

## Runnymede Borough Council

### Full Council

Wednesday, 26 January 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, J Furey, J Gracey, T Gracey, M Heath, C Howorth, J Hulley, N King, R King, M Kusneraitis, S Lewis, M Maddox, I Mullens, M Nuti, J Olorenshaw, N Prescott, P Snow, J Sohi, D Whyte, S Whyte and S Williams.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors D Anderson-Bassey, R Edis, L Gillham, S Mackay, C Mann, S Walsh, M Willingale and J Wilson.

#### 411 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor made her announcements.

The Mayor held a minute silence for former Mayor Councillor John Ashmore who had passed away recently and paid tribute to him and his service for the Council. On behalf of the Council condolences were passed onto his family.

The Mayor thanked Royal Holloway University of London for hosting the meeting and Officers for making the arrangements.

#### 412 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15 July ,2021 were confirmed and signed as correct record.

#### 413 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Coen declared a Non Registrable Interest in the item on Process for the Appointment of External Auditors 2023-2024 as he worked for one of the possible firms who may be appointed as the Council's auditor by the PSAA. Councillor Coen remained in the room and voted thereon.

#### 414 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Anderson-Bassey, Edis, Gillham, Mackay, Mann, Willingale and Wilson.

#### 415 Questions from Members of the Public under Standing Order 12

##### Question from Steve Ringham, a local resident:

'I recently surveyed residents in Addlestone for their views on local issues. The number one issue, reported by 60%+ of respondents in the School Lane area, was actually a raft of issues caused by parents dropping off, and collecting their children around the Jubilee High School in School Lane. Complaints include

- Inconsiderate/problem parking - blocking junctions creating hazards to pedestrians and nuisance to residents from blocked private drives
- Excessive engine idling - creating air quality and environmental issues

- Bad/inconsiderate driving - causing congestion and excessive emissions
- Litter

What power does the Council have to address these issues to improve the situation for residents, in terms of safety, air quality, neighbourhood quality of life and respect to property?’

**As Steve Ringham was unable to attend the meeting, Cllr Prescott, Leader of the Council would arrange for a written answer to be sent to him after the meeting.**

**Question from Deb Long, a local resident:**

‘Runnymede council recently issued for tender a contract for £5.8m to "replace existing aged gas fired central heating boilers and to upgrade existing central heating systems to tenanted domestic properties within its ownership in the Borough of Runnymede, Surrey". But UK housing stock is the least energy-efficient in Europe so that better boilers are only part of the solution to reducing housing emissions as well as costs. A third of Runnymede's own social housing stock is rated E or F.

So many council tenants in Runnymede, as well as private residents in the borough and elsewhere in much of the country, are experiencing rapidly rising energy costs on top of general cost-of-living inflation. Given that more efficient heating is only part of the solution to lower bills and lower emissions, what else is the council doing to improve the energy efficiency of its housing stock?’

The Leader of the Council responded as follows and this would be forwarded in writing after the meeting:

*‘We have made a commitment to ensuring all our Council owned homes have achieved a C energy efficiency rating as a minimum by 2030. With the help of government grants and some financial commitment from Runnymede Borough Council we are spending £1.5m on upgrading the energy performance of our worse performing homes this winter.*

*We have also developed a Runnymede Investment Standard which sets out the additional measures we are putting in place as part of our normal upgrade programme to improve the energy performance of our properties – triple glazed windows, additional loft and cavity insulation etc.*

*We are conscious that we need to look beyond gas heating in the medium term. Our existing plans are designed to future proof our stock to enable them to perform well when alternative affordable heating systems become available.*

*Our newly built Council owned homes will benefit from air/ground source heat pumps as they will be highly energy efficient they can run these forms of heating without incurring significant financial cost to the residents. ‘*

**Question from Aileen Owen Davies, a local resident:**

‘I would like to know what changes you are making to the council procedures and protocols which will enable you to make better progress in combatting climate change. We are now in a Climate Crisis situation caused in large part by the lack of action during the past years. The urgency is becoming greater as Global Warming accelerates faster’.

The Leader of the Council responded as follows and this would be forwarded in writing after the meeting:

*‘The Council is currently compiling the Runnymede Climate Change Strategy and Action*

**Plan.**

*This forms one of four themes supporting the integrated Corporate Business Plan. The Climate Change Strategy will be brought to Council for amendment and approval in February/March 2022.*

*The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will be embedded within the function of every business unit of the Council's Operations.*

*In keeping with the Council's initiative of empowering our communities – it will include measures to both inform and consult with our residents and businesses, as well as encourage and facilitate behavioural change in those areas beyond the Council's control and influence.*

*This does not mean that there will be no action in 2022.*

*The Council has an established record of action on Climate Change Avoidance and Mitigation:*

**River Thames Scheme:**

- *Circa £0.75b Flood alleviation scheme*
- *Development Consent Order Pre-Application Consultation starts January '22'*
- *Protection for 11,000 homes and 1,600 businesses*

**Local Plan: The Runnymede Local Plan 2020 – 30 incorporates our planning policies including:**

- *Flood Resilience*
- *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*
- *Water Efficiency*
- *Renewable Low Energy Carbon*
- *Protection of Soil, Mineral & Groundwater Resources, Water & Water Quality*
- *Protection & enhancement of Biodiversity, Habitats & Species, contributing to Net Biodiversity Gains*
- *Support to projects improving integration of road and rail to reduce congestion and improve accessibility to a range of accessible & active travel choices*

**Housing:**

- *Environmental Sustainability is an integral part of the Asset Management Plan 2021–26*
- *Minimum energy performance of RBC stock at C Energy Efficiency Rating by 2030*
- *Delivery of 125 additional housing units built to A Energy Efficiency Rating by 2026*
- *Investment in 'refuse areas' at blocks of flats to promote recycling and waste reduction*

**Energy:**

- *RBC Energy Supply Decarbonisation 58% of 2009 base level*
- *LAD 1B: Fuel Poverty £2.4m*
- *LAD 1B Additional Grant £1.2m*
- *LAD 2: £215K*

**Council Developments:**

- *Magna Square & Addlestone 1: Central Heat Networks & LED Lighting*

**Office Corporate:**

- *Hybrid Mail Internal Roll Out 2021 – wider application rolls out 2022*
- *E-invoicing*
- *Modern.gov: - move towards paper light/paperless meeting administration during this year*

**Agile Working Policy:**

*Implementation of Agile Working throughout the Council. Colleagues who can work from home are requested to do so two days of the working week, significantly reducing the number of colleague journeys to work.'*

416 **Petitions**

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

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

Councillor R King asked the following Question under Standing Order No 13:

*'Can the Leader set out the additional support, not available before the 6th October 2021, his administration is providing to the 5100 residents in Runnymede affected by the £1040 cut to Universal Credit?'*

The Leader of the Council responded as follows:

*'The Universal Credit (UC) uplift of £20.00 per week was introduced in April 2020 as part of the Covid measures as we went into the first lockdown. In the March 2021 budget, it was extended until September 2021. As part of the same budget statement, a one-off payment of £500 was made to eligible working tax credit recipients.'*

*The way our Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme works it meant the majority of our residents were no better or worse off with the £20 uplift with regards CTS entitlement. To determine entitlement, we compare the UC award plus any earnings to the maximum UC amount that a customer could get.*

*So, the DWP says a resident's maximum UC award is increased by £20, they therefore get an additional £20 in cash terms. For us calculating CTS with UC, it does not make too much difference.*

*In October 2021 the Chancellor announced a change to the taper in UC - decreased from 63% to 55%. This means those in work will see that for every £1 he/she earns over their work allowance (NB: Only those with responsibility for a child or limited capability for work get a work allowance) their UC will be reduced by 55p.*

*Locally, we have the DHP fund (Government allocation £106,120 plus £30,000 from Housing), we have our Discretionary CTS fund for Covid support (£50,000 Surrey COMF), and a recently updated Household Support Fund policy.'*

In response Cllr King asked what additional measures from today the Leader would do to support families who have suffered.

The Leader of the Council stated that he would write to the Chancellor thereon.

In response to a request from another Member to review the Council Tax Support scheme and remove the £10 threshold in view of the current difficult circumstances facing families, the Leader confirmed that the Scheme had been reviewed previously and there were no plans to change the scheme.

418 **Recommendation from Environment and Sustainability Committee 17 November 2021 - Climate Change**

Council considered a recommendation from the Environment and Sustainability Committee held on 17 November 2021 regarding Climate Change and setting of a target of 2030 for being net zero.

In moving the Motion to set a target of 2030 for being net zero, Cllr Heath, Chairman of Environment and Sustainability Committee, listed the achievements the Council had already made on climate change such as the LOCASE scheme encouraging businesses to go green, funding for energy efficiency, Solar Surrey, River Thames Scheme, and improving our housing stock. That said, Cllr Heath stated that the public needed clarity on the Council's vision. There was an urgent need for a thought-out strategy which set objectives and outlined the priorities and challenges. The Council would need to constantly review its work and flag the areas where it was not moving towards net zero and that we would be transparent with residents. It was important the Council involved residents in this work, and this would be done through a community engagement forum where updates would be given on our progress, support would be sought and ideas listened to. The target of net zero was in relation to the Council and not the entire Borough but Surrey County Council were working with districts and boroughs to get Surrey as a county to net zero by 2050. Finally, Cllr Heath said that whilst elected Members needed to be pragmatic and realistic in the work they did, they also needed to be visionary at times and that the climate change situation required that vision and ambition and that setting a target of 2030 would provide the impetus to move forward at pace on addressing climate change. The Climate Change Strategy which would come forward by the end of this Municipal Year would be important in setting out the plan to meet this target.

An Amendment was moved by Cllr Furey that an addition be made to the Motion 'that reviews be put in place biannually in 2024, 2026, 2028 and 2030'. The Amendment was moved in order to ensure progress towards the target was periodically reviewed and any blockages to its achievement considered and addressed. Cllr Furey considered it important that residents were kept informed of progress and that the achievement of the target would require their support and engagement. In response, Cllr Heath stated that the target related to the Council's emissions and not the emissions of the wider borough and residents.

The Amendment was put to the vote and declared to be lost.

A further Amendment was moved by Cllr Mullens to provide greater clarity that the target related to the Council's own organisational emissions and would provide a baseline against which progress could be made. The Amendment was as follows:

'Runnymede Borough Council sets target of 2030 to be net zero for its organisational emissions. The baseline for monitoring progress to this goal will be the figure reported in the RBC Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report for 2019/2020. The plan for how we are going to get to net zero will be set out in the council's Climate Change Strategy to be published by the end of this Municipal Year.'

Other Members felt the original Motion clearly set out the Council's ambition and that there was no need for the addition. The Amendment was put to the vote and declared to be lost.

The original Motion was then put to the vote and declared to be passed and it was

**Resolved that –**

**Runnymede Borough Council sets a target of 2030 to be net zero.**

**419 Recommendation from Standards and Audit Committee - 23 November,2021-  
Process for the Appointment of External Auditors 2023-2024**

Council considered a recommendation from the Standards and Audit Committee held on 23 November 2021 regarding the process for appointment of External Auditors and

**Resolved that –**

**the Council wishes to opt into the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) national auditor appointment scheme**

**420 Recommendation from Corporate Management Committee - 25 November 2021 -  
Calendar of Meetings 2022/2023**

Council considered a recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee held on 25 November 2021 regarding the Calendar of Meetings for 2022/23 and

**Resolved that-**

**the Calendar of meetings for May 2022 – May 2023, as circulated, be approved.**

**421 Recommendation from Corporate Management Committee - 25 November 2021 -  
Further Loan Agreement for RBC Investments (Surrey) Ltd**

Council considered a recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee held on 25 November 2021 regarding a further loan agreement for RBC Investments (Surrey) Ltd and

**Resolved that –**

**a loan facility agreement to be executed between the Council and RBC Investments (Surrey) Ltd be approved for the purchase of residential units in the Magna Square development up to the sum reported to be repaid over a time period as reported.**

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

- 1. Labour and Co-operative Party motion submitted by Cllr R King: A review and study into a selective licensing scheme for the Englefield Green, Egham Town, Egham Hythe and Thorpe Lea area.**

Cllr King moved the following Motion.

*'This Council Resolves that:*

- (1) A study of the local housing stocks be conducted in the areas discussed above, with a report to be produced, detailing, but not limited to:
 
  - a. The number, size and type of dwellings.*
  - b. Whether each dwelling is owner occupied, rented or vacant.*
  - c. Where the property is rented, to identify whether it is as a single unit or**

- HMO.*
- d. *The number of tenant complaints raised to the authority's housing officers in the past 10 years, and the type of action taken to resolve with landlords.*
- (2) *Review the most appropriate way to grade the quality of rental properties, using the Decent Home Standard, and how this fits most appropriately into the local setting.*
  - (3) *Assess an initial randomised sample of the areas rental stock and review each unit according to the aforementioned quality standards.*
  - (4) *An initial findings report be presented to members of Housing Committee and circulated to all Councillors, by the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2022 meeting, which will include:*
    - a. *The key findings of the above*
    - b. *The options for the authority improving PRS housing standard through Section 80 of the Act*
    - c. *The resources needed to implement a selective license scheme in the area*
    - d. *The PRS quality improvements which could be achieved by licensing properties*
    - e. *To provide whatever support Runnymede can to highlight model local landlords.*

*A reference back report be presented to Full Council by the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, highlighting the report, the options recommended by Housing Committee and a final decision whether a selective licensing scheme should be pursued in the areas mentioned.'*

In moving the Motion, Cllr King stated that decent homes should be a right for all residents, no matter of their income, personal circumstances, or household size. Whilst decent homes were needed across the Borough, Englefield Green, Egham Town, Egham Hythe and Thorpe Lea areas had significant types of housing pressures not seen elsewhere in Runnymede. A significant number of privately rented properties in these areas were in poor condition, with a number of streets in which they were located facing particular types of antisocial behaviour not seen elsewhere in the Borough, and that housing migration from outside Runnymede was particularly acute. Cllr King considered it vital that information was obtained to assess the scale of the problem in order to address it.

During the debate on the Motion, Cllr King accepted that the Environment and Sustainability Committee was the more appropriate Committee for the Motion, if passed, to be referred to as it was that Committee which had responsibility for enforcement of standards in the private rented sector.

Whilst Members sympathised with the plight some private rented tenants faced, legislation currently existed to ensure protection of private tenants and to tackle rogue landlords .Some Members felt Runnymede already directly and indirectly assisted private rental tenants. The Motion.if passed, could effectively create a two tier system for 20% of the borough.

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

For (12):	Cllrs Alderson, Balkan, Burton, Clarke, Cressey,Gill, R King, Kusneraitis, Mullens, D Whyte, S Whyte and Williams.
Against (18):	Cllrs Adams, Broadhead, Bromley, Coen, Cotty, Dennett, Furey, J Gracey, T Gracey, Howorth, Hulley, N King, Lewis, Maddox, Nuti, Prescott, Snow and Sohi.
Abstentions (2)	Cllrs Harnden and Olorenshaw.

**The Motion was lost.**

**2. Liberal Democrat motion submitted by Cllr S Whyte: Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) to promote The Great Big Green Week in September 2022.**

**Councillor S Whyte moved the following Motion: to promote The Great Big Green Week in September 2022:**

- A report be prepared and submitted to the Environment & Sustainability Committee with a range of proposals and costings to be considered; and
- Runnymede Borough Council seriously consider taking part in The Great Big Green Week in 2022

Members considered this was a positive event which would raise awareness and understanding.

**Council was fully supportive of the Motion which was duly passed.**

**423 Minority Group Priority Business**

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

**424 Englefield Green Committee - Appointment of Replacement Residents' Representative**

**Resolved that-**

**Mr Stephen Brisby be appointed as replacement residents' representative on the Englefield Green Committee**

(The meeting ended at 9.18 pm.)

Chairman