

Runnymede Borough Council
Corporate Management Committee
Thursday, 20 April 2023 at 7.30 pm

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

Members of the Committee absent: -

In attendance: Councillors S Jenkins.

670 Minutes

The following minutes were agreed and signed as a correct record:

- Corporate Management Committee (Extraordinary Meeting), 15 March 2023
- Corporate Management Committee, 23 March 2023
- Appointments Sub Committee, 1 March 2023
- Appointments Sub Committee, 14 March 2023

671 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

672 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

673 Carbon Literacy Training

Following interest from the Environment & Sustainability Committee, the Climate Change officer had investigated ways to deliver carbon literacy training for both Councillors and senior officers.

The objective of the training was based on the principle of behaviour and culture change alongside technology and policy to achieve the required reductions in carbon emissions needed to meet national and global targets.

The prospect of the training drew enthusiasm from the Committee, who were supportive of breaking the training down into four x two hour training sessions. The Climate Change officer would look into queries about whether the training would be recorded and whether Members and officers could attend each other's training sessions in the event that they were unable to attend one of their own.

Newly elected Councillors would be invited to take part, and it was acknowledged that failure to attend all aspects of the course in person or virtually would mean that the individual would not receive certification.

Resolved that –

Committee agreed to appoint Three Point Five to deliver carbon literacy training to Councillors and Level 3 Senior Officers in the format described in

paragraphs 2.11 and 2.12 of the officer report.

674 Gender Pay Gap

The Corporate Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development advised that the gender pay gap figure was reported to central government on an annual basis to monitor and close the pay gap over time.

The current mean gender pay gap at Runnymede Borough Council was currently 7.62%, which was below the national average of 12.2%. An action plan to bridge the gap further was being devised and would be taken to the Equalities Group, the HR Members Working Party and onwards to Corporate Management Committee.

The plan would include actions such as increasing flexible working policies and encourage women to take part in management development programmes to retain and develop current employees.

The Corporate Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development was quick to dispel any suggestion that the creation of an employment target for CLT to be gender balanced in due course would lead to a perception that individuals weren't appointed on merit or ability, and the Committee acknowledged that targets serve society well in the context of gender equality and helps to identify where shortfalls exist.

Resolved that –

The report was noted and a suitable action plan would subsequently be devised to encourage a further reduction in the gender pay gap.

675 River Thames Scheme: division of roles and responsibilities

The Head of External Projects and Emergency Response reminded Committee that the River Thames Scheme had been designated a nationally important strategic infrastructure project, and subject to examination under the Planning Act 2008 via the Development Consent Order (DCO) process.

The River Thames Scheme was a hybrid DCO in so far as all parties to the scheme were considered both Applicants/Promoters and Regulators. It was therefore essential that there was a clear separation of the roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers to ensure and demonstrate that the Council had fulfilled its duties appropriately and ethically and that any perceived conflicts of interest had been removed.

A Member expressed his support for the proposal, but was keen to ensure that the Council was proactive in addressing what could be done to reduce potential harm from other forms of flooding in the borough, with extreme weather events likely to be an increasing occurrence in future.

Another Member advised that Surrey County Council were currently working on a local flood risk management strategy, and all districts and boroughs would be encouraged to engage in the process of creating the strategy. More information would be provided to Councillors after the election, along with a site visit.

The Head of External Projects and Emergency Response would provide a detailed written briefing on both roles to all councillors after the election, and would seek nominations of interest. He also clarified that taking up one role or the other would not result in Members being deprived of information on the other role, and any decisions around investment of priority would still be made through the Council's Committee system. Regular briefings to all Members on the River Thames Scheme would continue.

Resolved that –

The proposed Division of Responsibilities procedure was approved.

676 Corporate Key Performance Indicators - Additional Information for Approval of Four Indicators and Targets for 2023/24

Following queries on four of the CKPIs for 2023/24 presented at the previous Corporate Management Committee, the Head of Business Planning, Projects and Performance and Procurement Manager and Direct Services Manager presented the proposed new targets.

Explanations were provided for why indicators H6 (Proportion of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard) and P1 (Percentage of 'Major' planning applications processed to deadline in each quarter) should remain unchanged.

The 60% target for P1 was owing to being a national minimum performance indicator set by DLUHC and was used to assess all Local Planning Authorities. The service already performed considerably beyond 60% so the proposed increase to 70% would not be an incentive to drive increased performance as the service was already performing in the desired manner.

The targets for indicator H6 reflected what was in the housing Asset Management Plan. A Member added that officers were already aware what work was required to meet Decent Homes standard, and working tirelessly to meet those targets. The Member added that increasing the percentage target by 1% could demotivate officers in their work to achieve this.

Indicators ES1 (dry mixed recycling rate) and ES2 (garden waste and food waste recycling rate) were both significantly impacted by multiple external factors. It was therefore proposed to remove them from the suite of CKPIs and instead provide Environment & Sustainability with six month reporting on the recycling percentage rates, KG of household waste and explanation of external national factors. It was proposed this would provide a more detailed understanding of overall waste and recycling measures and performance.

This would be reviewed upon release of the government's Environment Bill to ensure targets were realistic and reflected the Bill.

The Chief Executive advised that Runnymede was already the lowest producer of waste in the county, and officers had agonised over how to display the information in a meaningful way to members and residents. It was considered that the rates were too complex to put in one small table without understanding all the variables and objectives that make up waste and recycling rates.

A Member moved a motion to continue with six monthly reporting on the proposed CKPIs ES1 and ES2 with accompanying percentage figures.

A vote was taken and the proposed amendment was lost.

Resolved that –

Committee approved the deferred CKPIs to complete approval of the CKPIs for 23/24.

677 Outcome of Standards and Audit Committee Staff Appeal

The Corporate Head of Law and Governance reported the outcome of a Standards and

Audit Committee staff appeal, where an appeal for a higher level of remuneration was rejected by the Standards & Audit panel.

678 **Motion from Council**

Following a motion at Council in March 2023 a letter had been drafted to be sent to the Mayor of London objecting to the proposed ULEZ expansion.

There was no feedback on the content of the letter, however several Members expressed disappointment that the letter had been produced and made public during the period of Purdah, and felt it should have waited until after the election on 4 May, believing that the main driver for the letter was for political purposes.

The Council's Monitoring Officer reiterated advice he had previously provided some Members in writing, stating that ultimately the decision was a judgement call, decided by full Council before Purdah and did not fall within the term of publicity.

The Leader of the Council would contact other group leaders to seek confirmation on which Leader(s) wished to add their signature to the letter, some of whom responded during the item that they did not wish to add their signature.

Resolved that –

The content of the letter was agreed.

679 **Outcome of Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee Call-In, 12 April 2023**

Following a report from Corporate Management Committee on 23 March that was called in by Overview & Scrutiny Select Committee around the recruitment of a new chief executive, a meeting of the Select Committee took place on 12 April 2023, where it was voted by majority that Corporate Management Committee would be advised not to deviate from their intended course of action.

680 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

By resolution of the Committee, for the reasons set out in the agenda, 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 as set out in Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

681 **Q4 Project Portfolio and Year End Project Updates**

The Head of Business Planning, Projects and Performance and Procurement Manager presented the progress of projects for quarter four of 2022/23.

This included an overview of projects delivered since December 2022, an overview of projects for 2023/24 and a progress report and RAG rating for all live grade A and B projects.

Several Members commented on the prospect of live streaming Committee meetings. It was acknowledged that this would continue to be tracked and a business case brought forward at the appropriate time.

Resolved that –

1) Committee noted the project updates for the ten grade A and eleven grade B

projects ranging through the initiation to execution stages and one Programme update.

- 2) Committee noted key project achievements over the final quarter of 2022/23 for the months of January, February, and March 2023.**
- 3) Committee noted the project execution delays or issues highlighted and corrective actions in place to address them.**

682 Review of the Structure of Planning Policy and Development Management

The Chief Executive advised that the report proposed the merger of the Planning Policy/Economic Development and Development Management/Building Control functions into one single service unit.

The merger reflected the fact that there could be confidence in the strength of one single planning unit now that other issues such as the establishment of a shared service for building control had now been completed.

Furthermore, a gap notice needed to be commenced before the next local plan whilst government policy advice was awaited, and as well as providing career development opportunities to key staff, a single planning service would also provide an appropriate base for climate change coordination.

Subject to Committee approval, a consultation letter would be sent to affected staff, and the results would be presented to a future HR Member Working Party, and if necessary back to this Committee.

The Committee were supportive of the development of staff, and also aid the MTFs with the saving generated.

Resolved that –

- 1. Committee approved the merger of the Planning Policy/Economic Development function with Development Management/Building Control.**
- 2. Committee approved the revised structure.**
- 3. Committee noted and approve the changes to the salary structure and also the net saving to the General Fund.**
- 4. Committee agreed to set aside funding to adjust other staffing salaries following consultation with staff and realignment of roles within the merged service unit.**
- 5. Committee noted that a full consultation exercise would take place with all staff and UNISON in the Planning service with the result of that exercise reported to members no later than June, 2023.**
- 6. Committee noted that the re-structure would take effect from Monday, 12 June 2023, subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise.**

683 Business Plan Covering Runnymede Borough Council's Companies

The Property Portfolio Manager advised that the business plan for the Special Purpose Vehicle companies had been endorsed at an earlier meeting of the company's board.

A Member queried the high energy costs associated with running Waitrose Car Park, and was advised it was due to its 24/7 nature, along with the fact that it was underground and being run by a power plant for ventilation.

Another Member was keen to see the technical appraisal of investments, and was advised that a data collection exercise was currently being undertaken and would form part of the quarterly non treasury management plans that would be made available to Members.

Resolved that –

Committee agreed the five-year business plan.

684 **Update on Procurement Issues - Assets and Regeneration**

The Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration asked Committee to agree to the procurement of the mechanical and electrical surveys for the operational estate.

These surveys would be compliantly procured using the Workplace and Facilities framework managed by Fusion 21, and would enable the Council to fully understand the life cycle of all its plant and buildings and the cost of repairing and replacing, including undertaking sustainability measures and mitigating its risks.

The survey would allow officers to budget and plan in a more robust manner, setting out which would be priority.

Resolved that –

1. **Committee agreed to the procurement of mechanical and electrical surveys and a report of a five-year plan at the estimated costs highlighted in the financial section of the report.**
2. **Committee agreed to the waiver to Contract Standing Orders, to be enacted only if needed, and in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee, Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive to extend the incumbent mechanical and electrical contract for the key assets known as Addlestone One, Civic Centre and Magna Square until the procurement of a super FM contract successfully appoints a contractor in accordance with specification provided.**

685 **Democratic Services Printing Budget**

The Corporate Head of Law and Governance advised that Democratic Services were seeking an adjustment to the current printing budget.

The Council had a longstanding agreement with a local printing supplier, with the pricing structure maintained over a long period of time. However, this had now become unaffordable for the printing supplier, who had indicated that they would not be seeking a contract extension without an increase in the charges for printing.

A waiver to contract standing orders had previously been granted by this Committee to appoint the incumbent for 12 months. A further twelve months was being requested on uplifted terms whilst a procurement exercise took place to ensure that a competitive process was undertaken to appoint a supplier for future printing needs in Democratic Services. This would not require any growth due to savings made elsewhere in the service.

It was clarified that the cost covered all Democratic Services Committee printing rather than just Committee papers received by Members.

A Member encouraged colleagues to utilise Modern.Gov, which would soon be optimised to make the user experience easier. The Corporate Head of Law and Governance confirmed there remained a legal requirement to provide Members with hard copies of papers should they request them, and there was also a need to provide spare copies for the public gallery.

A Member highlighted that it was not desirable to be increasing the spend on paper so soon after the launch of a climate change strategy, and Democratic Services officers would closely monitor the volume of copies printed to minimise waste.

Resolved that –

- 1. A supplementary revenue estimate was approved for the increased costs of printing.**
- 2. Committee noted that the savings made on the Democratic Services staffing budget agreed by this committee on 19 January 2023 offset the additional cost of the printing.**
- 3. Committee approved a waiver to Contract Standing Orders to authorise a further direct award of a 12-month contract to the incumbent supplier from June 1 2023 to May 31 2024 noting that this would be subject to revised pricing.**
- 4. Authority was delegated to the Corporate Head of Law and Governance to finalise and enter into a new contract with the current printing supplier.**
- 5. The proposed procurement exercise, to be carried out during the 2023/24 financial year was noted.**

686 Urgent business - funding to cover cost of interim staff

The Corporate Head of Law and Governance advised that following the impending departure of the Deputy Corporate Head of Law and Governance, a supplementary estimate was requested to cover the cost of an interim member of staff, primarily to cover Committee meetings.

Resolved that –

Committee approved a Supplementary Revenue Estimate to fund the budget gap created by an interim member of staff to cover a vacancy arising from the departure of an existing member of staff whilst a recruitment exercise was undertaken.

(The meeting ended at 9.39 pm.)

Chairman