

Runnymede Borough CouncilFull CouncilThursday, 2 March 2023 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Council 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, V Cunningham, M Darby, R Davies, S Dennett, L Gillham, J Gracey, T Gracey, M Heath, C Howorth, J Hulley, S Jenkins, A King, N King, R King, S Lewis, I Mullens, J Olorenshaw, N Prescott, S Ringham, P Snow, S Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte, S Williams, M Willingale and J Wilson.

549 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor provided an update on the events and engagements that she had attended since the last Council.

550 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 9 February 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

- Item 502 – 2023/24 Budget and Council Tax - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee

The recorded vote on the proposed amendment from the Runnymede Independent Residents Group, pertaining to the inclusion of a budget for webcasting meetings, be amended to note that Councillor Cotty Voted against the amendment and Councillor Cressey abstained.

- Item 496 – Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order 13, Question c)

That the term “budget cuts” in Councillor R King’s supplementary question be changed to “sacking striking workers”.

[It was reported that the councillor membership of the joint committee with the operators of Egham Orbit would consist of Councillors Burton, Cressey, T. Gracey, Howorth and Willingale.]

551 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cressey, Furey, Gill, Mann and Nuti.

552 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no public questions or speaking.

554 Petitions

There were no petitions.

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

a) Councillor Sylvia Whyte asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

“In April 2022 I asked the Leader of The Council when elected members would receive monthly Enforcement updates. The Leader advised that “the most effective ways of reporting accurate information to Members would be looked at as soon as possible after the Election.” Whilst I and my fellow ward councillors have received some verbal updates on some key Enforcement issues in our ward, I would like to know when we, and all elected members, will receive a complete list of those enforcement issues across the Borough.”

The Leader responded in the following terms:

“I can confirm that from 1 April 2023, the Planning Enforcement team will be producing a report that will be circulated to all local members with regards to key enforcement cases in the borough. At this stage, it is expected that the list will include no more than 50 cases which will include those cases classified as medium or high priority, as set out in the Enforcement Charter as well as some significant cases that have been discussed with members for inclusion. The list and update will be circulated to all councillors on a quarterly basis.”

Councillor S Whyte asked whether members could be informed about all planning appeals, regardless of ward, in order to enable them to observe how such processes worked? Councillor Willingale, as Chairman of the Planning Committee, agreed that this would be helpful and stated that he would take up the matter with the Corporate Head for Development Management and Building Control.

Councillor D Whyte asked whether members could be advised of the outcome of all enforcement cases, regardless of ward? Councillor Willingale said that he would liaise with the Corporate Head for Development Management and Building Control, adding that striking a balance between enforcement activities and report writing needed to be considered.

Councillor Mullens asked whether the Leader agreed that resident involvement in the planning inquiries should be encouraged. The Leader agreed.

b) Councillor Don Whyte asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

“Since October 2022 most households in Runnymede will have been progressively receiving part of the Government funded £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) discount. These households have a direct relationship with an electricity supplier.

Those households that buy their fuel through a third party or are not on mains electricity, have as of 20th February, not yet received any of the £400 EBSS discount. This includes people who live in park homes, a houseboat or care homes. Similarly, those who don't use mains gas or electric are entitled to a payment of £200.

Can the Leader please explain what Runnymede Borough Council is doing or planning to do to encourage and help residents to claim their £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme (EBSS) discount and or their £200 Alternative Fuel Payment?”

The Leader replied in the following terms:

“This Council is committed to supporting residents through this difficult time and administering the EBSS Alternative Funding scheme is one way in which we are doing

this. The Chief Executive and I have met regularly with our local MP, Dr Ben Spencer, and discussed this specific topic and I would like to thank Dr Spencer for the work that he has undertaken in this area.

We identified when the first announcement was made by Government last year that those households without a direct relationship with an electricity supplier would be unable to receive this support directly. Within Runnymede, this particularly affects park home residents and those in retirement homes, as well as some houseboat residents, as you have identified in your question.

Dr. Spencer raised this issue directly with Ministers who committed to establishing a method of payment with the aim of delivering this support and that local authorities would be best placed to administer the scheme, in a similar way to how covid grants were administered.

I am delighted that the scheme that was opened on Monday 27 February 2023 will allow residents to apply directly via a Gov.UK portal and that the support will not be passed on through an intermediary owner. On application, Runnymede Borough Council will make final checks on applicants and authorise payments.

At this time, I cannot confirm how many applications have been made as the scheme has only very recently gone live, but every park home resident has been contacted since Monday, and if it would be helpful we can look to provide a form of reporting on utilisation of the scheme in Runnymede."

Councillor D Whyte asked whether there was more that the Council could do to identify hard to reach people that were entitled to payments? The Leader agreed that awareness of, and access to, the scheme was important and welcomed a separate discussion with Councillor D Whyte and the Chief Executive on how to facilitate this.

Councillor Marshall asked whether the Leader encouraged ward councillor support, for residents of park homes, with the sourcing their own energy supplier, as opposed to paying premiums to landowners? The Leader said that he did.

c) Councillor Steve Ringham asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

"Our next council elections, in May of this year, will be the first to be held where polling station voters will be required to show valid Photo ID before they can vote. Central government's excuse is that it is to prevent voter fraud or impersonation. However this restriction has not been extended to postal voters. Can the leader of the council tell me, with regard to Runnymede in the last 10 years, how many instances of voter fraud have been detected, investigated and prosecuted, split between postal and polling station voters, and as a percentage of all voters?"

**Clarification – I've asked for 10 years but any period will do depending on what data you hold*

The Leader replied in the following terms:

"I can confirm that we have had no instances of impersonation in a polling station or of fraud relating to postal votes over the past 10 years. Given Runnymede's history, I am glad that our well respected democracy continues to thrive. However, to the central point of your question, Runnymede along with all other Local Authorities, are required to implement Photo ID requirements under the Elections Act 2022. The Act seeks to address shocking and highly publicised instances of fraud, harassment of electors outside polling stations and demands from campaigners to electors to hand over their postal votes. This unscrupulous behaviour is something we must do our utmost to guard against and so it is

sensible that we have proportionate measures in place to discourage and prevent such behaviour.

Councillor Ringham asked whether the Leader felt that the new measures were disproportionate, discriminatory and wasteful? The Leader said that he did not agree and that the measures sought to ensure probity in the electoral system remained. He suggested that Councillor Ringham may wish to take up this issue with the local MP, as it was a legislative matter.

Councillor Gillham asked whether the Leader agreed with the Council of Europe's advice on requiring voter ID, in order to prevent fraud, and that it was the responsibility of elected representatives to encourage residents to register for voter identification? The Leader agreed with Councillor Gillham's observations.

Councillor Burton asked what activities were being undertaken to reach as many voters as possible? The Leader said that there had been engagement through social media, printed publications, and letters sent directly to residents.

556 **Recommendations from Committees**

556a **Asset Management Strategy and associated policies - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor T. Gracey) and seconded (by Councillor Howorth) that the recommendation of the Corporate Management Committee be agreed.

Resolved that the Asset Management Strategy and associated policies attached at appendix A be agreed, subject to:

- The amount in row 1 of appendix 8 (grant or renewal of a lease by officers) being retained at £100k.
- The various minor amendments detailed in the addendum to the report being incorporated into the strategy.

556b **Local Authority Housing Fund - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor J. Gracey) and seconded (by Councillor Hulley) that the recommendation of the Corporate Management Committee be agreed.

Resolved that the budget, as set out in the report, to purchase 8 properties to fulfil the requirements of the Local Authority Housing Fund, be agreed.

556c **Pay Policy Statement - 2023/24 - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor T. Gracey) and seconded (by Councillor Howorth) that the recommendation of the Corporate Management Committee be agreed.

It was **resolved** that the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 be agreed.

556d **Preliminary Consideration of Mayoral Selection - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor T. Gracey) and seconded (by Councillor Willingale) that the recommendation of the Corporate Management Committee be agreed.

It was **resolved** Councillor Shannon Saise-Marshall be proposed as Mayor for the 2023/24 municipal year.

557 **Preliminary Consideration of Deputy Mayoral Selection**

It was proposed (by Councillor T. Gracey), seconded (by Councillor Balkan) and **resolved** that Councillor Nick Prescott be proposed as Deputy Mayor for the 2023/24 municipal year.

558 **Delegated Authority to Appoint an Assistant Chief Executive**

It was proposed (by Councillor T. Gracey), seconded (by Councillor Howorth) and **resolved** that the Corporate Management Committee be delegated authority to make a formal offer of employment for the role of Assistant Chief Executive, following consideration of the recommendation of the Appointments Sub-Committee.

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

Motion a)

The proposed motion, as set out in the summons, was moved by Councillor T Gracey, subject to a referral being made to the Corporate Management Committee.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Howorth.

Councillor R. King moved, seconded by Councillor A. King, that the motion be amended to read:

This Council notes that the ULEZ expansion will, without further support from central government, add further costs for residents and businesses when budgets are already under pressure from spiralling inflation under the present government, disproportionately impacting those on lower incomes, including key workers, facing below inflation pay rises, required to commute to London. Further compounded by the lack of interacted public transport, with TFL zoning and fare capping, and poor service coverage by Surrey County Council subsidised services and those from commercial operators.

The Council also notes that the cuts to evening time services on bus route to Heathrow such as the number 8, makes driving the preferred option for many commuting or flying out of Heathrow.

There is evidence that ULEZ expansion will have a positive impact on reducing NOX emissions PM10 & PM2.5 emissions and be part of broader solutions to improved air quality in outer London boroughs, as highlight in the Jacobs's study revision 04, 17 October 2022. There has however been no study is on how better integrated public transport can improve the situation on Surrey roads. Residents within Runnymede should not have to pay a London-centric tax without London levels of financial support and transport coverage. It is completely reasonable to expect that the revenue raised from ULEZ should it go ahead should come with hand in hand with greater public transport levels and money to fix up Surrey's roads which have been left to rack and ruin.

Recognises the affect the £7 billion debt TFL incurred between 2008/09 and 2015/16, under Mayor Boris Johnson, has had on TFL's ability to weather the collapse in fare revenue due to Covid lockdowns, and that TFL under Mayor Khan prior to the pandemic was on track to paying off this debt and producing a surplus. As well as the piece meal support that TFL compared to the blank cheque train operators got during the pandemic, has had an effect on Cross Border Services not just for Surrey but also for London.

That the Council agrees and resolves the following:

- a) there is consistent and cross-party support for this Council to reduce its emissions and impact on the environment as quickly as practically possible;*
- b) this Council does not support the expansion of the ULEZ, without central government who imposed this deal on TFL, funding an outer London scrappage scheme, similar in scope to the £110 million scrappage scheme the Mayor of London launched, which particularly targets support to low-income and disabled people, supports charities and has particular support to sole trader and smaller businesses;*
- c) this Council rejects the proposal imposed on the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, by central government to expand the ULEZ £12.50 daily charge without the support for a scrappage scheme from central government and a commitment from central government of London level support for integrated public transport and fare structure. Are concerned that without central government support for a outer London scrappage scheme business and residents will be landed with potential large fines for noncompliant vehicles;*
- d) notes with concern the actions of Surrey County Council to block signage for ULEZ on Surrey assets and lack of proper consultation and debate which the Mayor of London has invited outer London authorities too and that this action by Surrey County Council could cost Surrey Tax Payers £100,000s of thousands of pounds in Legal fees. Right at the time the County is looking to cut £30 million out of its highways budget;*
- e) the evidence and economic modelling of the impact is limited by central government is and reflected in that of TFL. Too little attention has been paid by the DFT in joining up services and offering holistic funding schemes, that bidding for funding restricts local authority who do not have the resources to expand this offering and respond to timescales like the ATE grants with close in weeks of being announced;*
- f) the roughly £400 million of government funding set aside for the Mayor to spend on reducing air pollution supports the continued work TFL are doing on public transport, cycle ways, and other initiatives and that this Council recognises again we must have London levels of Public transport to make not using the car attractive;*
- g) that this council joins the Mayor of London, in calling for an outer London scrappage scheme and join the Council's Labour group in doing the same:
<https://www.london.gov.uk/Mayor%20of%20London%20calls%20for%20PM%20to%20back%20ULEZ%20with%20scrappage%20cash%20for%20London%20and%20Home%20Counties>;*
- h) that the Leader of Runnymede Borough Council writes to the Mayor of London to request that the current approach be paused whilst a review with outer London Boroughs takes place and negotiations with Central government take place to fix a scrappage scheme and improve it with a strategy that will benefit residents in neighbouring regions alongside with the positive work he has done in his own jurisdiction;*
- i) that the Leader of Runnymede Borough Council invites our local MP and group leaders of political groups on Runnymede Borough Council who are in agreement with the sentiments raised to co-sign the letter.*

The proposed motion and Councillor R. King's proposed amendment were debated. A named vote was requested on the proposed amendment and the voting was as follows:

For the amendment (12)

Councillors Berardi, Burton, Davies, Gillham, Jenkins, A. King, R. King, Mullens, Ringham, D. Whyte, S. Whyte and Williams.

Against the amendment (23)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Clarke, Coen, Cotty, Cunningham, Darby, Dennett, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N. King, Lewis, Olorenshaw, Prescott, Snow, Walsh, Willingale and Wilson.

Abstentions (1)

Councillor Harnden.

Councillor Heath moved, seconded by Councillor Willingale, that paragraph b) of the proposed motion be amended:

“this Council does not support the expansion of the ULEZ at this time”.

Councillor J. Gracey moved, seconded by Councillor Heath, that paragraph b) of the proposed motion be amended to read:

“this Council does not support the expansion of the ULEZ without full consultation, a cost-benefit analysis, and consideration of possible alternative measures to improve air quality”.

Councillor Heath withdrew her proposed amendment, in accordance with Standing Order 17.10.

Councillor J. Gracey’s proposed amendment was debated. A named vote was requested on the proposed amendment and the voting was as follows:

For the amendment (25)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Burton, Clarke, Coen, Cotty, Cunningham, Darby, Dennett, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N. King, Lewis, Olorenshaw, Prescott, Snow, Walsh, D. Whyte, Willingale and Wilson.

Against the amendment (2)

Councillors Berardi and Ringham.

Abstentions (9)

Councillors Harnden, Davies, Gillham, Jenkins, A. King, R. King, Mullens, S. Whyte and Williams.

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

For the amended motion (25)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Burton, Clarke, Coen, Cotty, Cunningham, Darby, Dennett, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N. King, Lewis, Olorenshaw, Prescott, Snow, Walsh, D. Whyte, Willingale and Wilson.

Against the amended motion (2)

Councillors Berardi and Ringham.

Abstentions (9)

Councillors Harnden, Davies, Gillham, Jenkins, A. King, R. King, Mullens, S. Whyte and Williams.

The amended motion was **carried**.

Councillor R. King requested his concerns, namely that the Council had agreed a factually incorrect motion, be recorded.

Motion b)

With the agreement of the Mayor, the Leader of the Council, and the Chief Executive, the proposed motion was determined in accordance with Standing Order 15.6(b)(iii).

The proposed motion, as set out in the summons, was moved by Councillor Balkan. Councillor Balkan altered the final bullet point of his motion in accordance with Standing Order 17.9 to read:

To support this the Leader of the Council will write to Network Rail to request a review of level crossing provision in the Borough in light of the development of the River Thames Scheme, and to provide a cost analysis for alternative options. This includes requesting an updated costing following the last feasibility study which previously took place in 2009-2010.

The proposed motion was seconded by Councillor Snow.

The proposed motion was debated by the Council. As a result of the debate, Councillor Balkan further amended the resolution section of his proposed motion, in accordance with Standing Order 17.9:

That the Council resolves the following:

- *Runnymede Borough Council supports measures to reduce engine idling, including appropriate signage.*
- *Runnymede Borough Council is committed to improving connectivity and reducing the negative impact of level crossings on our towns, including the environmental impact.*
- *Runnymede Borough Council will continue to engage with all stakeholders from Network Rail, the Department of Transport, South Western Railways, Heathrow Southern Rail Link, Surrey County Council, the Local Government Association, residents groups and local businesses to pursue viable alternatives.*
- *To support this the Leader of the Council will write to Network Rail to request a review of level crossing provision in the Borough in light of the development of the River Thames Scheme, and to provide a cost analysis for alternative options. This includes requesting an updated costing following the last feasibility study which previously took place in 2009-2010.*

A named vote was requested on the proposed altered motion and the voting was as follows:

For the altered motion (34)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Burton, Clarke, Coen, Cotty, Cunningham, Darby, Davies, Dennett, Gillham, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, Jenkins, A. King, N. King, R. King, Lewis, Mullens, Olorenshaw, Prescott, Ringham, Snow, Walsh, D. Whyte, S. Whyte, Williams, Willingale and Wilson.

Against the altered motion (0)**Abstentions (2)**

Councillors Harnden and Berardi (due to his having left the meeting during the debate).

The altered motion was **carried**.

560 Minority Group Priority Business

There was no minority group priority business.

561 Press and Public to be Excluded by Resolution

There was no exempt business.

562 Urgent business - Local Government Act 1972 – Section 85: attendance dispensation

This item was added to the agenda in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following reasons:

“It was necessary for the Council to consider whether to grant a dispensation under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Mayor was of the opinion that the item was urgent because it could not be held until the next ordinary meeting of the Council.”

It was **resolved** that:

1. The Council exercise its powers under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 by granting a dispensation to the attendance requirements for elected Members in respect of Councillor Furey’s ill-health.
2. That the duration of Councillor Furey’s dispensation be set at six months, to apply from 20 April 2023.

(The meeting ended at 9.40 pm.)

Chairman