of managing a compliant operational estate (including the Civic Centre).

- 2) The MTFF be amended to reflect the additional revenue costs £2,906,000, over the next five years, for additional life cycle repairs for the operational estate (including the Civic Centre).

111 **Magna Square Letting**

The Committee considered the proposal to let a unit in the Magna Square development.

Members agreed that the prospective tenant (who operated a number of other sites across the country) would complement other businesses in Egham town centre. It was confirmed that the provisions of the lease would address the tenant's responsibilities around litter and other matters of compliance.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) A lease be granted to the proposed Tenant on the terms outlined in the officer's report.
- 2) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (S151) to make the necessary amendments to the lease and to agree final terms, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporate Management Committee.

(The meeting ended at 9.17 pm.)

Chairman