

## Runnymede Borough Council

### Full Council

Thursday, 28 April 2022 at 7.30 pm

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

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors D Anderson-Bassey, M Heath, J Hulley, N King, M Kusneraitis, S Mackay, M Nuti and M Willingale.

#### 568 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor made her announcements.

The Mayor thanked the following Councillors who were standing down in May for their past service to the Council and its residents, and wished all other candidates well in the May election:

Cllr Alderson  
Cllr Anderson-Bassey  
Cllr Edis  
Cllr Mackay  
Cllr Sohi

#### 569 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 3 March ,2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

#### 570 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Anderson-Bassey, Heath, N King, Kusneraitis, Nuti and Willingale.

#### 571 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Adams declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 9 a), as he is a Director of RBC Investments (Surrey) Ltd which was the company that would be receiving the loan and left the room for the discussion and voting on this item.

#### 572 Speaking or Questions from Members of the Public under Standing Order 12

No members of the public had registered to speak or ask a question under Standing Order 12.

#### 573 Petitions

No petitions had been submitted by Members of the Council under Standing Order No 19.

#### 574 Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order 13

**Councillor Williams asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

'Further to the Motion put forward at Full Council on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022 which proposed increasing Council Tax (CT) payments for dwellings that are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than five and ten years – which was defeated, and reports indicating that there is difficulty experienced when collecting CT from the owners of unoccupied dwellings that are required to pay 150% of CT, could the Leader of the Council tell me what the collection rate is for those CT payers who have empty properties, and who are required to pay CT at 150% of the normal charge?'

The Leader of the Council responded as follows:

*'As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 there were 148 Properties that were recorded as paying the additional charge of 150%.*

*Out of those, 26 are Runnymede Borough Council owned and go via Commercial Services (All paid in full).*

*11 are Runnymede Borough Council Owned (All paid in full).*

*1 is Leisure Services (Paid in full).*

*So remaining 110 Accounts of which only 4 are not paid in full at the end of the financial year and recovery action is progressing.*

*How this affects our collection rates:*

*Net debit for 2021 at year end is £2,507,460.52.*

*2021 debt for Empty Premium accounts at year end £10,224.58 2020 and older debt for Empty premium Accounts at year end £10,807.18 (same accounts as 2021).*

*Empty Premium debt for 2021 is 0.41% of the net collectable debit outstanding and for both 2021 and older is 0.84% of the net debit. Whilst a small % overall, for those properties where owners are abroad, there is very little the Council can do to recover the money until it gets to over £5000 where we can put a charge on the property but cannot force a sale'.*

A Member commented that from the figures reported there did not appear to be a difficulty in collection of Council Tax on unoccupied properties.

**Councillor S Whyte asked the Leader of the Council the following question:**

'The last formal monthly update to Members on the status of all outstanding Planning Enforcement cases across the Borough, was received in October 2020. Now that the Enforcement Team has increased from 3 to 5 Officers when will monthly updates recommence?'

The Leader of the Council responded as follows:

*"The Council has recently grown the Enforcement team to 4.7 FTE including two new trainee Enforcement Officers. This is an important milestone for the service, and staff training is underway and it is considered that the service will approach full capacity in the Summer.*

*Now that the staff growth has been achieved, the service will now review various Enforcement processes and procedures including the adopted Enforcement Policy as well as considering appropriate updating mechanisms for elected Members and the public on*

key cases.

*The most appropriate mechanism for reporting updates on key cases will be discussed with the Planning Committee by the Corporate Head of Development Management and Building Control in the coming months with a view to finding the right balance for providing an appropriate level of updates without using up significant enforcement officer capacity doing so."*

Cllr S Whyte hoped that the most appropriate mechanism for reporting updates would be discussed sooner rather than later.

The Leader of the Council responded that the most effective ways of reporting accurate information to Members would be looked at as soon as possible after the Election.

#### 575 **Recommendation from Corporate Management Committee 3 March 2022 - Constitution Review 2022**

Council considered a recommendation from Corporate Management Committee held on 3 March 2022 regarding proposed changes to the Council's Constitution resulting from periodic updating and recommendations arising from a review of the Constitution by the Constitution Member Working Party (MWP).

The Chairman of the Constitution MWP was thanked for her chairmanship and Council agreed the proposed changes to the Constitution subject to an addition that under the new procedure for appointments to outside bodies, appointees to outside bodies would be required to report back in a form appropriate to the activities of the organisation to which they are appointed within the Municipal Year. The form of reporting back would be proportionate and flexible to reflect the activities of the outside body and could be to a Committee, Member Working Party or in some other way. The operation of the new process for outside bodies would be reviewed by the Constitution MWP in the next Municipal Year.

#### **Resolved that –**

- i) the changes to the Council's Constitution be approved subject to an addition that under the new procedure for appointments to outside bodies, appointees to outside bodies would be required to report back within the Municipal Year in a form appropriate to the activities of the organisation to which they are appointed;**
- ii) the revised Constitution be effective from 18 May 2022; and**
- iii) the Corporate Head of Law and Governance be authorised to settle the final form of the Constitution for adoption in accordance with the above decisions, and the Corporate Head of Law and Governance be authorised to incorporate any delegations to Officers subsequently authorised by Committee(s) after 28 April, 2022 and prior to printing and make any minor editing changes necessary to correct errors or omissions discussed after 18 May 2022.**

#### 576 **Recommendations from Corporate Management Committee -21 April,2022 - Loan Agreement for RBC Investments (Surrey) Ltd**

Council considered a recommendation from Corporate Management Committee held on 21 April,2022 regarding the adjustment of the purchase price discount rate associated with Magna Square properties which were subject to the loan agreement to RBC Investments (Surrey) Ltd (RBCI) approved by Full Council on 26 January 2022. This was necessary to reflect the market changes which had been verified by the Council's independent valuers.

Council agreed that this adjustment be made and approved a supplementary revenue estimate to account for the reduced investment income to the Council which would result from the adjustment.

**Resolved that –**

- i) the purchase price discount rate that forms part of the loan facility agreement between the Council and RBC Investments (Surrey) Ltd for the purchase of residential units in the Magna Square development be adjusted from the percentage reported to the percentage reported thereby reducing the loan facility agreement from the sum reported to the sum reported; and**
- ii) a supplementary revenue estimate be agreed in the sum reported to account for the reduced investment income to the Council resulting from the lower amount loaned to RBC Investments (Surrey) Ltd.**

**577 Notices of Motion from Members of the Council under Standing Order 15**

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

**578 Minority Group Priority Business**

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

(The meeting ended at 8.01 pm.)

Chairman