

Runnymede Borough Council

Full Council

Thursday, 20 October 2022 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Harnden (Mayor), S Saise-Marshall (Deputy Mayor), A Balkan, A Berardi, J Broadhead, R Bromley, T Burton, D Clarke, D Coen, D Cotty, M Cressey, V Cunningham, R Davies, S Dennett, J Furey, L Gillham, J Gracey, T Gracey, C Howorth, J Hulley, S Jenkins, A King, N King, R King, S Lewis, I Mullens, M Nuti, J Olorenshaw, S Ringham, P Snow, S Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte, S Williams, M Willingale and J Wilson.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors M Darby, E Gill, M Heath, C Mann and N Prescott.

287 **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor paid tribute to ex Councillor Keith Thompson, who had recently passed away at the age of 92.

The Mayor went on to highlight some of her events in recent months, which included judging three classic car shows, opening the new Magna Square development, travelling on the Royal Row Barge on the day of the Queen's funeral, and reading out the proclamation of the new King.

The Mayor went on to pay tribute to the many volunteers in the borough.

288 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 July 2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

289 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors M Darby, E Gill, M Heath, C Mann and N Prescott.

290 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations received.

291 **Speaking or Questions from Members of the Public under Standing Order 12**

Lorraine Reed, a local resident, asked the following question:

"I am partially sighted and hearing impaired. I am a blue badge holder and live in Egham. I have a support worker who drives me into town to shop. We very frequently find some of the disabled parking spaces at Waitrose are taken up by non-Blue Badge holders, and are unavailable to us. I know other members of the disabled community have the same experience as me. Could Runnymede take action to enforce the parking restrictions in this car park, so that disabled residents can have the same access to Egham shops as other residents have?"

The Leader of the Council replied that where the Council own car parks in the borough

enforcement officers are directed to ensure that blue badge spaces are only taken up by blue badge holders.

However, Waitrose car park is operated by Waitrose and therefore it is outside the Council's powers to enforce parking restrictions.

The Leader of the Council offered to write to the store manager of Waitrose to ask for a meeting and better understand how enforcement of the car park was managed.

Ms Reed subsequently asked how many Penalty Charge Notices had been issued at Waitrose car park over the past three months, which the Leader pledged to find out, and would also provide a breakdown of how many parking notices had been issued by the Council's Enforcement Officers for blue badge offences in Egham during that time.

The Leader thanked the resident for her question.

Please see appendix 1.

292 **Petitions**

No petitions had been received from Members of the Council under Standing Order No 19.

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

Question One

Cllr Abby King asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

As Paul Scully MP, the new Minister of State at the Department for levelling up, declared recently there is more "fat to be trimmed" in local government, how is the Leader going to respond to a further experiment with austerity politics and the threat it brings to the services we provide?

The Leader of the Council responded that he would reject any suggestion that Runnymede would consider an experiment of austerity politics, adding that since 2010 the Council had embarked on extensive efficiency work to give residents value for money, as well as setting out an investment strategy to protect and develop the services it provides to residents.

Question Two

Cllr Rhys Davies asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

As highlighted in the new corporate business plan, 1,620 of Runnymede's residents live in absolute poverty, 8% of our total population and 11.1% higher than the average in Surrey. Given the refusal of the new Prime Minister to confirm she will be uprating benefits in line with inflation, or with general wages, what new funding as of this month will the Leader be announcing to support families who are below the absolute poverty line and those additional households who will now fall below that because of the prime minister's determination to transfer wealth from the poorest to the richest?

The Leader of the Council replied that the term 'Absolute poverty' was not recognised in the UK in relation to national statistics. The term quoted within the Health & Wellbeing strategy was 'relative income poverty', which was not directly comparable.

The Leader went on to highlight some of the activities the Council undertake to support those residents requiring support within the borough, which included funding to the

Runnymede Food Bank and Citizens Advice Bureau.

The Leader responded to a follow up question about the potential for staff to be affected by relative income poverty by advising that as part of the budget setting process a number of fair and equitable deals would be under consideration for all staff.

Question Three

Cllr Robert King asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Is the Leader committed to continuing to provide free bin collection services to churches, certain charities and other religious groups which have a community outlook, as Runnymede has previously done so for many years? If he is, will he be instructing officers, along with the chair of Environment & Sustainability Committee, to cancel demands for new trade collection contracts when missed bins collections have been challenged by these institutions.

The Leader of the Council advised that it was ultimately for the relevant Committee to escalate their recommendations to full Council, with the most recent recommendations relating to fees and charges implemented earlier this municipal year. The Leader encouraged Cllr R King to raise any concerns with the Chair of the relevant Member Working Party.

When asked about the prospect of charities and community organisations being offered additional relief around environmental services provision, the Leader advised that he felt the country was at the start of a prolonged period of stress and it was important for the Council to be aware of what was happening across the borough, however it was currently too soon to provide information on specific areas.

Question Four

Cllr Isabel Mullens asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

The Empowering Communities Strategy of the Corporate Business Plan references the importance of reaching residents through social media. Could the leader of the council say what proportion of our residents do not have access or the ability to work with social media, so that we can better address the problem of how to reach these digitally excluded people?

The Leader of the Council felt that a combination of factors such as technical ability and appetite to embrace social media made it impossible to provide an accurate answer, but added that he felt that the Council's digital offering was excellent, whilst acknowledging that it only reached a certain percentage of the population.

Through the Citizens Panel that forms part of the Corporate Plan, it was strongly hoped that a large cross-section of the community could be called upon through an outreach strategy to give their views on matters through non-digital means such as focus groups.

In response to a follow up question about finding the necessary numbers for the Citizens Panel to get a representative sample, the Leader advised this would be done through a combination of engagement with local organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau as well as outreach through Councillors' work.

A Member suggested building up a database of residents willing to engage by email with the Council via the electoral process.

School Transport Service

The recent Community Services Committee had considered a proposal to discontinue the school transport service and reallocate the previously agreed sum of £215,000 to develop leisure and recreation opportunities in the borough in line with the Council's Health & Wellbeing strategy.

The Community Services Committee Chair advised this was primarily in response to delays in equipment and the ongoing impact of the pandemic resulting in changes to travel patterns and added that the money would be used flexibly on both refurbishments and new equipment.

Some Members expressed dissatisfaction with the discontinuation of the service, the lack of data provided for context and the impact of increasing the number of cars on the roads. It was also asked to ensure that Surrey County Council would provide additional bus routes on the services affected. The Leader of the Council would share with full Council the data used to come to the decision.

The Leader advised that to run the service in isolation would cost around £800 per pupil, adding that there were existing transport services available. It should also be encouraged to use active travel to get to school such as walking and cycling. Furthermore, Surrey County Council would continue to provide transport for those who had the greatest need for school transport.

The Chair of Community Services stated that schools in the borough were consulted, and most did not respond, whilst others declared that a bus service was not a priority for them and demand was low. One school did suggest that a bus service to help deal with pupils who were not regular attendees would be useful, but it was felt there were other ways these concerns could be addressed.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the £215,000 was an annual revenue budget to deliver the service, which would be transferred to Community Services Department on an ongoing basis.

A named vote was requested on the item and the voting was as follows:

For (25)

Cllrs Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Burton, Clarke, Coen, Cotty, Cressey, Cunningham, Dennett, Furey, Gillham, J Gracey, T Gracey, Howorth, Hulley, Nuti, Olorenshaw, Snow, Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte, Willingale, Wilson

Against (7)

Cllrs Berardi, Davies, A King, R King, Mullens, Ringham, Williams

Abstain (4)

Cllrs Harnden, Jenkins, N King, Lewis

Resolved that –

the previously agreed discretionary school transport service is not to proceed, and that full sum of £215,000, is allocated to Community Services Department for the development and refurbishment of leisure and recreation opportunities for children and young people across the borough, which may include the refurbishment and/or replacement of play equipment.

The Leader of the Council advised full Council that work on the Corporate Plan had been ongoing for nearly 18 months and had been through a thorough consultation process. Each of the five strands had been signed off by Corporate Management Committee having also been scrutinised by various Member Working Parties.

There was an ambition to ensure the Council was delivering excellent facilities, providing a good quality of life for residents and meet objectives set out within the climate change strategy.

The Leader thanked both officers for the preparation of the Corporate Plan, and Councillors for engaging in the review process.

The Chair of Environment & Sustainability Committee acknowledged the importance of all strands within the strategy but stressed the importance of the climate change strategy and in particular the target to achieve net zero carbon emissions from the Council's operations and services by 2030. The ability to calculate where the distribution of the Council's carbon emissions would be vital to this process.

Furthermore he felt it was important to set an example for others to follow across Runnymede and beyond, including the Council's supply chain by ensuring suppliers and contractors were also working to net zero targets.

Several Members expressed concern that the Corporate Plan's accompanying action list had only recently been released and felt that many of the actions and initiatives contained within had not been subject to the appropriate levels of Member scrutiny and debate. The Leader of the Council confirmed that it was intended that the plans would evolve to reflect new knowledge, understanding and priorities, and would form part of the workplans for Committees and Member Working Parties.

In response to the absence of livestreaming Committee meetings from the Empowering Communities strategy, the Leader of the Council advised Members this was being looked at by the Communications and Service Transformation Member Working Party, who would provide recommendations to the relevant Committee when appropriate.

Resolved that –

a) All elements of the Corporate Plan and overarching report were approved.

296 **Recommendation from Corporate Management Committee - 13 October 2022 - Calendar of Meetings 2023/24**

An amended motion was proposed to address concern from some Members about the proximity of annual Council to the local election. The proposed amendment would see an additional week between the two dates to allow more time for newly-elected Councillors to familiarise themselves with the role, as well as more time for the potential for political groups to form coalitions.

The amended motion was lost.

Resolved that –

The calendar of meetings for 2023/24 was approved.

297 **Changes to Membership of Committees**

Resolved that –

The changes proposed by the Labour and Co-operative Group to the membership of the Housing and Planning Committees for the remainder of this Municipal year (2022/2023) was approved.

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

Motion 1 – Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) to support the Local Electricity Bill.

Cllr D Whyte moved the motion in the summons for Runnymede Borough Council to support the Local Electricity Bill. In moving the motion, Cllr D Whyte felt that this would reduce the carbon footprint of the Council, as well as the borough as a whole, adding that this would be an enabler for small-scale local energy provision, and would have no cost implications for the Council.

During the debate on the motion the Deputy Leader of the Council agreed that energy storage and production needed to be prioritised, but expressed concerns around both the timing, stating it was premature to support until the Bill became an act of parliament, along with the necessary interface with the national grid, meaning enhancements in technology would need to be available before this was a viable option.

Cllr D Whyte advised that the power would not be affected by the national grid, rather it would stay within the local grid. Furthermore, it was felt that the current legislation was outdated having been drawn up in the 1990s, and this would have formed part of the now deferred National Energy Bill.

A Member highlighted that the Bill was supported by Surrey County Council and would be a good opportunity for cross-party working, adding that currently the market did not incentivise producers. The Bill would also encourage local entrepreneurs to utilise the technology available.

The Deputy Leader invited Cllr D Whyte to amend the motion to enable it to be referred to Corporate Management Committee to study the detail behind the Bill, which Cllr D Whyte declined.

A named vote was requested on the Motion and the voting was as follows:

For (14)

Cllrs Harnden, Berardi, Burton, Davies, Gillham, Jenkins, A King, R King, Mullens, Ringham, Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte, Williams

Against (18)

Cllrs Saise-Marshall, Broadhead, Bromley, Clarke, Coen, Cotty, Cressey, Cunningham, Dennett, Furey, J Gracey, Howorth, Hulley, N King, Lewis, Snow, Willingale, Wilson

Abstain (3)

Cllrs Balkan, Nuti, Olorenshaw

(Cllr T Gracey had left the meeting at this point so did not vote)

The motion was lost.

Motion 2 – Ending Fuel Poverty and lowering energy use in homes. Council and Community action through a Green Bond

Cllr R King moved the motion in the summons around ending fuel poverty and lowering energy use in homes. In moving the motion, Cllr R King stated that the cost-of-living crisis

meant that many families would be facing a dark and cold winter, particularly in light of the announcement that the energy price guarantee would cease considerably sooner than first announced.

Cllr R King added that climate change was the biggest crisis facing the country, and whilst he called on government to act faster stated that too many homes in Runnymede were poorly insulated, the cost of green and solar energy was prohibitive to many households, and the planting of trees was not taking place at enough pace.

A Member highlighted that the Council does not join lobbying groups but rather makes representations through the LGA, and whilst the administration was in broad agreement over many of the aims set out in the motion, officers had been asked to consider the green bond along with a raft of other options as part of the budget setting process.

It was asked to set out how opposition Members could engage with the administration outside of the Committee cycle as part of the budget process, and the Deputy Leader of the Council would follow up with the Leader and report back to Members.

It was added that bringing forward bonds of this nature would take experts a significant amount of time, and it would not be economic to carry that expertise within the Council staff. A Member replied that the proposed six months within the motion was a reasonable timeframe for a report to be readied to understand the costings and principle.

A named vote was requested on the Motion and the voting was as follows:

For (13)

Cllrs Harnden, Berardi, Burton, Davies, Gillham, Jenkins, A King, R King, Mullens, Ringham, D Whyte, S Whyte, Williams

Against (20)

Cllrs Saise-Marshall, Broadhead, Bromley, Clarke, Coen, Cotty, Cressey, Cunningham, Dennett, Furey, J Gracey, Howorth, Hulley, N King, Lewis, Nuti, Snow, Walsh, Willingale, Wilson

Abstain (2)

Cllrs Balkan, Olorenshaw

(Cllr T Gracey had left the meeting at this point so did not vote)

The motion was lost.

Motion 3 – Tackling violence against women and girls: Making misogyny a hate crime

Cllr A King moved the motion in the summons that sought to tackle violence against women and girls whilst making misogyny a hate crime.

The motion called for the Crime & Disorder Committee to commission a report within the priorities of the Borough Commander to crack down on hate crime in the Borough and learn how lessons from victims of abuse can improve the Council direct response and its joint work with Runnymede Police. It also called for the Leader of the Council to write to the local MP calling on him to lobby for misogyny to become a hate crime.

In moving the motion, Cllr A King spoke of a traumatic personal experience, and stated that serious sexual assaults were crimes that did not happen overnight but rather were crimes built up over a prolonged period of time that were allowed to happen by a society deeply rooted in sexism and that demeaned survivors.

Cllr S Jenkins tabled an amendment to the motion (Appendix 2) that included changing the wording to ‘tackling discrimination against women, girls, men and boys’ (rather than ‘violence against women and girls’). It also added wording to consider acts of misogyny ‘...and *misandry* a hate crime.

Cllr Jenkins acknowledged that dealing with gender-based crimes was a sensitive issue and should be dealt with in a non-partisan, inclusive evidence-based manner. He also felt that the original motion prevented a discrimination by creating a separate discrimination, with a lack of detail about the gender of the perpetrators of the crimes set out in the motion.

During the debate on the motion it was remarked that all Members of the Council would benefit from hearing the action plan rather than just Crime & Disorder Committee, and some Members felt it would be more powerful to engage with the Police & Crime Commissioner and Borough Commander via a meeting rather than the submission of a written report, particularly in light of the Police & Crime Commissioner being the national lead against violence towards women and girls.

A number of Members thanked Cllr A King for bringing the motion forward, whilst several Members highlighted their support for the amendment based on part of the original motion going beyond the remit of Council by asking the Borough Commander to commission a report.

Cllr A King as the proposer of the original motion expressed her extreme disappointment that the motion was amended, adding that whilst the amendments were all valid in their own right, she felt that they should have come forward as a separate motion and other than technical amendments relating to the engagement with Police, the original motion should have been allowed to stand.

A named vote was requested on the amended Motion and the voting was as follows:

For (22)

Cllrs Harnden, Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Coen, Cotty, Cressey, Cunningham, Dennett, Furey, Gillham, J Gracey, Howorth, Hulley, Jenkins, N King, Lewis, Nuti, Olorenshaw, Williams, Willingale

Against (11)

Cllrs Berardi, Davies, A King, R King, Mullens, Ringham, Snow, Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte, Wilson

Abstain (2)

Cllrs Burton, Clarke,

(Cllr T Gracey had left the meeting at this point so did not vote)

The amended motion was carried.

Motion 4 – Keeping Runnymede & Surrey frack free

Cllr Davies moved the motion in the Summons that sought to keep Runnymede and Surrey frack free. In moving the motion Cllr Davies highlighted that the government’s 2019 manifesto placed a moratorium on fracking on England with immediate effect, which had recently been reversed in parliament.

Whilst acknowledging there were no proposed fracking sites within Runnymede, Cllr Davies felt that the knock-on effect of fracking elsewhere in Surrey would have a significant

detrimental impact on the environment, particularly in terms of air quality, damaging water sources and the transportation of materials.

Several Members commented that they felt this was an important national issue but was not relevant to Runnymede given the geology in north Surrey, and felt that passing the motion might result in unnecessarily causing concern amongst residents. Furthermore, it was stressed that the revised government policy would only see fracking taken forward with community assent.

A named vote was requested on the Motion and the voting was as follows:

For (12)

Cllrs Berardi, Burton, Davies, Gillham, Jenkins, A King, R King, Mullens, Ringham, D Whyte, S Whyte, Williams

Against (16)

Cllrs Broadhead, Bromley, Clarke, Coen, Cressey, Cunningham, Dennett, J Gracey, Howorth, Hulley, N King, Lewis, Nuti, Snow, Willingale, Wilson

Abstain (6)

Cllrs Harnden, Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Cotty, Olorenshaw, Walsh

(Cllrs Furey and T Gracey had left the meeting at this point so did not vote)

The motion was lost.

299 **Minority Group Priority Business**

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

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

By resolution of full Council, 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.

301 **Recommendation from Special Housing Committee - 18 October 2022 - Housing Revenue Account Development**

The Chair of Housing Committee advised full Council that the recent Special Housing Committee had considered an item on the redevelopment of an area within the borough, citing it as critical for the provision of social housing.

Plans to redevelop the area had been under consideration for many years, with lots of the properties in question a prefabricated design that had long since gone beyond their intended lifespan and had poor energy efficiency ratings.

Ultimately the redevelopment would deliver regeneration, improve the quality of housing and provide more of it, and was key to many of the aspirations within the corporate plan.

The Chair of Housing Committee clarified that the funding requested was for the first stage of the redevelopment and included a feasibility study. The overall project would include a mixed tenure of housing and significantly improve the density of housing on the site. It would also go a long way towards delivering the target of a minimum 125 social housing units across the borough.

Resolved that –

- 1) Full Council approved the supplementary revenue estimate to be spread over the next two years of £5,000,000 to proceed from RIBA Stage 1 to 3.
- 2) Full Council approved the delegation of authority to Housing Committee to proceed with RIBA Stage 1, noting that the project can be halted by Housing Committee if the project is not proven to be viable at the end of RIBA Stage 1.

302 **Appendix 1**

After the meeting the Leader of the Council sent the resident the following email to clarify the answer given under Item 5 – Speaking or Questions from Members of the Public Under Standing Order 12:

Dear Lorraine

Thank you once again for submitting your question to full Council on 20 October. I'm very sorry to say that the answer that I provided verbally on the night was incorrect, and I write to set the record straight.

There are only 8 Blue badge bays at Waitrose Car Park. Blue Badge holders wishing to park in the disabled spaces at Waitrose need to register with Sagoss (specialist parking management contractor) prior to parking in the disabled bays outside Waitrose. It was incorrect to say that this was managed by Waitrose, Sagoss do in fact manage it on the Council's behalf. Once the blue badge is linked to the vehicle there is no requirement to display the blue badge. This, in the main, leads to the misconception that non-blue badge holders are parking in the 8 disabled spaces available. All vehicles entering the Waitrose car park are recorded remotely by ANPR and where non-blue badge holders are parking illegally or where vehicles are staying longer than 20-minutes a PCN is issued.

The car park operator has been asked to enhance its signage provision to make this clearer to the community.

I do still intend to follow up on the number of PCNs issued in Egham over the past three months for blue badge parking offences in Egham, and will be back in touch once I have received this information.

My apologies again for the confusion and misleading answer.

*Cllr Tom Gracey
Leader, Runnymede Borough Council*

Appendix 2

(The meeting ended at 10.48 pm.)

Chairman

Amended Motion for Full Council on Thursday, 20th October 2022.

Amendment to the Labour and Co-operative Party motion from Cllr Abby King

Proposer: Cllr S Jenkins (Runnymede Independent Residents' Group)

Seconder: Cllr V Cunningham (Conservative and Unionist Party)

**Title: Tackling ~~violence~~ discrimination against women, ~~and girls~~, men and boys:
Considering acts of Making misogyny and misandry a hate crime.**

Motivation:

This motion is being brought forward ~~by the Runnymede Labour & Co-operative Group~~ to support Runnymede Borough Council's response to a national rise in discrimination ~~violence~~ against women, ~~and girls~~ men and boys.

This council notes:

Women, ~~and girls~~, men and boys ~~around the borough~~ are all subject to harassment and abuse due to their gender. In 2021, there were 20 counts of violence and sexual offences for every 1,000 residents, a number higher than in previous years¹.

Misogyny disproportionately affects those from minority communities. The Fawcett Society notes that 'Not including misogyny within the hate crime framework ignores the experiences of women who are subject to hatred based on multiple factors'².

This is supported by observations from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Hate Crime, which noted that current legislation does not allow for the 'intersectionality' of hate crime statistics to be recorded, meaning that 'the picture that authorities have lacks depth and subtlety'³.

Misandry also affects men and boys in similar fashion. In a recent Crime Survey of England and Wales, 10,000 hate crimes were reported by men.⁴ Additional research shows that 1 in 20 men have experienced male rape and that 4 in 5 men do not feel able to report it because 'they didn't think the Police could help'.⁵

Cuts to police budgets and a decline in community policing in the last ten years have led to a rise in unsolved hate crimes, a reduction in policing capacity to respond to antisocial behaviour and a lower number of sexual and harassment crimes having perpetrators brought to justice

The Council Believes that:

Misogyny and misandry should be recorded as a hate crime and policing resources should be increased nationally to levels above those seen in 2010, to ensure that police forces are able to deal with these new responsibilities.

¹ Brighton Analytics Limited, 2022

² Fawcett Society, 2022

³ Hate Crime Statistics, House of Commons Library, 2021

⁴ Fawcett Society, 2019

⁵ Rape Crisis England and Wales: Statistics about sexual violence and abuse, 2022

It is encouraging to see the support we have seen from our Borough Commander at Runnymede Police in responding to specific violence against women and girls.

~~The Government was wrong to whip against an amendment to classify misogyny as a hate crime.~~

The Council Resolves That:

(1) Runnymede is committed to ending hate crime in all its forms and will work with organisations, including, for example, such as Women's Aid and Pride in Surrey amongst other organisations for a safer Runnymede.

~~(2)~~ (2) The Leader of the Council along with the Chairman of Crime and Disorder Committee invite both the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner and the Runnymede Borough Commander to the next meeting of Crime and Disorder Committee that they are both available to attend in order to brief the Committee as to their current action plan to tackle discrimination against women, girls, men and boys, and to discuss what further steps can be taken and how Runnymede can support these steps at a local level. ~~through the crime and disorder committee, commission a report within the priorities of the Borough Commander, to crack down on hate crime in the Borough and learn how lessons from victims of abuse can improve the Council direct response and its joint work with Runnymede Police.~~

~~(3) The Leader of the Council writes to our local MP, calling on them to lobby for misogyny to become a hate crime.~~