

Runnymede Borough Council

Community Services Committee

Wednesday, 12 June 2024 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors A King (Chair), I Mullens (Vice-Chair), A Berardi, MK Cressey, T Gracey (In place of S Lewis), K Graham, R King (In place of S Ringham), P Snow (In place of D Clarke), P Tucker-Brown and M Williams.

Members of the Committee absent: None

In attendance: Councillors P Gahir, T Gates and M Smith.

## 1 **Notification of Changes to Committee Membership**

To record that Councillor T Gracey substituted for Councillor S Lewis, Councillor R King substituted for Councillor S Ringham and Councillor P Snow substituted for Councillor D Clarke.

## 2 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 March 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the addition of the following words (in bold text) on item 80 'Runnymede Pleasure Ground (RPG) Development Programme 2024', for the final sentence to read.....the National Trust, **"and any other relevant parties and key stakeholders."**

## 3 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no Apologies for Absence.

## 4 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

## 5 **Home Improvement Agency update and policy review**

The Committee reviewed operation of and proposals to revise the Home Improvement Agency Assistance Policy (HIA).

The Committee was provided with a comprehensive summary of how the HIA had been operating since it was last updated in June 2023. Members were pleased to learn that approximately £414,000 of the Better Care Fund had been awarded in grant funding to residents to make improvements to their homes and allow them to enjoy more independence. It was confirmed that Runnymede was given approximately £874,000 annually. It was noted that there had been an increase of approximately 23% in referrals to the service from Social Housing properties alone. As a result there was an underspend which was ringfenced to the mandatory Disabled Facility Grants as Officers continued to work through the backlog of referrals made to the service and navigate the new procurement route. Officers confirmed that the current waiting list was between 3 and 4 months. However, applicants were kept informed throughout and assisted from the point of making an application to resolution. There was also an option to re-deploy funds in the Better Care Fund if it met the criteria.

Officers had reviewed the service since the HIA had become tenure neutral and proposed making some changes to the range of discretionary grants available to elderly, disabled and/or vulnerable residents under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002.

The Committee agreed that a checklist would assist with the implementation of means testing for discretionary grants. This would make the process more transparent and equitable. Members were also keen to support the increase in Clearance Grants from £1,500 to £5,000 so that residents could be offered better support. There had been one such case in 2023/24.

The Committee approved an increase in the Energy Efficiency Grant from £2,000 to £3,000. This would more effectively cover the cost of labour and materials in the current economic climate. In addition, and as Members noted, this would also enable residents to install boilers which were more expensive but gave better resilience and were a more effective long term solution to fuel poverty.

This was also partly the reasoning behind the proposal to change the Discretionary Disabled Adaptation Assistance Grant to provide an additional £5,000 if needed bringing the total to £20,000. This sum also gave more flexibility and support for residents.

The last change to the policy was to use assistive technology to allow for enabled care for independent living.

Members thanked Officers for their report and were pleased to support all the proposed changes to the policy.

#### **Resolved that –**

**The reviewed Home Improvement Agency Assistance Policy, as set out in the Officer's report, be approved**

#### **6 Community Services Service Area Plan Update - Quarter 4 2023/24**

The Committee noted progress with the agreed objectives within the 2023/24 Service area plan for Community Services.

Officers reported that of the 32 planned objectives, 19 were complete, as set out in the appendix to the report and the remaining 13 would be carried over into 2024/25. Officers remained confident that these could be completed despite resourcing challenges.

Officers confirmed their intention to bring a report to a future meeting of the appropriate committee on the Citizens Panel. Members were pleased that one of the Council's Graduate Trainees was having a significant input into this.

Members were advised that progress with the Heathervale All-wheeled facility was pending planning permission. A contractor had been appointed and a noise impact assessment was being undertaken.

In respect of improvements at Runnymede Pleasure Grounds, Officers planned to submit a progress report to the next scheduled meeting of the Committee in September 2024. A report was also anticipated on proposals for the future use of the site currently occupied by the Egham Hythe Centre.

Officers were, as a priority, reviewing the policy for Voluntary Sector Grant Funding and how it was affected by the non-statutory Best Value Notice. Members would be updated in due course.

The report was duly noted.

## 7 **Community Services 2023/24 Full Year & 2024/25 Targets KPI Report**

The Committee's approval was sought for the proposed Key Performance Indicators and targets for 2024/25.

Members recalled that the targets for 2023/24 had been approved at the meeting of the Committee in March 2024 and noted the year end results, most of which were very positive. Of note was that Homesafe Plus data for Runnymede was exceeding its target as was the annual target for the Home Improvement Agency. One area was classed 'amber'. This was the total number of Social Prescribing referrals being 665. However, the number was less than 10% from the target of 705. Any forthcoming changes to the service would be communicated to Members when appropriate.

The Committee reviewed the key performance statistics for Community Safety and Safer Runnymede which illustrated the breadth and impact of these high social value services. With regard to Junior Citizen there had been a reduction in the number of overall attendees owing to the County Council's introduction of the Safer Communities Programme. However, feedback suggested that continuing with Junior Citizen was the preferred way forward, with participation by the Police. Members noted an increase in staffing resources in Community Safety which would allow a higher level of engagement with the community. In respect of anti-social behaviour reports, Officers were working with colleagues in Digital Services to streamline the number of avenues where reports could be made. It was clarified that the figures showed the number of reports rather than incidents. Therefore, one could have 3 reports about that same incident for example.

Members welcomed an additional indicator to report on and track the total number of community hours facilitated by the Open Spaces Development Team to support projects and maintenance of the Council's parks and open spaces. This could encourage a sense of civic pride and ownership as well as achieve cost savings. It was asked whether any additional key performance indicators for community involvement could be considered.

Members asked for an update on Barrsbrook Farm and plans to work in partnership with Sir William Perkins's School to identify opportunities and the feasibility of new sports facilities with community access. Officers understood that the school was reviewing the viability of this and Members would be kept informed.

The Committee was content to approve the proposed Key Performance Indicators accordingly.

### **Resolved that –**

**The proposed service Key Performance Indicators and targets for 2024/2025 be approved**

## 8 **Community Services Appointments 2024**

The following appointments were agreed by the Committee.

The Committee was advised that an update on how the Community Services Partnership Board with Surrey Heath operated would be advised in due course if this affected the appointments being made at the meeting.

Members noted that the appointment of Councillor C Howorth to the Place Based, Health and Wellbeing Partnership in 2023 did not expire until 2027.

It was noted that the Crime and Disorder Committee would be asked to make the second appointment to the Community Safety Partnership at its meeting on 10 July 2024.

**Resolved that –**

**The following appointments be made to the Community Services related bodies for 2024/2025:**

- i) The Corporate Head of Financial Services and Open Spaces and Community Development Manager be re-appointed to the Cabrera Trust Management Committee;**
- ii) Councillors M Nuti and J Mavi be re-appointed to the Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group;**
- iii) Councillor M Harnden be re-appointed as the Older Persons Champion;**
- iv) Councillors A King, I Mullens and P Tucker-Brown be appointed to the Community Services Partnership Board with Surrey Heath; and**
- v) Councillor M K Cressey be appointed to the Community Safety Partnership**

**9 Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group Minutes**

**The Minutes of the Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group held on 27 February 2024 (Appendix A), were received and noted.**

**10 Exclusion of Press and Public**

**Resolved that –**

**The press and Public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following report under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the report in question would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

**11 Community Transport Review Outcome**

The Committee was presented with three options for the future of the Community Transport service in Runnymede. This was following a comprehensive review in the light of the Council's financial position and an assessment of demand for and viability of the service since the Covid Pandemic in 2019.

The Committee recalled that Community Transport had been provided in the borough for over 20 years. Among the service objectives were to connect communities and reduce isolation. Latterly, the service was provided across Runnymede and Surrey Heath.

Members were apprised of the economic and environmental effects of the service coupled with a reduction in demand which meant the service was under-utilised and heavily subsidised. Furthermore, the County Council's plans to roll out a two year pilot of a Demand Responsive Transport Service would potentially further reduce demand for other Community Transport services. The Committee agreed that all these factors had implications for future viability unless costs could be reduced and income generated.

Members noted the scope and process of the review and agreed Officers had been both

thorough and fair in their approach and the conclusions drawn, discounting the 'do nothing' option and withdrawal of the service altogether. Members' attention was drawn to the full options appraisal and SWOT analysis appended to the report. The legal implications were noted and that a full Equalities Impact Assessment had been undertaken. The Committee was also advised of the risks of pursuing the preferred option but agreed that these were outweighed by the potential positive outcomes as presented. These were in particular, the significant financial saving, the procurement of an accessible electric fleet of minibuses in partnership with the County Council and the resulting reduction in carbon emissions and revenue cost.

Officers highlighted a revised charging structure for the 2025/26 fees and charges and that a further full service review would take place in 2026/27.

It was agreed to provide one Member a table of estimated savings associated with the fuelling of the electric Meals at Home vehicles in relation to fuel spend as it was acknowledged that Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) was more expensive than diesel. It was agreed this would help evidence how fast a transition could be made from HVO to electric vehicles.

As a result of a full consideration of the report, the Committee agreed that the most sensible and cost effective option was 'Social Value Transport with identified contract capacity'. Members were particularly pleased that arrangements to procure vehicles in partnership with the County Council were progressing, the details of which were noted, including the projected annual savings and grant funding option should this be necessary. In addition, it was pleasing that the chosen option also aligned with the Corporate Climate Change Strategy and action plan, the Electric Vehicle and the Sustainable Fleet Management Strategies. This option also had the least impact on staffing resources whilst maintaining an effective and supportive service to some of the most vulnerable members of the Community, as well as helping the day centres to remain open to all.

In order to take advantage of potential contract opportunities which were often time limited and presented themselves at relatively short notice, it was agreed to recommend to Corporate Management Committee that delegated authority be given to the Corporate Head of Community Services to move such projects forward in a timely manner.

Officers would keep the Chair of the Committee updated on the funding bid to the County Council and whether the failsafe option to apply to the Climate Change Pump Prime Fund would be needed. Officers would also share the marketing plan with the Committee when it was available.

Officers were thanked for their report and the Committee was pleased to make the following recommendations to Corporate Management Committee accordingly.

**Recommendation to Corporate Management Committee that –**

- i) a rationalisation of the Community Transport Service as set out in Option 3 of the Officer's report be approved;**
- ii) entering into an agreement with Surrey County Council for the procurement of electric vehicles in the terms described in the Officer's report be approved;**
- iii) subject to proceeding with the procurement of electric vehicles, in the manner specified in the Officer's report, the drawdown of a capital estimate in the sum reported for this purpose be approved, to be funded from the equipment replacement reserve within the Financial Years 2024 and 2025;**
- iv) the procurement of electrical vehicle charging infrastructure, to be funded**

**from the Climate Change Pump Prime Fund, to a maximum value as reported, be approved; and**

- v) the delegation of authority to the Corporate Head of Community Services be approved to submit tenders to deliver contract transport opportunities up until 31 March 2027 and to the maximum sum as reported per contract tender**

#### **Appendix A Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group Minutes**

(The meeting ended at 8.35 pm.)

Chair

Runnymede Borough CouncilChertsey Meads Management Liaison GroupTuesday, 27 February 2024 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Management Liaison Group present: Councillors M Nuti (Chair) and J Mavi, T Athersuch, D Cotty, R Deacock, G Drake, K Drury, S Hall, F Harmer, J Hearne, N Johnson, M Nichols, J O'Gorman, B Phillips, C Noakes, M Ray, T A Stevens and D Turner.

Members of the Management Liaison Group absent: J Alexander, R Arbery, P Bickford, J Denton, I Girvan, G James, C Longman and H Wilson

In attendance: N Barrett, A Roy, M Steward and C Swatridge

## 10 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Management Liaison Group held on 5 September 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## 11 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from J Alexander, R Arbery, P Bickford, J Denton, I Girvan, G James, C Longman and H Wilson.

## 12 Membership of the Management Liaison Group

The membership of the Management Liaison Group was noted and Toby Athersuch and Andi Roy, the Council's Biodiversity Officer were welcomed to the meeting. The Council's External Projects Lead, Marcel Steward and the Community Development Projects Officer, Naomi Barrett were also welcomed as guests to the meeting.

## 13 Esso Pipeline Update

Dr Steward provided the Group with a brief update on the Esso pipeline project. The pipeline itself was complete and Esso would be coming back to grout up the old pipeline when the ground was sufficiently dry to allow them on site. There was also a snagging list of tasks to effect repairs which had been drawn up with Esso's contractors.

The Group was advised that after site visits and discussion with Esso's contractors it had been expressly agreed that the affected areas of the Meads would not be re-seeded but would be left to recover naturally. During this period it had also been agreed that these areas would not be mown.

Mr Turner drew attention to the effects the works had had on Chertsey Show and requested that a suitable crossing point and Heras fencing be used to facilitate their vehicles setting up this year's show. He also raised issues regarding the land not having been compacted properly which Dr Steward agreed to talk to Esso about. It was advised that Esso had accepted that they had been on site far longer than first anticipated and caused more disruption than expected.

Members of the Group and other residents were aware of other works that needed addressing as a result of the pipeline replacement, notably damage to the road from

vehicles parking on the verges and turning at various points, damage to the hedgerow and various materials left on site. A priority would be repairing the top of the road leading to residential properties and the Marina, and it was also asserted that the approach road to Dumsey Stump had not been completed. There were also security issues in respect of gates being left open, the height barrier being locked in the open position and missing sleepers.

The Chair suggested that a sub-committee was formed to compile another snagging list to present to Esso. This was agreed and the sub-committee would comprise the following members of the Group: Toby Athersuch, Derek Cotty, Kay Drury, Sarah Hall and Nathan Johnson.

### **Chertsey Meads conservation project update**

Some of the Esso funded conservation project works had commenced. This involved removing scrub, pollarding and gapping up of hedgerows. Some additional funding had been requested as the original cost estimates had increased. These works had to finish before the first ground nesting birds arrived on the Meads in March and would resume when they had fledged later in the year. It was reported that more Blackthorn would be planted to encourage the rare Brown Hairstreak butterfly adding to the biodiversity of the site.

There was some concern expressed about works taking place around Fox Copse and the Cow pond where some heavy machinery had left some deep tracks in the ground. People had observed some red and white markers and asked what they were connected with. Officers would investigate further.

The Group would be kept informed of progress with when Esso would be returning to complete repairs and commence the decommissioning of the old pipeline.

## **14 Management and Maintenance**

### **SANGs Update**

The Group was updated with preparatory identification of infrastructure changes required to promote Chertsey Meads as a SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space). This aligned with works set out in the original Surrey Wildlife Trust management plan. For example interpretation boards, route signposting, re-routing part of the main defined walking route which was impassable in winter and some small scale habitat works. Once these were in place it would move to a maintenance phase and the SANG management plan would be reviewed.

It was agreed to ask the Green Space Team to remove the damaged sign at the entrance to the Meads. However, SANG funding could not be used for other signs deterring BBQs which had been previously requested.

### **Countryside Stewardship**

Members were advised that the former Countryside Stewardship agreement had ended in December 2023 but that the Biodiversity Officer had taken this over from the Green space team and was exploring future funding options. For example, it was hoped that reinstating the regular reed bed cut and hedgerow creation could be funded by entering into a Countryside Stewardship higher tier agreement. The Group would be updated on whether an application for funding was successful later in the year.

### **Reed Beds and annual Hay Cut**



Unfortunately, Officers from the Greenspace team were unable to attend the meeting to provide an update on when the hay cut would take place. This would be requested when available and the Group notified. The Group was disappointed that funding was unlikely to be forthcoming until the new financial year and a lack of resources had meant that the management plan could not be adhered to.

### **Potholes**

The Group noted that temporary repairs to the road in the vicinity of Dockett Moorings had not been effective and a permanent re-instatement of the road was needed, although there was currently no budget to do this. Evidence suggested that some of Esso's contractors had used this area for turning vehicles making the state of disrepair worse. It was noted that the approach road to Dumsey Stump was a discussion to be had separately between the resident and Esso but that the main road could be raised with them. Dr Steward undertook to do this in liaison with Officers from the Green Space team.

### **UKPN works on the Meads**

Members were notified that UKPN were undertaking works as part of a national upgrade to the network. Further details, including time scales and size of operation were awaited and were also subject to discussion with the Council's Legal team regarding easements and access. Officers would work with UKPN to minimise disruption and the Group would be updated accordingly. It was noted that the works in a similar way to Esso's were being done under a Development Consent Order. It was confirmed that all the work would be under ground.

The Group was advised that a resident's plan to ask UKPN to upgrade the power supply to their property had been discontinued, as the opportunity to co-incide this with Esso's project had been lost. Therefore, the prospect of having a power supply to the second car park as an offshoot 'bonus' was no longer an option.

With regard to frustrations expressed the Chair offered to write to UKPN and the local MP and provide an update to the resident accordingly.

## **15 Events**

### **Litter Pick**

Members looked forward to the litter pick planned for 7 April at 10am. This was being organised by the Community Development Project Officer who would be producing some posters to publicise the event. This was thought to be a good opportunity to involve local schools, Cubs and Scouts and Abbey Rangers. The Team would carry out a pre-visit to identify which areas needed the most attention. As usual, litter pickers and sacks would be provided and the rubbish collected from the first car park by the DSO.

### **Site Visit**

It was agreed that an early evening in the Great Big Green Week commencing 8 June would be a good idea. Mr Philips suggested a revival of the orchid count, post Esso. Officers would confirm a date in liaison with Mr Philips.

Officers from Community Services were asked to arrange a separate 'open day' to promote the SANG status of the site and lead a smaller number from the group around the new walking route in due course.

### **Chertsey Show**

Mr Turner confirmed 10 – 11 August for this year's Chertsey Show. Last year's show had been successful, despite the Esso works. It was reported that the cost of putting on the show was increasing, noting the Council's modest contribution. Mr Turner agreed to remove the Heras fencing and the large paladin that was left after last year's show when it was safe to do so.

## 16 **Management Plan**

An update on the Management Plan would be requested from Ms Wilson.

## 17 **Any other Business**

The following issues were raised:

- Height Barrier operation and CCTV functionality

[following the meeting, Safer Runnymede confirmed that the default position would return to the barrier being closed and only opened on request]

- Signage audit and a request for permanent deterrent to BBQs and fires in the picnic area
- Deer awareness signage and educating visitors to the Meads not to allow their dogs to chase the deer
- Illegal mooring – progress with enforcement and costing options to deter it
- Replacement whips were being arranged by the Council's Tree Officer for Green Space [this post is now vacant]

The group was also encouraged to respond to the public consultation on the River Thames Scheme which was underway.

Officers were asked to provide a monthly update on issues raised and progress with the conservation project.

## 18 **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Group noted the next scheduled meetings of the Group were Tuesday 3 September 2024 and Tuesday 4 March 2025, to be held at the Civic Centre at 7.30pm.

(The meeting ended at 9.16 pm.)

Chair