

Runnymede Borough Council

Full Council

Thursday, 3 March 2022 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors E Gill (Mayor), M Harnden (Deputy Mayor), M Adams, A Balkan, J Broadhead, R Bromley, T Burton, D Clarke, D Cotty, M Cressey, S Dennett, J Furey, L Gillham, J Gracey, T Gracey, M Heath, C Howorth, J Hulley, N King, R King, M Kusneraitis, C Mann, I Mullens, M Nuti, N Prescott, P Snow, J Sohi, S Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte, S Williams and J Wilson.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors A Alderson, D Anderson-Bassey, D Coen, R Edis, S Lewis, S Mackay, J Olorenshaw and M Willingale.

484 **Councillor Mark Maddox**

The Mayor called for a Minute silence in memory of Cllr Mark Maddox who had passed away suddenly this week.

The Mayor, Leader of the Council and Leaders of all Groups on the Council and other Members paid tribute to Cllr Maddox for his service to the New Haw ward and borough of Runnymede and passed their sincere condolences to his family.

485 **Mayoral Statement on Ukraine**

Father Harrison-Miles from St Mary's Church, Thorpe attended the meeting and joined the Mayor to light a candle and say a prayer for those affected by the events in Ukraine.

Earlier in the day the Ukrainian flag had been raised outside the Civic Centre as a show of solidarity and support for the Ukrainian people.

486 **Mayor's Announcements**

Council noted the Mayoral announcements.

487 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 26 January 2022 and 10 February 2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

488 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Alderson, Anderson-Bassey, Coen, Edis, Lewis, Olorenshaw and Willingale.

489 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were made.

490 **Petitions**

No petitions were submitted by Members of the Council under Standing Order No 19

491 **Question from Member of the Public under Standing Order 12**

Mr Steve Ringham, a local resident, asked the Leader of the Council the following Question:

"On 26th January, 2022 I asked this Council a question relating to the school run around School Lane and issues arising from that situation. One element concerned idling cars and the resultant pollution impact on local air quality. There are several other local hotspots for large numbers of cars idling, primarily either side of Addlestone Station.

The answer I was given by Cllr Prescott, can be summarised that while current legislation, namely The Road Traffic Regulations 2002, has provisions to penalise such behaviour, Runnymede Borough Council does not have the resources to enforce this legislation. Therefore, my question is what criteria were used to decide not to allocate resources to this problem?"

The Leader of the Council responded as follows:

'The Council has a finite amount of resources. Whilst the issue of inconsiderate parking by certain people transporting their children to school has been brought to the Council's attention and our Parking Services are addressing the issue by visiting locations where the issue has been brought to our attention. The matter of idling engines at certain school sites has not been raised until Mr Ringham raised the matter in his previous question. The various problems caused by journeys to schools is not something the Council can resolve on its own as it requires input from other agencies, such as Surrey County Council as Highway Authority, the Police and the schools. The Council will ask the Joint Committee to consider this issue to see what can be done to resolve the problem.'

In response Mr Ringham reiterated the air quality and environmental issues caused by excessive engine idling and problems caused by queues at Addlestone level crossing and asked that Officers be trained to enforce the legislation.

The Leader of the Council again stated that the Joint Committee was the most appropriate forum to consider the matter.

492 **Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order 13**

Question from Cllr S Whyte:

Cllr S Whyte asked the Leader of the Council the following question under Standing Order No 13:

'With the lifting of Covid safety restrictions across the country, what measures are Runnymede Borough Council putting in place to protect our more vulnerable residents, such as those who are immunosuppressed, as they will no longer be able to rely on those with Covid symptoms to self isolate?'

The Leader of the Council responded as follows:

'Officers had reviewed Council policy in the light of the recent Government announcements on Covid restrictions. When it comes to our vulnerable clients; those in receipt of meals at home or who attend our day centres, we consider it necessary to continue to take precautions and protect people from covid. Therefore, we will be asking staff to continue to wear masks in appropriate settings, to wash their hands regularly and to test on a regular basis. We are in the process of sourcing lateral flow and PCR tests for staff who are working in settings with vulnerable people. As supplies may be limited, we are asking staff to source their own tests as well. Anyone who has symptoms, is being asked to stay at home until tests prove they are negative. I stress this applies to those employees working closely with vulnerable people in certain settings such as day centres, independent

retirement living etc.

Any client with covid symptoms, will be asked to inform Community or Housing Services staff (as appropriate) so that we may consider taking adequate precautions.'

In response Cllr S Whyte pointed out that Covid cases were still occurring and that social media should be used to advise residents to continue to take appropriate precautions.

The Leader of the Council commented that whilst SCC was the public health authority and led on communication on Covid, he would ask the Council's Communications Team to schedule posts in the coming weeks reminding residents to continue to take appropriate precautions.

Question from Cllr Burton

Cllr Burton asked the Leader of the Council the following question under Standing Order No 13:

'At the July 15th 2021 Full Council the following motion was passed regarding the SCHOOL TRANSPORT SERVICE:

"To review both the need for the service and also the other projects and priorities to support children and young people within the borough, in order to ensure the current subsidy agreed for the service is spent in the most appropriate way."

"That in support of families who used the previous school transport service, funding for contributions to public transport costs be made, with a maximum budget of £58,500.

And

That to support families within the borough impacted by the Covid pandemic, a grant of £2,500 is awarded to each secondary school, totalling £12,500, with officers working with the schools to create a hardship grant scheme for the academic year 2021/2022."

What progress has been achieved to date on these three actions?

The Leader of the Council responded as follows:

'We have decided to review the service offered by the so called yellow bus service because: -

- a) of the very low take up at some schools
- b) the significant subsidy to the service for relatively few pupils
- c) two miles if unsafe route to walk/cycle. The fact that home to school transport is a County Council function. Every pupil over 8 and living more than three miles from their school is entitled to free transport as are pupils with disabilities or those that have no safe walking route from home to school.
- d) we have subscribed a service for families who can afford to pay a daily fare. It does not help low income families, or target children at risk or in need of support.

As the Council develops its Health and Wellbeing Strategy (which will be with us in draft form in the next couple of months) it seemed the appropriate time to look at how best we might target our scarce resources. What the work today shows is that supporting children and young people through provision of leisure, recreation/services is a key need in the borough. This is a wider challenge/need than transport for a small number.

A full report will be submitted to the Community Services Committee at the first opportunity after the May elections. However, in the interim here are some of the initiatives we are considering: -

- a) Support to schools to ensure that particularly vulnerable pupils attend school by providing a school based bus service.
- b) Ride to school bicycle schemes, to provide subsidised cycle purchase or free to those on very low incomes.
- c) After school activity clubs such as the proposed Addlestone Youth Café. This would not only provide low cost or free recreational opportunities but provide access to laptops for homework.
- d) Small bursaries to enable young people to develop in the world of arts and sport.
- e) Opportunities for young people to access 'rewards' for community work.
- f) Eat healthy/be active schemes. Runnymede does have a higher than Surrey average in terms of obesity and lower than average levels of physical activity and this ought to be a priority.

As the Strategy and its Action Plan is developed it is intended to hold a session with the H & W Member Working Party, to receive Member comments, ideas and contributions, as well as engage with statutory and voluntary/community sector partners through the H & W Task Group. These are just a few of the ideas coming forward. It is open to any Councillor to feed in their suggestions via Darren Williams in Community Services and they will be explored.

In response, Cllr Burton asked whether any of the £58,500 budget to assist towards public transport costs had been spent and if the secondary schools had been given a grant £2,500 each.

The Leader of the Council stated that none of the £58,500 had been spent as yet and would provide a written answer to all Members in respect of the grants to secondary schools. The Leader stated that officers were working hard to stabilise the situation post Covid, but confirmed that the budget was in place for next year and future years.

Cllr R King commented on the high truancy rates in Runnymede and the need for the service. The Chairman of Community Services Committee confirmed that the issue of truancy rates would be discussed with the Corporate Head of Community Services this week and would be addressed in the emerging Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

493 **Recommendation from Corporate Management Committee 20 January 2022 – Preliminary Selection of Mayor**

Council considered a recommendation from Corporate Management Committee held on 20 January 2022 regarding the preliminary selection of Mayor for 2022/23.

Resolved that –

Councillor Margaret Harnden be nominated for the office of Mayor for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

494 **Preliminary Consideration of Deputy Mayoral Selection**

In accordance with Standing Order 7, Council considered candidates for the office of Deputy Mayor for 2022/23.

Councillors Adams and Kusneraitis had been nominated. As there were two nominations, the selection of Deputy Mayor was conducted by secret ballot. Councillor Adams polled 24 votes, Cllr Kusneraitis 8 votes. Accordingly, it was

Resolved that

Cllr Mark Adams be nominated for the office of Deputy Mayor at the Annual

Council meeting on 18 May 2022.**495 Members' Allowances - Report of The Independent Remuneration Panel**

Council considered the recommendations from the Corporate Management Committee held on 24 February, 2022 regarding the recommendations of the IRP on Members Allowances.

Council accepted the recommendations to increase the Basic Allowance and some Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) as recommended by the Panel.

The recommended increase to the Basic Allowance reflected the increased responsibilities and workload, the skills sets now required of a Councillor in a more commercially driven local authority environment including a large services and property portfolio, the requirement to engage in policy development and direction, the need to challenge proposals and assess risks and the pressures associated with communication with constituents in a digital environment. It also acknowledged the overall time commitment of Councillors and addressed the historical deficit of Runnymede's Basic Allowance when compared with other local authorities in Surrey and the South East.

Members hoped that the increased Basic Allowance would make the role of Councillor more viable for persons of working age and those who had family commitments. The increased allowance also better recognised the social value of the role performed by Councillors and hopefully encouraged greater diversity in membership which would be more representative of the community the Council served.

The Panel had recommended that the SRA for Leader of the Council be increased from £10,368 to £11,000 with the SRA for Deputy Leader being 50% of that, namely an increase from £2,592 to £5,500. The Panel considered this an appropriate increase which better reflected the workload and responsibilities associated with these high profile roles, would assist succession planning to those offices, and be more in line with SRAs paid in other local authorities for these roles. Council accepted these recommendations.

The Panel had reviewed the restriction placed on Members who served on Corporate Management Committee. Currently a Councillor could only receive a SRA of £1,296 for being a member of Corporate Management Committee if he or she was not entitled to any other SRA. The Corporate Management Committee currently had 12 Members. At the current time, only 2 councillors were eligible for the SRA for serving on that Committee and the remaining 10 Councillors did not get a SRA as they received an SRA for holding other offices. The Panel acknowledged the increased workload and responsibilities involved in serving on this Committee and considered that the restriction should be removed and that all Members of that Committee should be paid an SRA of £1,296 regardless of any other offices that they held. Council accepted this recommendation.

The Panel had reviewed the SRAs for Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Standards and Audit Committee which were low compared to SRAs paid to other Chairmen. In addition, since the last review 3 years ago, the Committee had taken an increased role for the oversight of the governance and financial operation of the Council. On this basis the Panel considered that the SRA for Chairman and Vice Chairman of this Committee should be increased from £1,710 to £5,184 and from £648 to £2,592 respectively which was in line with SRAs paid to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of main Committees. Council accepted this recommendation.

The Panel knew from its research that a small number of local authorities paid Political Group Leaders a flat rate plus a payment per member in their group or just a payment based on number of members in their groups. The Panel considered that the current SRA of £3,888 for Political Group Leaders was too high and that it was fairer for the SRA to be based on number of members in a group and recommended a figure of £425 per member

which was consistent with the SRA paid to the Leader of the Council if a per head basis calculation was applied. Council accepted this recommendation.

As a provision of £16,000 had already been made in the 2022/23 Estimates, a further annual sum of £49,000 was required to fund the increases in Allowances.

All Members apart from the serving Mayor currently received an allowance of £1,000 for serving on a Member Working Party (MWP). This was an allowance received by Members which was separate from the Members' Allowances Scheme. Council agreed with the Corporate Management Committee recommendation that as it was recommending an increase in the Basic Allowance and in the amounts that some Councillors would receive for SRAs it would not be appropriate to continue to receive a MWP allowance.

With this adjustment the net financial impact of the changes could be lower and full details would be provided by the Leader to all Members after the meeting.

A small number of Members considered that acceptance of the recommended increases was inappropriate in the current economic climate.

A Member mentioned that Members could donate all or part of their Allowances to charitable organisations and advice could be sought from Officers thereon.

Council asked that its thanks be passed onto the Members of the Panel for the diligent work that the Panel had done in putting forward the recommendations.

Cllr R King requested that the names of those voting on the Motion be recorded and the voting was as follows:

For the Motion (26): Councillors Adams, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Burton, Clarke, Cotty, Cressey, Dennett, Furey, Gill, Gillham, J Gracey, T Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N King, Kusneraitis, Mann, Nuti, Prescott, Snow, Sohi, Walsh and Wilson

Against the Motion (5): Councillors R King, Mullens, S Whyte, D Whyte and Williams.

Abstention: (1) Councillor Harnden

The Motion was passed and it was-

Resolved that –

- i) the Council notes the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel following the Panel's review of the scheme of Members' Allowances;**
- ii) the Council notes that the Panel recommends that**
 - a) the Basic Allowance be set at £5,500 per annum;**
 - b) annual increases linked to annual staff pay awards be applied to the Basic Allowance and SRAs in the financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25;**
 - c) the SRA for Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council be increased to £11,000 and £5,500 respectively;**
 - d) the SRA of £1,296 for serving on Corporate Management Committee be paid to all Members of that Committee regardless of any SRAs they**

- receive for holding other offices;
- e) the SRA for Chairman and Vice Chairman of Standards and Audit Committee be increased to £5,184 and £2,592 respectively;
 - f) the SRA for Political Group Leaders, other than Leader of the Council, be based on £425 per Member of their respective Groups;
 - g) no other changes be made to the scheme of Members' Allowances;
- iii) the Panel's recommendations be accepted;
 - iv) the Members' Allowances Scheme set out at Annex '2' to the Panel's report, be adopted with effect from 1 April 2022;
 - v) subject to confirmation, a supplementary revenue estimate be approved in the sum of £49,000 to cover the increased costs of the scheme in 2022/23 and subsequent years' increases be added to the Medium Term Financial Strategy; and

(Subsequent to the Full Council meeting, Officers confirmed that as a result of the discontinuance of the MWP payment the supplementary revenue estimate would be £9k and not £49k).

- vi) the annual allowance of £1,000 received by all Members, apart from the serving Mayor for serving on a Member Working Party, which is an allowance received by Members which is separate from the Members' Allowances Scheme, be discontinued for 2022/23.

496 Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23

Council considered a recommendation from Corporate Management Committee held on 24 February 2022 that the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23 to be implemented from 1 April 2022 should continue in its current form with no changes other than statutory changes and uprating.

As the Scheme had been in its current form since April 2019, proposals for a full scale review of the Scheme would be submitted to a future meeting of the Corporate Management Committee, so that the Council's decision on the Scheme for 2023/24 could be informed by the findings of that review. All Members would have the opportunity to input into the review.

One of the elements of the current Scheme was that Council Tax Support entitlement calculated at less than £10.00 per week was not paid except for those classed as vulnerable and the previous level of £5.00 per week was maintained. Some Members expressed concerns at this element. In order to establish how many persons would be affected by the decision, some Members asked to be provided with the number of persons who qualified as vulnerable and the number of persons who were not classed as vulnerable but would still not receive support. Members asked to be informed of the cost of support if it was provided below the £10 per week threshold. The Leader would provide this information to all Members after the meeting.

Cllr Kusneraitis requested that the names of those voting on the Motion be recorded and the voting was as follows:

For (20): Councillors Adams, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Clarke, Cotty, Dennett, Furey, J Gracey, T Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N King, Nuti, Prescott,

Snow, Sohi, Walsh and Wilson

Against (12): Councillors Burton, Cressey, Gill, Gillham, Harnden, R King, Kusneraitis, Mann, Mullens, D Whyte, S Whyte and Williams.

Abstentions: (0)

The Motion was passed and it was-

Resolved that –

the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23 to be implemented from 1 April 2022 continues in its current form with no changes other than statutory changes and uprating.

497 Annual Pay Policy Statement - 2022/2023

Council considered the recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee held on 24 February 2022 regarding the Annual Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 and.

Resolved that –

the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2022/23, as reported, be approved.

498 Urgent Notice of Motion - Situation in Ukraine

The Mayor had given her consent to the Motion below, which was submitted by Cllr Gillham, being dealt with as a matter of urgency under Standing Order 15.3 in view of the emerging situation in Ukraine.

Cllr Gillham moved that:

Runnymede Borough Council expresses its support for the Declaration adopted on 28 February 2022 by the Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on the situation in Ukraine as set out below:

CG-BUR(2022)44-22

The Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities the Council of Europe, held an extraordinary meeting on 28 February 2022 and adopted the following Declaration:

The Bureau,

1. condemns in the strongest terms, the armed attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation, which constitutes a blatant breach of international law and the Statute of the Council of Europe;
2. urges the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally cease its military operations in Ukraine and withdraw its troops;
3. deplores loss of life, human suffering and destruction caused by the Russian aggression and expresses its support to Ukraine and its solidarity with its people;
4. condemns the recognition by the Russian Federation of the Ukrainian oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent entities and the previous annexation of Crimea;

5. expresses its unwavering commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders;
6. underlines the fundamental role of the Council of Europe, as an organisation founded in the aftermath of the Second World War, to defend human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe, and ensure the peaceful coexistence of nations in Europe;
7. recalls, in this respect, that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress;
8. stresses that the armed attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation constitutes an attack on the principles and values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law which the Council of Europe stands for, promotes and defends; and that this war makes it impossible for local authorities in Ukraine to operate and inflicts serious suffering on the Ukrainian people;
9. underlines the role of the Congress in contributing to the aim and objectives of the Council of Europe and in building up local and regional democracy, the values of which are deeply rooted in the Ukrainian nation, identity and institutions;
10. calls for the Russian Federation to respect its obligations under the Statute and under international law;
11. considers that it is impossible to co-operate with the Russian delegation in the Congress until the territorial integrity of Ukraine is restored;
12. welcomes the Committee of Ministers' decision of 25 February 2022 to suspend the Russian Federation from its rights of representation in the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 8 of the Statute of the Council of Europe and calls on the Committee of Ministers to take the necessary additional decisions as soon as possible so that the suspension also applies to the Congress;

The Bureau stresses that democracy, multilevel governance and human rights are stronger than war, stands firmly by Ukraine and its people, and calls on all local and regional communities of Europe, and beyond, to stay united and determined in their solidarity with the Ukrainian nation, its people and its authorities.

The Motion was unanimously supported and many Members spoke in support of the people of Ukraine and mentioned personal contacts they had with Ukrainian nationals.

A Member mentioned community organisations who were raising funds /goods for the Ukrainian people and thanked those groups and asked that consideration be given by officers to publicising links on the Council's website /social media to signpost persons to these groups

The Motion was unanimously supported and it was

Unanimously Resolved that-

The Council expresses its support for the above-mentioned Declaration

No Notices of Motion had been submitted by Members of the Council under Standing Order 15.

500 **Minority Group Priority Business**

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

501 **Press and Public to be Excluded by Resolution**

By resolution of Council, the press and public were 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 paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

502 **Delivery Model For Future Grounds Maintenance Operations**

Council considered confidential recommendations from the Corporate Management Committee held on 24 February 2022 regarding the delivery model for future ground maintenance operations and Council fully supported the recommendations and

Resolved that –

The recommendations from the Corporate Management Committee, as reported, be approved.

(The meeting ended at 9.45 pm.)

Chairman