

Runnymede Borough CouncilEnvironment and Sustainability CommitteeWednesday, 22 January 2025 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors D Whyte (Chair), S Ringham (Vice-Chair), P Gahir, T Gates, M Harnden, J Hulley, S Lewis, R Milstead, K Rowsell and S Saise-Marshall.

In attendance: Councillors M Smith.

27 **Changes to Committee Membership**

There were no substitutions.

28 **Minutes**

Concerns were raised about the reference to the Council's projected budget deficit of £4.1m in the context of parking fees and charges, as such income was only able to cover the cost of providing the service. It was stated in response that it was important to recognise the Council's financial position and that it was not affordable for the Council to subsidise its car parks.

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2024 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

The agreement of the minutes was the subject of a named vote, with the voting noted as follows:

In favour (5)

Councillors D. Whyte, Ringham, Gates, Harnden and Rowsell.

Against (3)

Councillors Hulley, Lewis and Saise-Marshall.

Abstentions (2)

Councillors Gahir and Milstead.

29 **Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

30 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

31 **Air Quality Action Plan 2024**

The Committee reviewed the proposed Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The plan contained various actions that were appropriate to Runnymede as a second-tier local authority.

The proposed AQAP had been reviewed by the Department for Environment Food and

Rural Affairs (DEFRA), who had responded positively to what was proposed. The feedback from DEFRA and other stakeholders was included in the report for members' information. It was felt that the engagement of local stakeholders was an important element in preparing robust and effective AQAPs.

There was discussion about whether there were any additional measures Runnymede could take, principally with regard to vehicles idling whilst stationary. Such activities were limited to raising awareness, particularly at level crossings and junctions. 'Anti-idling' signage, paid for through grant funding, had previously been installed at key locations and officers would continue to seek funding opportunities for other measures.

The progress made towards improving the borough's air quality was highlighted. As there had been sufficient improvement to the air quality at the sites concerned, the previously implemented Air Quality Management Areas would potentially be revoked before their next review date in 2029.

There was discussion about NO₂ monitoring at various locations within the borough. It was suggested that monitoring equipment should be placed in areas of significant development, in order to monitor the impact of construction traffic.

Suggestions for future activities were made. These suggestions included the monitoring of indoor air quality and reducing emissions from buildings. In order to inform future suggestions, members sought clarity over the source of the borough's background NO₂ levels.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The response to the consultation be noted.
- 2) The revised AQAP for publication be approved.

32 **Environmental Services Action Plan 2025-2026**

The Committee reviewed the proposed Environmental Services Action Plan. Key achievements from the previous year's plan were highlighted. The proposed plan for the next year supported the Council's Corporate Business Plan, whilst also identifying specific priorities for the service area. Key activities for the upcoming year included:

- The depot refurbishment.
- Responding to the Renters' Rights Bill.
- Responding to the Environment Act 2021.

There was discussion about the cleansing of dual carriageways and laybys. Of particular concern was the A320, where it was felt that both Runnymede and Surrey County Council needed to liaise more effectively to address issues of fly tipping, littering and accurate communication with residents.

Following a question from the Committee, it was confirmed that the newly appointed Head of Operations would be taking the street cleansing review of operations forward.

It was **resolved** that the 2025/26 Service Area Plan for Environmental Services be approved.

33 **Simpler recycling and DEFRA funding for food waste collection**

The Committee discussed a proposal to enhance the borough's food waste collections by utilising grant funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

(DEFRA) to purchase a new refuse collection vehicle (RCV). The purchase of a smaller 12 tonne vehicle was proposed in lieu of a larger 26 tonne vehicle, as it complemented Runnymede's existing fleet, and would make food waste collections from difficult to reach places such as flats more practical. It was confirmed that DEFRA were agreeable to any surplus grant funding being used to procure communal food wheelie bins and kitchen caddies, as this would also enhance food waste collection in the borough.

The grant funding had been received through a bid made by the Surrey Environmental Partnership on behalf of all Surrey boroughs and districts. The grant award for each borough and district was influenced by the current progress that each had made on developing food waste collections.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The proposal to procure one 12 tonne RCV (to be fitted with CCTV and on-board weighing capability), to progress collection of food waste from flats, be agreed.
- 2) The remaining DEFRA grant funding be used to purchase additional communal food wheelie bins and kitchen caddies to progress the separate collection of food waste for flats.
- 3) The work already being delivered by the recycling team, to ensure Runnymede residents living in flats have facilities for food waste collection, be noted.

It was **further resolved** to recommend to the Corporate Management Committee, in pursuance of the above, that:

- 1) A capital estimate in the sum of £175,585, to meet the cost of purchasing a new food waste collection vehicle and food waste bins and caddies as set out in the report, to be financed from new burdens grant funding, be approved.
- 2) A supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £16,990, to allow the service to meet the current revenue costs associated with the additional vehicle and collections, be approved.

34 **Council's support for the Climate and Nature Bill and proposal to join the 'Zero Hour' campaign**

The Chair of the Committee introduced his request for the Committee's support in taking his proposal to the Council. He considered that Runnymede, as a body responsible for significant areas of land, should be giving a high priority to enhancing the natural environment and increasing biodiversity.

The Committee debated the Chair's proposal.

Many members were in support of the approach that had been proposed by the Chair, echoing the views that he had presented to the Committee. It was also suggested that it was important for the Council to demonstrate that it was taking the matter of climate change and the environment generally seriously, particularly because it had declared a 'climate emergency'.

Other members, whilst supportive of the sentiments laid down, were concerned that the Council should not be publicly endorsing legislation that was in the early stages of the parliamentary process, particularly because it was likely to be subject to changes following the consideration of MPs and Lords.

There was discussion over whether it was appropriate for councils to lobby parliament in

the manner that was proposed, particularly because of the uncertainty over what any eventual piece of legislation would encompass. In response to this comment, it was stated that many councils and other bodies were already lending their support to the Bill, which had also received support from a number of MPs representing various political parties. It was stated that the Bill had also been supported by a number of academics and scientists. Additionally, the Chair stated that should the Bill not pass its second reading in the House of Commons, the matter would not be debated by the Council.

It was proposed and seconded that the Committee defer further consideration of this item, to a point after which the Bill received Royal Assent. The proposal was subject to a named vote, with the voting noted as follows:

In favour of deferral (3)

Councillors Hulley, Lewis and Saise-Marshall.

Against deferral (7)

Councillors D. Whyte, Ringham, Gahir, Gates, Harnden, Milstead and Rowsell.

Abstentions (0)

The proposal to defer further consideration of this item **FELL**.

The proposed resolution of the Council was the subject of a named vote, with the voting noted as follows:

In favour (7)

Councillors D. Whyte, Ringham, Gahir, Gates, Harnden, Milstead and Rowsell.

Against (1)

Councillor Hulley.

Abstentions (2)

Councillors Lewis and Saise-Marshall.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The Chair's proposed resolution of the Council be agreed.
- 2) In the event the Climate and Nature Bill passes its second reading in the House of Commons on 24 January 2025, the Chair's proposed recommendation be put to the Council on 27 February 2025.

35 **Exclusion of press and public**

There was no exempt business.

(The meeting ended at 8.58 pm.)

Chair