

## Runnymede Borough Council

### Corporate Management Committee

Thursday, 24 November 2022 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors T Gracey (Chairman), C Howorth (Vice-Chair), M Cressey, J Gracey, M Heath, R King, I Mullens, D Whyte, A Balkan (In place of M Willingale), D Coen (In place of N King), E Gill (In place of L Gillham) and N Prescott (In place of M Nuti).

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors L Gillham, N King, M Nuti and M Willingale.

In attendance: Councillors S Jenkins.

#### 369 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2022 were agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

- Amend the resolution for item 264 to read “referred” instead of “deferred”.

#### 370 Apologies for Absence

There were none.

#### 371 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

#### 372 Council Tax Support Scheme

The committee felt that the proposed scheme represented a fair approach which sought to minimise the financial strain on those residents facing financial hardship. It was noted that this scheme was for residents of non-pensionable age only.

There was discussion about the cost of the proposals. It was requested that additional information on any savings and expenditure be provided to Council on 8 December 2022.

#### **Resolved that –**

**The preferred option for a revised Runnymede Council Tax Support scheme be recommended for adoption by Council, for implementation from 1 April 2023.**

#### 373 Mid-Year Treasury Management

Runnymede’s treasury management function had performed well over the previous six months, despite significant amounts of turbulence in the financial markets.

Credit reference agencies had recently positively revised their assessment of Credit Suisse. Consequently, the council’s investment was expected to realise its planned returns. Processes had been introduced to further reduce the likelihood of a breach of the council’s treasury management procedures occurring in the future.

The report was noted.

### 374 **Referral from Standards & Audit Committee - Counter Fraud Service Update**

A review of the level of resources required to deliver the council's counter fraud activities had been undertaken. It was recommended that the current level of resource provided by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council be retained. The high level of reported fluctuations was due to the council recovering a number of properties following investigations.

The committee lauded this as a positive example of partnership working between Surrey's districts and boroughs.

#### **Resolved that –**

**A supplementary estimate of £12,700 be approved, to be split 80/20 between the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund, following consultation with the Chairman of the Housing Committee.**

### 375 **Budget Monitoring**

The committee noted that this report had been prepared during a period of fluidity in the financial markets. Whilst interest rates were offsetting some of the financial challenges faced by the council, inflation was presenting its own challenges. Officers were closely monitoring the situation.

There was discussion about the housing revenue account (HRA). A business plan for the HRA was currently being prepared.

The council's medium-term financial strategy was to be considered at an upcoming Corporate Management Committee.

The report was noted.

### 376 **Refurbishment of Tennis Courts an Increased Participation Project - Update**

Discussions had taken place with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) who had confirmed that they could not provide funding for multiuse games areas. The refurbishment costs therefore had to be met by the council, which it was able to do through departmental underspends. An agreement had however been reached for those areas exclusively used for tennis. Details of the structure of this agreement was contained within the officer's report.

#### **Resolved that –**

**The Council enter into agreements with contractors, to complete the works as set out in the officer's report.**

### 377 **Parliamentary Boundary Review**

The committee reviewed the revised proposal from the Boundary Commission. Whilst some changes had been made in response to the council's feedback on the original consultation, other changes had subsequently been proposed that resulted in the unfavourable arrangement of there being three constituencies covering various parts of the Runnymede Borough Council area. Issues particular to the locality, that left some smaller communities cut off by the road network, had also been identified.

Members considered that there were positive elements within the revised proposal. Three wards moving into a new constituency, instead of the previous two, would provide a greater

resident and councillor voice with the member of parliament. Additionally, the retention of “Runnymede” in the relevant constituency’s name was also welcomed. It was suggested that the Windsor constituency be named “Windsor Great Park” to account for some of the communities that would now potentially fall within its boundary.

The committee discussed whether it wished to submit a further response. It was noted that further submissions should not repeat arguments put forward in previous ones to the Boundary Commission. It was however felt that many of the previously presented arguments applied to the latest proposal.

It was agreed that all members should be provided with an opportunity to supply their views on a possible response to the Boundary Commission.

The importance of communicating any agreed changes with residents was emphasised, in particular that they were not moving from the Runnymede Borough Council area.

**Resolved that –**

- 1. The revised proposals, in relation to the Runnymede and Weybridge Constituency, be noted.**
- 2. The Corporate Head of Law and Governance be delegated authority to agree a further submission to the Boundary Commission, following consultation with all councillors.**

**378 Fees and Charges**

Increases to the proposed fees and charges had, where possible, been kept to a minimum. Whilst there were significant inflationary pressures on council budgets, court related fees and charges had been held as increases would severely impact those in financially challenging circumstances.

**Resolved that –**

**The proposed fees and charges (including their proposed effective from dates (or as soon as practical after these dates)), as set out in Appendix A, be approved.**

**379 SO42 - Business Rates Pooling**

The report was noted.

**380 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 of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

**381 Future Management of Property**

There was detailed discussion about the negotiations that had taken place with the lessee, who had been severely impacted by pandemic related restrictions on their services. These restrictions had resulted in a significant level of arrears being accumulated. It was hoped that the revised agreement would enable the council to recover some of its lost income, whilst also allowing the lessee to continue operating whilst it restructured its business. It also reduced the risk of various costs falling to the council in the event that the lessee became insolvent.

The committee, whilst generally in favour of the proposed revised agreement, voiced its concerns about how the lessee had interacted with the council over a prolonged period. There were also queries raised about the lessee's ability to manage the site.

Concerns about whether the revised agreement could be adhered to by the lessee were raised. It was noted that whilst the revised agreement, due to its temporary nature, provided opportunities for the lessee to review their situation, it also provided time for the council to develop plans in the event that the lessee's business became financially unviable.

It was noted that, should the committee agree to the proposals, work on developing a positive ongoing relationship with the lessee would continue. Formal proposals would be considered by a future Corporate Management Committee.

**Resolved that:**

- 1. The agreement with the lessee, as set out in paragraphs 2.4 to 2.8, be agreed.**
- 2. Officers be instructed to implement the new agreement as soon as possible.**
- 3. Subject to there being no material changes which would require the approval of a future Corporate Management Committee, the Chief Executive Officer be delegated authority to make any required minor alterations to the agreement, following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Management Committee, prior to its implementation.**
- 4. In the event of default on the part of the lessee, officers report back to the Corporate Management Committee with a view to instigating legal proceedings and proposing an alternative plan for the management of the site.**

(The meeting ended at 10.06 pm.)

Chairman