Runnymede
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Corporate Management Committee

Thursday, 13 July 2023 at 7.30 pm

Council Chamber - Civic Centre

Members of the Committee

Councillors: T Gracey (Chairman), C Howorth (Vice-Chair), D Coen, M Cressey, L Gillham, R King, I Mullens, M Nuti, S Ringham, P Snow, D Whyte and M Willingale

In accordance with Standing Order 29.1, any Member of the Council may attend the meeting of this Committee, but may speak only with the permission of the Chairman of the Committee, if they are not a member of this Committee.

AGENDA

1) Any report on the Agenda involving confidential information (as defined by section 100A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972) must be discussed in private. Any report involving exempt information (as defined by section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972), whether it appears in Part 1 or Part 2 below, may be discussed in private but only if the Committee so resolves.

2) The relevant 'background papers' are listed after each report in Part 1. Enquiries about any of the Agenda reports and background papers should be directed in the first instance to **Mr G Lelliott, Democratic Services Section, Law and Governance Business Centre, Runnymede Civic Centre, Station Road, Addlestone (Tel: Direct Line: 01932 425620). (Email: gary.lelliott@runnymede.gov.uk).**

3) Agendas and Minutes are available on a subscription basis. For details, please contact Democratic.Services@runnymede.gov.uk or 01932 425620. Agendas and Minutes for all the Council's Committees may also be viewed on www.runnymede.gov.uk.

4) In the unlikely event of an alarm sounding, members of the public should leave the building immediately, either using the staircase leading from the public gallery or following other instructions as appropriate.

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Filming should be limited to the formal meeting area and not extend to those in the public seating area.

The Chairman will make the final decision on all matters of dispute in regard to the use of social media audio-recording, photography and filming in the Committee meeting.

List of matters for consideration
Part I

Part II

Matters involving Exempt or Confidential Information in respect of which reports have not been made available for public inspection

involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

To disclose the information would be commercially sensitive and put the council at a commercial disadvantage.

This report contains exempt information as defined by Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the report in question would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

To disclose the information would be commercially sensitive and could put the council at a commercial disadvantage.

This report contains exempt information as defined by Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the report in question would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

To disclose the information would reveal the identity of an individual.

This report contains exempt information as defined by Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the report in question would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

To disclose the information would be commercially sensitive and put the council at a commercial disadvantage.

Runnymede Borough Council

Corporate Management Committee

Thursday, 22 June 2023 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present:	Councillors T Gracey (Chairman), C Howorth (Vice-Chair), T Burton (In place of D Whyte), D Coen, M Cressey, R Davies (In place of R King), L Gillham, I Mullens, S Ringham, P Snow, M Willingale and Jonathan Wilson (In place of M Nuti).
Members of the Committee absent:	Councillors R King, M Nuti and D Whyte.
In attendance:	Councillors M Smith.

16 **Notification of Changes to Committee Membership**

Councillor Burton substituted for Councillor D. Whyte.

Councillor Davies substituted for Councillor R. King.

Councillor Wilson substituted for Councillor Nuti.

17 **Minutes**

The minutes of the Corporate Management Committee held on 25 May 2023 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

The minutes of the Appointments Sub-Committee held on 26 April 2023 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

18 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

19 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

20 **Referrals from Committees**

20a **Referral from the Housing Committee - Establishing a Housing Systems and Revenue Team**

The report had been considered by the Housing Committee, which had put forward its recommendation to the Corporate Management Committee.

The proposals, which sought to improve tenants' experiences of interacting with the Council, were welcomed by the Committee.

It was **resolved** that:

1) The business case for the following be agreed:

    a) The purchase and implementation of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Customer

Service Modules (as contained within the Housing Service Plan for 2023/4 and Capital Programme) to be funded from HRA Revenue Reserves.

b) The establishment of a centralised Business System and Revenue function as contained within the Housing Service Plan for 2023/4.

2) The following sums be released from the provisions previously set aside:

a) A £50,000 provision in the Capital Programme and Business Plan.
b) A £135,000 provision in the HRA Revenue Budget and Business Plan.

20b   Referral from the Housing Committee - Building Safety Act

The report had been considered by the Housing Committee, which had put forward its recommendation to the Corporate Management Committee.

The Building Safety Act 2022 gave landlords additional responsibilities, with a particular emphasis on ensuring the safety of higher risk buildings, which could not be fulfilled within the current staffing structure. The proposed additional post would also be able to, capacity dependent, deliver on other priority areas for the Housing team, such as addressing mould.

It was **resolved** that a Compliance Surveyor be added to the Housing staffing structure.

20c   Referral from the Community Services Committee - Open Space Development Resource Capacity

The report had been considered by the Community Services Committee, which had put forward its recommendation to the Corporate Management Committee.

It was envisaged that the additional capacity would help deliver on the Council's climate change and sustainability aspirations.

It was **resolved** that:

1) the authority's establishment list be amended, as set out in the report, with the following roles created:

a) An Open Spaces Development Biodiversity Officer (permanent, 37-hour contract on grade 10); and
b) A Community Development Projects Officer (permanent, 30-hour contract on grade 8).

2) supplementary revenue estimate of £4,886, required from 2025/2026 onwards, be agreed.

21   Employee wellbeing strategy and associated policies

The Employee Wellbeing Strategy and its associated policies sought to provide a healthy workplace for Council staff, as well as make it an attractive place to work for prospective employees. Other policies intended to supplement the Strategy would be brought to the Committee in due course.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that Unison had been consulted on the proposed policies and that minor amendments could be made in response to issues that were raised. Should more significant changes be required, policies would be brought before the Committee for further review.

Support was available to staff for matters such as quitting smoking. Human Resources

could signpost such individuals to various NHS services and also arrange a review by an occupational health adviser. The Committee requested that it be updated on the level of uptake for such health promotion initiatives.

It was **resolved** that the following documents be agreed:

1) Employee Wellbeing Strategy
2) Menopause Policy
3) Smoke-free and Vape-free Workplace Policy

22   **Health and Safety Policy**

A comprehensive review of the Health and Safety Policy had been undertaken. The review sought to clarify the roles of various individuals and supplementary training was proposed for senior managers. Various associated policies such as a Driving Policy and an Alcohol and Drugs Policy were currently being written.

It was noted that this policy did not incorporate elements relating the Council's buildings.

There was discussion about the number of lost working days due to injuries sustained in the workplace. This was a particular issue for depot based staff whose roles tended to be physically demanding. A depot specific health and safety officer, whose role involved emphasising the importance of, and ensuring compliance with health and safety requirements, had been appointed.

It was **resolved** that the Health and Safety Policy be agreed.

23   **Appointments to Outside Bodies - second round**

It was **resolved** that:

1) The following appointments be made, in accordance with the arrangements set out in the report:

Organisation/type of representation	Appointees
Air Training Corps (No. 398 Squadron) Management Committee	Councillor Harnden
Chertsey Chamber of Commerce	Councillor Mavi Councillor Clarke
Fairoaks Airfield JCC	Councillor Michael Cressey
PATROL – Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Adjudication Joint Committee and the Traffic Penalty Tribunal	Councillor Michael Cressey
Runnymede Access Liaison Group (RALG)	Councillor Williams Councillor Harnden
South East Employers	Councillor R. King (member) Councillor Gillham (deputy)
Staines Shopmobility	Councillor Harnden
Surrey Museums Partnership	Councillor Harnden (member) Councillor Wilson (deputy)
Thorpe Parochial Society	Councillor Harnden

2) A further round of nominations be invited, where none had been received, for

consideration at a future Corporate Management Committee.

24   **Appointment to the Surrey Police and Crime Panel**

Each Surrey district and borough was able to appoint one representative to the Surrey Police and Crime Panel.

Both Councillors Prescot and Burton were proposed and seconded to be Runnymede's representative.

It was **resolved** that Councillor Prescot be appointed to the Surrey Police and Crime Panel.

25   **Standing Order 42 - Re-grading of the Corporate Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development post**

Consideration had been given to sharing this role with a nearby authority, however this had elicited no interest from the authorities approached.

The decision pertaining to the re-grading of the Corporate Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development post, taken in accordance with Standing Order 42, was noted.

26   **Exclusion of Press and Public**

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting during the consideration of the remaining matters under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as set out in Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

27   **Referral from the Community Services Committee - Addlestone Day Centre Provision**

The report had been considered by the Community Services Committee, which had put forward its recommendation to the Corporate Management Committee.

The reopening of the Eileen Tozer Centre had become necessary due to the Addlestone Community Association's withdrawal from its agreement with the Council. Additional staffing was required to facilitate the centre's safe operation.

The Committee was pleased to see the return of a much valued service and officers were thanked for their efforts in ensuring that vulnerable residents had such a facility available to them. There was discussion about the level of use the service was now seeing in comparison to its pre-Covid-19 levels. It was confirmed that officers were supporting those who were nervous to leave their homes to engage in the Council's services.

It was **resolved** that:

1) The reopening of Eileen Tozer Centre, until such time as plans for the "Addlestone Two" regeneration project were mobilised, be approved.

2) The changes to the structure within Day Centre Services, as set out in the service delivery model section and paragraph 2.27 of the officer's report (including the regrading of Day Centre Manager and Deputy Day Centre Manager posts), be approved.

3) An annual revenue supplementary budget estimate, for the sum set out in the officer's report, be approved.

4) The sum, as set out in the officer's report, originally intended to be awarded to Addlestone Community Centre, instead be used to support the reopening of Eileen Tozer Centre.

28   **Student FM Procurement Update**

The report related to student accommodation at Magna Square in Egham. Due to facilities management for student accommodation being a specialised area, Runnymede was unable to provide the service in-house. A procurement exercise had therefore been undertaken, with a recommendation to award the contract made within the report. Student accommodation at Magna Square had proven to be popular and the quality of the service received by students was consistently high.

The length of the contract was discussed by the Committee. It was noted that in order to achieve the best possible value, a contract term of five years had been included in the tender documentation. There would however be elements in the contract relating to the quality of service expected by the Council, with the ability to withdraw from the agreement in the event of significant underperformance.

The difference between the pre-tender estimated cost of the contract and the eventual contract value was questioned. The Committee also asked about the number of houses in multiple occupancy in the Egham area. Officers noted the queries and agreed to report back to members.

It was **resolved** that:

1) The award of the contract to the facilities management provider proposed in the officer's report be agreed.

2) The contract term be agreed as 5+1+1 years, for the annual fee stated in the officer's report.

3) The savings in the current financial year, and the additional expenditure in 2024/25-on, be noted.

4) That the additional costs associated with this award be incorporated into the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

29   **Update on Abbey Groves**

The report provided a comprehensive update on the Abbey Groves asset and set out potential options for future use of the site. The economic downturn and changing demand for office accommodation following the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted the financial viability of the asset.

There was a detailed discussion about the potential for the site. It was a challenging location, particularly because it was within a conservation area. The Housing team had confirmed that the asset was not required and that they were focused on delivering in accordance with their previously agreed, and costed, housing strategy.

It was agreed that further consideration of this item be deferred until the Corporate Management Committee on 13 July 2023, to enable a review of whether other potential uses of the Abbey Groves site were feasible.

30   **Procurement of Occupational Health Services**

Due to an unsuccessful first attempt at procuring a new service, it was suggested that a

new exercise be undertaken with a longer contract term via the Crown Commercial Service Framework. It was noted that other nearby authorities had been approached about the prospect of a joint service without success.

It was **resolved** that:

1) The estimated contract value, on the basis of a 2+1+1 year term, as detailed in the officer's report, be agreed.
2) The procurement route, as detailed in the officer's report, be agreed.
3) A supplementary revenue estimate, for the sum detailed in the officer's report, in anticipation of increased costs for this contract, be agreed.

(The meeting ended at 9.07 pm.)   Chairman

Establishing a Runnymede Citizens' Panel (Housing, Andy Vincent)

Synopsis of report:

The Council's Empowering our Communities strategy identifies that a Citizens' Panel will be set up. A Panel will also support the corporate objective of enhancing 'evidence-based decision-making;' strengthening the evidence base used to support decision-making.

Many local authorities utilise Citizens' Panels to generate feedback on the role of the council and the value of new initiatives.
Royal Holloway, University of London has compiled a report setting out the literature exploring the role of a Citizens' Panel and the additional value it brings over more traditional, one-way consultative mechanisms like postal or telephone surveys. This offers a more deliberative democratic format designed to engage in more extended and active debate and deliberation by a representative sample of residents.

Whilst it is expected that the Citizens' Panel will provide invaluable insight through their views and opinions, it will not be a decision-making body.

Recommendation(s):

That Corporate Management Committee members

1. **Recognise the value of a Citizens' Panel in gathering evidence on residents' views of council and potentially partner organisations' services.**
2. **Approve the establishment of a Runnymede Citizens' Panel .**
3. **Approve expenditure of £10,000 Shared Prosperity Fund to recruit the membership of the Panel.**
4. **Virement of the remaining costs associated with the Panel from the central Community Budget, held by the Chief Executive. This will enable the authority to offer participants a small incentive for retaining their membership.**

1. **Context and background of report**

1.1   In September 2022 the Council's Corporate Management Committee approved the Empowering our Communities Strategy. That strategy included a commitment to develop a citizens' panel.

> *"Formulate an engagement strategy including reference to communities in deprived areas. The primary tool emanating from this will be the re-launch of the Citizens' Panel as a representative sample of the Runnymede community. This will subsequently be used to draw standing panels for individual issues and consultations, including on climate change. The panel will also be used to select focus groups for specific topics." (*Empowering our Communities Strategy page 7).

1.2   Citizens' Panels are used across local government as a tool to generate a representative view of the thoughts of residents on a range of local issues.

"A Citizens' Panel aims to be a representative, consultative body of local residents. They are typically used by statutory agencies, particularly local authorities, and their partners, to consult service users and non-users on specific issues." Involve – the UK's public participation charity.

1.3   Citizens' Panels are a way of conducting qualitative and quantitative research of the general public or a particular cohort (e.g. by age). Qualitative research in particular can be conducted face to face or remotely. Panel members are likely to be selected at random from the resident population and are expected to reflect their own views on a variety of topics.

1.4   If the Panel is structured in a way that generates representative views, it does not enable special interest groups to volunteer to be part of a working group. The aim will be to recruit 1% of the Runnymede population (approximately 880 people) who will be representative of the community as a whole.

1.5   Resident feedback and input on initiatives also supports the corporate commitment articulated within the Empowering our Communities Strategy of enhancing the evidence-base when making decisions.

"Evidence-based decision making; The quality of decisions made on behalf of our residents is going to be determined largely by listening to our residents and examining evidence and data that informs our decisions." Runnymede Borough Council's Empowering our Communities Strategy page 6.

1.6   Understanding the views of residents alongside other forms of evidence is one of the tools that will help support decision makers when deliberating the relative strengths and weaknesses of arguments on a topic.

1.7   It is anticipated that reports to Committee or Full Council will include details of consultation undertaken with the Citizens' Panel (where appropriate) as a standard part of the report template. This will enable Councillors to understand the sentiment of the local community on a topic when also considering other evidence.

1.8   Locally a number of authorities have established panels. These include: -

- o   Epsom and Ewell
- o   Guildford
- o   Kensington and Chelsea
- o   Reading
- o   Surrey County Council
- o   Surrey Heath
- o   Woking

1.9   Use of the Citizens' Panel will supersede individual commutation initiatives, thereby producing a swing in due course across all service areas where consultation with the public is necessary.

2.   **Establishing a Citizens' Panel**

2.1   The enclosed report (Appendix A), developed by Royal Holloway, University of London, identifies the successes of local panels in gleaning public views on topics.

2.2   The report also considers the most effective mechanisms for structuring the membership of the Panel to ensure it is representative of different geographies and cohorts of residents.

2.3   Several citizens' panels offer incentives for participation, ensuring high response rates. Incentives are also offered to minimize the number of residents leaving the panel, minimising the need for further recruitment.

        Examples of incentives are: -

        o   Cardiff Youth Citizens' Panel runs quarterly prize draws.
        o   Surrey Heartlands – contribute to charity for every survey completed.

2.4   The report proposes that Council tenants are recruited as one 'population cohort.' Incentives for undertaking consultation on housing related issues with this cohort can be funded by the Housing Revenue Account.

3.   **The Business Case for a Citizens' Panel**

3.1   It is anticipated that setting up a Citizens' Panel representative of the population will require external support from a market research company (MORI, Opinion Research etc). It is anticipated that this support will cost approximately £15,000 per annum based on the experience of Surrey County Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

3.2   The Council's relationship with the Royal Holloway, University of London could enable the authority to tap into their market research expertise.

3.3   It is also anticipated that the Panel will require an annual budget to ensure it can incentivise participation.

3.4   It is proposed the Panel is run independently of operational departments. This will ensure it operates to the highest research standards.

3.5   It is proposed it is administered internally within the Council by the Electoral Services Team with recruitment being supported by our Communications and Marketing Team.

3.6   It is estimated that the Council spends approximately £50,000 annually undertaking surveying and consultation activity that could be absorbed by a Citizens' Panel.

3.7   The Council does undertake other consultation activity, but this is likely to be locally focused (such as consultation on planning applications) or focused on specific cohorts of the population (such as statutory consultation on changes to the landlord function) to be undertaken via a Citizens' Panel.

3.8   It is anticipated that as the Council increasingly seeks to garner the views of its population this spend is likely to increase, which would strengthen the value for money benefits of a Citizens' Panel.

4.   **Policy Framework**

4.1   The Corporate Business Plan 2022-2026 establishes 5 broad themes – one of which is empowering communities, which seeks to support groups and societies with

initiatives to strengthen their communities and to represent and advocate for our residents' interests.

4.2 Empowering Communities Strategy identifies 7 strategic priorities – priority 1 is evidenced-based decision making which includes a commitment to establishing a Citizens' Panel.

4.3 Results from the Citizens' Panel are expected to provide an additional tools to support decision making by members. It is not anticipated that results determine policy per se but are an aid to members in providing real time evidence of public opinion which may be one of many factors determining an outcome.

5. **Resource implications/Value for Money**

5.1 It is anticipated that £15,000 will be required to establish the Citizens' Panel.

5.2 It is anticipated that the Panel will require an annual budget of £15,000 to ensure it continues to operate successfully and can offer incentives.

5.3 Other incentives for participation should be funded from departmental budgets from where the consultation originates.

5.4 It is anticipated that by operating the panel successfully it will generate savings for the authority. Work will be undertaken to identify these savings and capture them in the Planning, Housing, Community Services and Environmental Services budgets particularly.

6. **Legal implications**

6.1 Wherever there is a duty to consult, it is a duty to engage in lawful (and therefore fair) consultation. Similarly, if a public authority chooses to consult (whether or not required to do so), the consultation must be adequate and fair.

6.2 It is not the intention of officers and Members to replace all consultation with relevant parties by way of consulting with the Citizen's Panel. Where there is a statutory requirement or published statutory guidance to consult with specific individuals or groups, the Citizens' Panel will be an additional forum where consultation will occur (where appropriate) rather than as a replacement to existing consultees.

6.3 By way of example, there is a statutory requirement to consult its tenants further to section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 on matters of housing management.

6.4 Should the establishment of a Citizens' Panel be agreed by Members, a review of Annex 4 of the Constitution – Consultation Guidance – will need to be carried out to reflect the role of the Panel within the Council's principles for consultation.

7. **Equality implications**

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is required to ensure the Citizens' Panel is set up in a way which promotes access to all parts of the Runnymede community. The process for selecting Members of the Citizens' Panel and how they are communicated with will also need to comply with the Council's Public Sector Equality duty in accordance with s.149 of the Equality Act 2010.

7.2   Monitoring of response rates is also essential to ensure all parts of the community are engaging and giving feedback during the consultation exercises.

8.   **Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

8.1   The establishment of a Citizens' Panel has no direct environmental, sustainability, or biodiversity implications although getting a representative view of residents on these issues will help guide Runnymede Borough Council's approach.

9.   **Other implications**

9.1   Personal data will be protected during the set-up and running of the Citizens' Panel Any external organisation supporting the set-up will need to assure the Council that their arrangements for protecting personal data are robust and reflect best practice.

10.   **Timetable for Implementation**

10.1   It is anticipated that if this proposal is supported by the Corporate Management Committee, the Council will commence work to establish a Citizens' Panel from September 2023.

11.   **Conclusions**

11.1   This project has been identified as a key priority for the Council within the Empowering our Communities Strategy.

11.2   Establishing a Panel will have cost savings for the authority as well as enrich the quality of the data held by the authority. It will also support the corporate objective of enhancing "evidence-based decision making."

        (To resolve)

        Background papers

        Report to the Corporate Management Committee requesting approval for the Empowering our Communities Strategy

Deepening public participation in local policy making: a review of deliberative democratic governance for Runnymede Borough Council

David Simon, James Sloam, Karia Hartung and Scott Downham

Royal Holloway, University of London

June 2023

Summary

Democratic politics is faced by a number of challenges regarding citizen participation. Disillusionment with democratic politics has increased over several decades and citizens rarely engage with local politicians and officials. Furthermore, any interactions that do take place are often with unrepresentative groups and individuals, who possess significant advantages in terms of economic resources and civic skills. Surveys show that citizens are actually quite keen to engage in local decision-making, and Councils can benefit hugely from involving them in the decision-making process: improving the quality of policies, providing greater legitimacy, and making implementation more straightforward. So, there is a clear opportunity for local authorities to deliver more inclusive and effective public policy.

Runnymede Borough Council wishes to establish a consultative mechanism through which to engage actively with residents for different purposes. To assist the Council, this report therefore provides a systematic review of the evidence regarding the various kinds and formats available from academic and policy literatures internationally but with a primary focus on the UK. This review was augmented by selected interviews with key informants and a small set of focus group discussions with Runnymede residents. There is a clear distinction between more traditional, one-way consultative mechanisms like postal or telephone surveys on the one hand and the range of deliberative democratic formats like citizens' panels, juries and assemblies designed to engage in more extended and active debate and deliberation by a representative sample of residents.

In the light of this evidence and a detailed examination of the demographic composition of Runnymede and its constituent wards, a deliberative format is recommended comprising a representative one percent sample of the borough population, structured so that subsets can be identified according to demographic, socio-economic and geographical characteristics for consultations specifically relevant to them. The sequence and criteria for the Council to decide on its preferred format and delivery process (as between in-house and subcontracted/outsourced provision in part or whole) are clearly set out. In order to maximise appropriateness, detailed selection of an external provider, if desired, should be undertaken only after these decisions have been made.

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Introduction

Participation in local governance is important for many reasons, such as the ability of local populations to accommodate their own unique cultures and geographies (Burns, Hambleton, & Hoggett 1994), to resist centralised policy imposition (Teles 2023), and to tailor public services to local needs (Steiner, McMillan & O'Connor 2022). Yet, turnout within local representative democracy within the UK remains low and both socially and spatially uneven (The Electoral Commission 2022; Einstein, Glick, Godinez Puig & Palmer 2022), as is participation in local decision-making processes. Yet a growing body of literature shows that citizen participation in democracy is important for building trust in democracy and developing a more informed and cost-effective local policy decision (Ostrom 1990; Fung 2006).

Electoral politics, with its mass parties, perceived artificial polarisation and commonly distrusted politicians thought beholden to other interests, both locally and nationally, is often seen as perfunctory and formalistic. Accordingly, it is losing favour, especially amongst upcoming generations, who are more involved in informal, issue-based forms of engagement (Tormey 2015; Vromen 2003). Moreover, hurdles like the recently introduced voter ID laws (Barton 2022) and a lack of knowledge and political efficacy disproportionately affect the participation of marginalised groups, including some ethnic minorities and the elderly (Brennen 2020).

According to the Local Government Association (LGA), "[l]ocal democracy is strongest when there are high levels of civic representation, where citizens voices are heard and taken into account in local decision-making" (Local Government Association 2021). This kind of engagement and the concept of deliberative democracy more broadly have their roots in Athenian democracy (Ipsos MORI 2021). Nowadays, in addition to statutory provisions and the common law of the 'doctrine of legitimate expectation' legally requiring the consultation of citizens in certain circumstances (for example in the context of healthcare changes, budget cuts or environmental issues) (Local Government Association 2019b), there are significant advantages for local authorities to consult citizens.

Working regularly with citizens through different forms of engagement allows councils to improve their dialogue and relationship with them (Local Government Association 2019a, p. 10). New ideas and suggestions can be easily accessed, expectations managed, and council activities and policies can thus be shaped around the needs and aspirations of citizens (Local Government Association 2023g). This has the potential to improve planning as well as policy and decision making and can thus ultimately lead to better services and provide a way of governing by consent (Local Government Association 2019a, p. 15; 2023). As a result, the cohesion of communities as well as trust in democracy,

the community and the system can be increased (Local Government Association 2019a, p. 47). By allowing local authorities to make better use of resources and by minimising the risk of judicial review, consultation can also accelerate the economic efficiency of the organisations of local authorities (Local Government Association 2019a, pp. 6, 15). Ultimately, "[…] consultation is about ensuring decision-makers have all the facts they need to make a choice for their community […]" (Local Government Association 2019a, p. 61) and local government can be found in an ideal situation to carry out this exercise of trust and community building (Local Government Association 2019a, p. 5).

Accordingly, local government officials have been searching for ways to improve engagement with their councils (Local Government Association 2022). This can take many different forms. Local residents can be offered an opportunity to consult – either online or in-person – or be polled on a particular policy decision. At the other end of the spectrum, deliberative democracy, i.e., inviting citizens into discussions over particular issues (Runnymede Borough Council 2022), offers a more intensive but ultimately more rewarding form of engagement by generating ideas and testing out different policy solutions.

Consultation is highly encouraged and in specific instances a statutory requirement in the UK (Local Government Association 2023e; 2023h). This importance placed on creating and enhancing civic space keeps democracies distinct from authoritarian regimes (Anderson et al. 2021). Whilst simple polling and consultation exercises remain the most common form of local engagement, there have been many experiments in deliberative democracy over recent decades (Galimberti 2022). This has led to some useful practical guides, such as those provided by Citizensassemblies.org (2018a; 2018b) and Involve.org (2018).

The deliberative engagement of citizens promises several broad advantages. These include levelling or at least moderating unequal underlying power relations to co-produce policy (Turnhout et al. 2020), utilising diverse perspectives, enhancing civic skills (Tippett & How 2020), reinvigorating relations between citizens and formal political institutions (Dasgupta & Williams 2022), generating public support for specific policies (Wells, Howarth & Brand-Correa 2021), avoiding short-termism (Machin, 2023), finding a way past gridlock, confrontation, partisanship, and polarisation (Wells et al. 2021), and starting wider public conversations via news and social media about what local authorities are doing.

The enthusiasm for co-production of public services has meant that practice has lead theory (Durose & Richardson 2016; Tippett & How 2020). In other words, public consultations often lack conceptual coherence or an evidence base and are not founded on best practice. Hence, Wells et al. (2021) call for further research on what works and in what circumstance in parallel with the growing number of

deliberative events. This literature review investigates different forms of consultation and their strengths and weaknesses, by examining their key attributes: recruitment, structure, and impact. The main forms of consultation are discussed: beginning with the simplest forms – surveys and focus groups – before turning to more complex deliberative events.

This report will argue that an appropriate form of 'citizens panel' would enable Runnymede Borough Council or other local authorities to use a combination of different methods or consultation depending upon the policy issue (what is, how it is resourced, and at what stage of development it is) and the need for local knowledge and/ or popular support from the total population or particular sub-groups e.g. over-65s, students, council house tenant, residents of a particular town or ward, In the borough.

Literature Review

Consultative Surveys and Simple Focus Groups

Surveys or polls remain the most popular form of local consultation. They can be used to present residents with their preferences on different policy alternatives or be used – earlier on in the policy-making process – to understand citizens' priorities. The advantage of the type of surveys usually sent out by Councils is that they can be quick and easy to distribute, and quick and easy to analyse in their simplest form. However, they also have a number of problems. First, local authority surveys tend not to be representative, and so they are often self-selective. This means that the results will tend to be skewed towards those who are older (or if they are online, away from the most elderly in the population) and with higher degrees of educational attainment, those who have lived in the borough for a longer period of time, or those with a strongly-held or vested interest in the issue(s) at hand. Second, surveys may ask citizens about questions they do not know much about – so, citizens' responses may be uninformed and may be founded upon expectations of the Council that are unrealistic with regard to resources or time scales or beyond its set of competences (Wells et al. 2021).

Completing a survey does not allow an in-depth understanding of how policies will affect different people or encourage behavioural change. Surveys are, however, the only method here allowing private responses. This reduces self-presentation concerns (Spears & Lea 1994) of participants feeling self-conscious to air their real opinions publicly. Being primarily quantitative, surveys are best used in policy areas requiring quantifying of public opinion. For instance, when a council wants to

understand attitudes towards use of residents' personal data, a survey can quantify which uses of data will generate a majority of public support (Downham 2023). Surveys tend to be a cheaper option, allowing a more rigorous, representative sample of the population to be consulted relatively quickly and easily. However, in addition to the bias in responses already noted, there can be a lack of qualitative detail or explanation in responses.

In some consultation exercises, surveys have been used to complement focus groups work and deliberative events, which can make sure that the questions councils are asking are the most appropriate, i.e., that they are well-informed by local knowledge and appropriate to citizens levels of knowledge or reference frames (Greater London Authority 2019).

Focus group discussions are cheaper than deliberative events (Wells et al. 2021). They involve consulting the public in small groups, except without experts and the lengthy deliberation processes described below. This means that they are best used for well-known and simpler policy areas. The quickness of focus groups and questionnaires may reduce inequalities in terms of who has the time to participate, compared to extensive deliberative events (Tippett & How 2020). A key feminist critique of deliberative democracy is that women, especially the most marginalised, are still busiest with unpaid work (Celis & Childs 2020). Focus groups primarily recruit from various community groups, for convenience. These might be less representative of the population though. For example, active community members may be more civic minded and more positive towards the council. However, they are very useful for testing out ideas that have interest for a particular set of residents e.g., the provision of holiday activities for families with small children.

Deliberative Events

For deliberative events (which may actually comprise multi-session processes), an independent oversight panel or advisory board of key stakeholders is often set up to oversee the process from the beginning (Wells et al. 2021). Avoiding perceptions of bias is key. Consultations tend to be run or at least facilitated by external organisations or specialised facilitators expert in deliberation, like universities, deliberative democracy organisations and charities. A as specified in Table 1 below, there is a wide range of deliberative formats.

	Citizens' juries	Planning Cells	Consensus conferences	Deliberative polls	Citizens' assemblies
Developed by (first instance)	Crosby (USA, 1971)	Dienel (Germany, 1970s)	Danish Board of Technology (1987)	James Fishkin (USA, 1994)	Gordon Gibson (Canada, 2002)
No. of citizens	12-26	100-500	10-25	100-500	100-160
No. of meetings	2-5 days	4-5 days	7-8 days	2-3 days	20-30 days
Selection method	Random selection	Random selection	Random + self-selection	Random selection	Random + self-selection
Activities	Information + deliberation	Information + deliberation	Information + deliberation	Information + deliberation	Information +consultation +deliberation
Result	Collective position report	Survey opinions + Collective position report	Collective position report	Survey opinions	Detailed recommendation
Destination of proposal	Sponsor and mass media	Sponsor and mass media	Parliament and mass media	Sponsor and mass media	Parliament, government and public referendum

Table 1: Main categories of deliberative event (Elstub and McLaverty 2014).

Deliberative consultations tend to seek participants who are representative of the relevant population (Wells et al. 2021). The smallest tend to include only 12–30 people. They are often called citizens' juries. Larger ones include 50–160 people and are often called citizens' assemblies. Therefore, the cost per one-off exercise varies from £25,000 to £500,000 (Wells et al. 2021). The largest involve 100-500 people and are often called planning cells (Dienel 2009). The strength of smaller options is that they are cheaper and easier (Ayano 2021). The weakness is that they are less representative (Citizensassemblies.org 2018b). It can be harder to enable everyone to be heard in bigger deliberative events (Citizensassemblies.org 2018b). If a crisis comes along, for example a pandemic, expensive consultations may become the last priority, and be cut in duration or depth (Wells et al 2021). Generally, there is a risk with expensive deliberative events in that they can be rushed to cut costs and/or save time (Rishbeth et al. 2018).

Importantly, however, size is not the only distinguishing characteristic, and the choice of format should be appropriate to the intended purpose. For example, in essence, a citizens' jury may be small but should function in a more extended, intensive and interactive manner, in which a group of representative citizens hear presentations from, and ask questions of, a set of experts on the topic in hand, including advocates of different proposed actions or 'solutions' then deliberate and deliver a verdict to the council. A variation of this theme would have a jury select its two top options for presentation to a wider citizens' panel or survey. Similarly, a citizens' assembly is larger and can debate particular issues on behalf of the population they represent (Durose & Richardson 2016;

Egerod & Larsen 2021; Ipsos MORI 2021; LGA 2023b). The rest of this section focuses on the broad definitional and procedural issues; detailed cases studies of their application are given in Annex 1.

Consultations and Sampling

Surveys can be distributed by post or online to invite citizens to participate, with the negative consequences set out above, or can be carried out by selecting a representative sample by a professional polling company or similar organisation e.g., university. However, representative samples for local authority areas are hard and expensive to develop. The potential advantage of a standing citizens' panel is that it could be developed through stratified random sampling (explained below) and provide an ongoing resource for a Council. However, the Council or its subcontractor would need to be pro-active in maintaining the size, representative composition and response rate of the panel due to natural rates of attrition (which can be quite high but are heavily dependent upon both frequency of use and incentives provided for panel members (see below). A panel of one percent of a population e.g., 900 people in Runnymede, would certainly be sufficient to undertake representative surveys, provided that the response rate was relatively high (above 30%). Indeed, 30–35% is the average response rate for postal or unfacilitated online surveys.

Stratified random sampling is the most widely used recruitment method (Local Government Association 2023b). Unlike entirely random sampling, a target population is divided along important demographic traits, ideally at least gender, age, district, and education level. Such a panel can be used for surveys but also for more deliberative exercises. So, for citizens' assemblies or applied focus groups, a random representative sample is drawn from each of those strata. A Penrose method, also known as a square-root method, can calculate a proportionate number of participants to draw from each area (Citizensassemblies.org 2018b). There can be proportionate sampling, or disproportionate sampling, where strata may be purposefully unequally represented. Some consultations oversample marginalised groups to avoid them being drowned out – minorities for example (Wells et al. 2021). Likewise, women or young people may be quieter in large or demographically mixed deliberative events (Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014). So, alternative methods may be adopted to put participants at ease and thus to contribute with less inhibition. Such methods include active facilitation, splitting the discussions up into smaller groups or into groups representing categories that are less likely to engage with conventional democracy, such as young people from low-income backgrounds.

Making the demographic composition of the panel non-representative of the population may, however, be a questionable practice. Since women and minorities are disproportionately inclined to

more progressive views (Sloam & Henn 2018), it could potentially be viewed as biasing the process. On the other hand, there is also evidence that those of a progressive persuasion are already more likely to participate in deliberative democracy (Farrell et al. 2020). For example, in the Irish citizens' assembly for constitutional change on abortion, the stratified random sampling did not account for political stance.

Necessarily recruiting based on only a few demographic traits means that the sample may not be perfectly descriptively representative of the whole population, let alone substantively, as, for instance, regarding political views (Farrell et al. 2020). Some recruitment processes ensure a substantively representative range of attitudes towards the topic at hand, while others do not (Wells et al. 2021). That raises questions of how imbalanced a sample can be in terms of attitudes, and whether different sides are well represented. A seminal citizens' jury, on the impact of agriculture on water quality, had half the panel be the mainly effected group; farmers, because otherwise famers would only be 6% of the population and sample (Crosby et al. 1986). For policy areas concerning only a narrow part of the community, like elderly people or those with a disability, a deliberative event representative of the whole population may be unnecessarily broad. Still, the whole population could be relevant, like if there is public funding involved (Citizensassemblies.org 2018b). More detailed consideration of the demographic composition of Runnymede's overall population and by ward, as the basis for drawing up an appropriate panel composition is provided in Annex 3.

Prospective participants can be randomly selected through the electoral register. If so, they should be communicated with via appropriate channels. Not everyone will have internet access, for instance. Two weeks is a good time to leave for responses (Citizensassemblies.org 2018b). Participation in multiple waves of a citizen panel might be discouraged, to allow other citizens a chance. Experts and various stakeholder groups should also be invited. Those working in government, or other organisations within the specific topic area, should come as stakeholders, not participants. Stakeholders can include both formal organisations and informal groups, even an individual giving non-expert testimony (Farrell et al. 2020). Exact participants can be determined by a random selection (also known as sortition) process.

To obtain some insights into RBC residents' perceptions of existing Council consultations and their preferences and perceptions of the options discussed in this report, a small, non-representative set of focus group discussions was undertaken in the Egham/Englefield Green area. The findings have been incorporated into relevant parts of the following text, while detailed summaries are provided in Annex 2.

To encourage participation and reduce attrition rates and hence the time and effort of replenishing the representative panel size, provision of some form of compensation as an incentive is widely used and is recommended. This could take the form of money, vouchers, the prospect of making important decisions, and/or recognition of the panellists' role by the Council, for example by providing a certificate of participation to strengthen the CVs for young members. Such incentives are particularly important for unwaged, poor and others for whom the time taken to participate represents an opportunity cost or who, like young minority groups, rarely participate in conventional democratic processes.

Running Deliberative Events

First, there can be some kind of introduction and icebreaker (Citizensassemblies.org 2018b). Next, a range of experts, followed by stakeholder groups, present information on the topic at hand. Participants then cross-examine them, before deliberating with each other. Participants devise recommendations. Ranked choice voting on proposals is recommended, for nuance. The recommendation achieving the highest degree of consensus amongst participants, proposed to be 80% since unanimity is rarely attainable and, indeed, may not be entirely desirable (Machin 2023), wins. It is possible that proposals may need to be revised and voted on again to achieve this. The result is announced, and as soon as possible the recommendations can be acknowledged by authorities and if deemed appropriate, implemented. Binding verses non-binding recommendations are discussed later.

One deliberative event might run for eight evening sessions totalling thirty hours, another across two weekends. The biggest version, planning cells, usually runs for four days. There is some talk of citizens needing longer than might be expected, to enable enough in-depth discussion. The longest citizen jury seen in the UK spanned four years, run by Tony Blair's Labour government. Cost and participant fatigue became significant (Local Government Association 2023a). Equally representative substitute participants are recommended, particularly for longer events, about 20% of the main sample (Citizensassemblies.org 2018b).

Deliberative events start with a problem statement. Some use a narrow, closed question (Wells et al. 2021). They might ask how ambitious the council should be on, for example, climate change, and give options of increasing ambitiousness across defined policy areas over which the council has remit. This ensures that recommendations are actually actionable, but limits citizen input. Citizens perform more of a consultative role here, rather than it being citizen-led. Other deliberative events

have a broader, open question, inviting participants to propose policy themselves, which takes longer (Wells et al. 2021). Dienel (2009) defines 'open problems', where an open-ended, creative process is required to innovate an as of yet unknown solution. Open problems are best addressed by 'future workshops', events that do just that. Meanwhile, 'conflictual problems' are where there are standard solutions, but it is more about solving disagreements among different groups on which is (most) appropriate. Citizens' juries or planning cells are best for this because they can elucidate a mandate for one policy solution over another. The topic can be complex, as long as it can be explained enough in the early, learning phase of the event, rather than requiring years of study (Citizensassemblies.org 2022). The topic must not be too simple. It must generate enough debate and challenge (Citizensassemblies.org 2018b).

Nowadays, deliberation can occur online, for example in urban planning (Zeiderman et al. 2017). Afzalan, Sanchez & Evans-Cowley (2017) evaluate several digital platforms designed for deliberation, like MySideWalk, PlaceSpeak, CitySourced and Crowdbrite, but also social media like Facebook and Nextdoor. Authors discuss a range of considerations for choosing platforms, including the capacities of one's organisation, the community, the platform, the planning problem and participation goals, and various norms and regulations. The aim is to lower costs yet increase accessibility. However, there is evidence that, for example, online livestreaming of council meetings does not significantly increase the diversity of attendees (Einstein et al. 2022) but might increase the number observing.

Now for a global south perspective. In Bengal, India, village development committees were set up in the late 2000s for participatory planning, as recounted by Dasgupta & Williams (2022). The government set up these committees as hybrids, containing the elected local council, and residents via neighbourhood meetings. Committees were given shares of UK development funds and deliberative meetings to address their own priorities. Soon a malfunctioning public distribution system plus state seizures of land contributed to government unpopularity, then mass violence, before a new government was installed and the committees were closed down.

Co-production of public services or urban design, for example, must accommodate linguistic diversity, different epistemic communities, and cultures (Durose & Richardson 2016; Nikulina et al. 2019; Hemström et al 2021). A weakness of deliberative events, then, is the accompanying depoliticising discourse (Machin 2023; Turnhout et al. 2020). A participant is expected to align their political opinions with what is considered rational, scientific, and the emerging consensus, rather than having their unique perspective from their lived experience valued and addressed. Turnhout et al. call for organisers, scientists and other elites involved to level power relations, and empower the participants to define their own role and goal. Others argue that this is impossible and that

deliberative democracy is an illusion, just maintaining existing power structures (Tippett & How 2020; Tormey 2015). Moreover, some critiques of citizen assemblies (and, by implication, other deliberative formats being reviewed here), argue that they have a problematic in-built assumption that consensus will emerge but that this is not always either possible or desirable, since minority voices should be recorded and not scripted out (e.g., Machin 2023).

Providing evidence of the impact from previous deliberative events can increase enthusiasm among residents (Tippett & How 2020). Some deliberative events use hands-on or visual approaches, like Ketso kits, to better accommodate those less keen on speaking publicly. To ensure fairness and transparency, deliberative events, including the selection of members, presentations, information packs, and votes, should be publicly available, like on a website. The event could even be livestreamed (Citizensassemblies.org 2018b).

The Impact of Deliberative Consultation Exercises

Wells et al. (2021) distinguish processes as either having a direct impact, as in recommendations being directly turned into policy, or an indirect impact, like influencing policymakers, participants and public views, promoting wider public debate, or stimulating greater public engagement. A mandate put forward in a deliberative event is more difficult to dismiss then that from, for example, a group of environmental campaigners. One possible recommendation from a deliberative process could be to offer a referendum on the topic at hand, garnering more legitimacy perhaps, by switching to direct democracy to involve all voters. This was done in the Irish citizens' assembly on abortion (Farrell et al. 2020).

Arnstein (1969) coined an 8-rung 'ladder of citizen participation.' The lowest rungs represent 'nonparticipation' (rungs 1-2), up to 'degrees of tokenism' (rungs 3-5), then at the top, 'degrees of citizen power' (rungs 6-8). This was recently modified to include forms of co-production at the upper end (Simon 2021). A strength of deliberative events is that they give citizens some level of power through their recommendations, fitting at least rung 6, 'partnership.' Meanwhile, the weakness of surveys and focus groups is that they risk fitting rung 5, 'placation.' Citizens are consulted but can simply be overruled. They have no power. 'Citizen control' is the eighth rung.

During the agenda setting stage of policy making, consultations might avoid legitimacy questions because they will not lead to specific policies. Getting in early means that the consultation may be more effective in steering policymaking, allowing more meaningful participation to those involved (Wells et al. 2021). Some deliberative events stress from the outset that the recommendations will

be merely advisory, not binding, to defuse tension, high stakes and high expectations (Citizensassemblies.org 2022). Participants can at least be guaranteed that their recommendations will be given full consideration by authorities. The strength of binding recommendations is that they will further encourage citizens and experts to participate (Citizensassemblies.org 2018b). The weakness is that the recommendations ultimately might not be desirable or practical to implement. Ignoring recommendations risks ruining public trust in deliberative democracy for years to come (Cabannes 2015).

Other risks include that politicians can champion consultations they have done, without the consultations actually revealing anything new (Wells et al. 2021). Furthermore, there can be pressure to concede, and to delegate decision-making to the consultation. Decision making is not often wholly devolved to the citizens. This is still deliberative and not direct democracy. Giving so much power to few unelected, unaccountable citizens could be considered undemocratic. Another risk is that panels can be set up merely to rubber stamp existing plans, especially if councils come under pressure to respond to a panel's recommendations, despite policy requiring far longer to be developed. It can take years before consultations bear policy. Plans, theoretically, could have been more ambitious than the maximum set by a deliberative event. Perhaps once a consultation puts out a target, there becomes less incentive for a council to be any bolder. Like most research and politics (Stockemer & Sundström 2022), current methods mostly involve only adults 18+ by default. This ignores younger people, who have to live with the impact of new policy decisions for far longer. Participants aged 16+ do not pose additional ethics requirements. Work with those younger just requires parental consent instead.

Conclusions

Participation in local governance is important for many reasons. Yet, turnout within established democracies remains low and unrepresentative. Local government officials have been searching for ways to improve engagement with their councils. Deliberative democracy, inviting citizens into the discussion of specific issues, offers a path forward, and could be used in combination with other forms of consultation e.g., surveys and focus groups, through the setting up of a Citizens Panel.

Several forms of consultation have been investigated, and their strengths and weaknesses identified through their key attributes; recruitment, structure, and then impact. A mixed-methods approach – using surveys or polls, focus groups and deliberative exercise - is optimal, to cancel out limitations of

each approach and retain the best of all worlds. The method used must complement the type of policy:

- The policy area covered and likely level of citizens' knowledge, and the *need* for local knowledge from the Council's perspective
- The relevance of the areas for a particular group of residents e.g., based on age, area, gender
- The stage of development of the policy (e.g., if it early in the process a deliberative consultation may be preferable, if it is near the end surveys is better advised)
- How the policy is to be resourced (residents will react differently to engagement about newly resourced initiatives as opposed to policies without new funding)
- The *need* for popular support (from the perspective of the Council) from the total population or particular sub-groups for successful implementation of a policy or initiative

As in this view, the literature review supports surveying a representative sample of residents to rigorously quantify public opinion, as well as using one of the qualitative methods to zoom in on specific demographics, for example, young people, to get more tailored and detailed responses.

The main differences found among the qualitative methods assessed here are the number of citizens involved, how long the event lasts, the direct monetary costs associated with each, and the indirect costs involved if long processes delay decisions and implementation of solutions. At one end of the spectrum, focus groups are small, quick, single sessions with little time for deliberation. On the other hand, planning cells involve up to 500 participants in robust deliberation over multiple days. Exactly how deliberative this element can be then, will likely ultimately depend on available funding.

Recommendations

The report has investigated various methods by which local authorities might consult with its citizens, with a focus on the strengths and weaknesses of surveys, focus groups and deliberative forms of consultation with regard to:

- how they are structured
- who is consulted and
- the impact those consultations have on Council policy

The efficiency and value of these different approaches are determined by several factors:

1. Complexity of the policy area

If residents are considered to have a generally low level of knowledge regarding the policy area on which the local authority wishes to consult, e.g., the creation of civic spaces, then deliberative forms of consultation will be optimal. If the policy area involves a less complex decision e.g., on whether to introduce controlled parking zones (CPZs) in residential areas, consultation might more easily be undertaken as a poll or survey to all residents in the area concerned (recognising that the results are likely to be skewed by age, level of education attainment etc.) or to all individuals on a more representative Citizens Panel (described above).

2. Relevance of the policy or issue to a particular group

In cases where an issue or decision is relevant to a particular demographic group e.g., young people, those with a disability, focus groups or a deliberative exercise (that could be recruited from the relevant component within a standing Citizens Panel) would be effective forms of consultation. This is especially the case where the consultation occurs at an early stage in the decision-making process, as this would provide local ideas and knowledge to inform policy and provide greater legitimacy. This would also be an appropriate first step for launching a co-design or co-production process (see main report).

3. Stage of development of the policy

The point at which citizens are consulted is absolutely critical to the process. If citizens are consulted early on and have a role in providing various policy options and/ or are informed about the feasibility of different options for the Council (e.g., through deliberative methods), they can help develop policies that are more informed (tested by citizens whose local knowledge would help the Council understand how policies might be refined or changed to improve implementation). Deliberative methods are more suited to early consultation and/or for launching a more substantive co-design or

co-production process (see main report), but they are also resource-intensive and may be subject to high levels of 'attrition' (citizens dropping out part of the way through the deliberative process). Alternatively, focus groups and surveys might be deployed at several points in time over the policy development process. Establishing a citizens' panel, jury or assembly (with clear benefits for participants) can be seen as a potential solution for maintaining citizen engagement over time.

4. How the policy is resourced

Where the policy areas are very tightly constrained by resources, it might seem optimal to consult the public on only a small range of options. However, this would leave the Council vulnerable to accusations of prejudging solutions that might not match residents' priorities or preferences. Another school of thought therefore holds that policy areas with particularly tight budgetary constraints are ripe for consultation. There is evidence to show that, in these circumstances, local knowledge can offer out-of-the-box solutions – through focus groups or deliberative exercises – that might, for example, provide alternative civil society solutions e.g., to the closure of a youth centre. On the other hand, residents are likely to have a more positive experience if they are invited to discuss or deliberate on how money is to be spent for a particular initiative to address a local problem. The panel could provide an excellent resource for recruiting residents for both purposes.

The sample focus groups (described in Annex 2) suggested that a number of themes regarding citizen engagement were important:

1. Communication: how the Council interacts with residents. Online forms of engagement and leafleting may seem more efficient but are often less popular. They allow only for a one-way flow of information and few genuine interactions. It is, therefore, suggested that the Council considers how priority policy issues could be communicated more directly to citizens with opportunities for genuine interactions (potentially by nominating and rewarding individuals on the Panel to actively inform others in their communities).

2. Knowledge: The communication dimension should be very carefully considered as focus group participants expressed a lack of knowledge about what the Council does (this is a very common response across the UK), what it could to, or what areas it is responsible for. The Council should consider partnering with various institutions in the Borough e.g., schools, Colleges, day care centres, to improve the current situation. A Citizens' Panel could function as a way to increase and spread knowledge about Council activities in the Borough.

3. Engagement: focus groups participants wanted the Council to address meaningful issues that had a bearing on citizens' everyday lives. Encouragingly, most participants were very willing to participate, if the participation were to be meaningful. This speaks to the engagement of citizens at an early stage in the policy development process. It should be noted that civic engagement tends to be habit-forming, so that if some citizens engage in a Panel that would be more likely to engage in other activities as well mobilise their friends to do the same.

The proposed structure of a potential Runnymede Borough Council Citizens' Panel has been set out in Annex 3. However, important decisions would also have to be made how to prioritise issues for consultation and the forms of consultation that would be most appropriate (depending upon the factors discussed above).

As the first order decision, we thus recommend that the following framework would be appropriate:

- A citizens' panel (or whichever version is preferred) to be set up with a broadly representative sample of around 1,000 residents (as discussed above).
- Bringing in partners at an early stage on a steering committee to help provide the expertise e.g., RHUL, and the outreach e.g., social institutions and local businesses.
- Intensive deliberative exercises to be (initially) focused on new policy initiatives with new resourcing – two or three per year with clear objectives and timelines.
- Focus groups to be undertaken 3-4 times per year with Panel members from a particular population cohort, e.g., students, social housing tenants, residents of a particular town or ward, who can help the Council address specific and pressing challenges (approximately 7 people per focus group, and 2-3 focus groups per issue).
- Surveys to be undertaken of the whole panel (approximately 4 times per year to maintain interest but prevent overload) to understand broader questions such citizens' priority issues or they behavioural preferences e.g., over environmental action.

Thereafter, **the essential second-order decision** is on who is to undertake the key tasks of

- recruiting and maintaining the membership of a citizens' panel, jury or assembly
- undertaking simpler, more limited forms of consultation, e.g., postal or telephone surveys

- the main panel consultations with the full borough or selected sub-populations identified by ward or other geographical area and/or demographic characteristics relevant to required decision, and
- small deliberative exercises, such as focus group discussions.

The principal options, all of which have different resource implications, are:

- run them all in-house by the Council (but note the points raised in the report and annexes about potential perceptions of bias or prejudgement, as well as resource implications)
- running postal and perhaps telephone surveys in-house and subcontracting or outsourcing the deliberative exercises
- outsourcing recruitment and maintenance of panel membership but running the consultations in-house
- outsourcing all aspects of panel recruitment and operation

In terms of subcontracting/outsourcing, the principal options are:

- one of the well-established and reputable commercial organisations with long and wide experience of operating phone or online consultations for diverse local authorities in this country, such as Ipsos MORI or Opinion Research Services (ORS)
- One of the newer, mainly online survey operators, some originating in the NGO/civil society sector, and which also have wide relevant experience but tend to specialise in certain thematic areas, such as climate change issues. This is a fast-evolving field but the current leaders in the UK include Citizenlab (https://www.citizenlab.co/), Commonplace (https://www.commonplace.is/citizen-engagement-platform) and EngagementHQ (https://go.engagementhq.com/). Others used mainly in North America include MySideWalk (https://www.mysidewalk.com/), PlaceSpeak (https://www.placespeak.com/en/), Rock Solid (into which CitySourced merged in 2019) (https://www.rocksolid.com/onelink). and Crowdbrite (https://www.crowdbrite.com/). Most of these websites have fairly short and helpful online demos; as with the more conventional providers, costs vary according to scale, frequency and the nature of consultations contracted – so detailed comparison would need to be undertaken in the light of decisions on these key parameters.

Since these decisions on the optimal combination of consultation mechanisms, extent of in-house versus subcontracted/outsourced operation, and specific outsourced provider are dependent on Council preferences, resources and how they might be leveraged through collaboration with other partners (e.g., with SCC who are already using ORS to initiate their citizens' panel), we make no

specific recommendations at this stage but would gladly engage in further discussions after the first-order decisions have been made. Fundamentally, it is essential that selected form of panel and each consultation are adequately resourced in terms of personnel if they are not to become self-defeating exercises.

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Annex 1

Relevant Local Examples of Deliberative Consultation

Key issues and procedures

The LGA provides a large number of different support services to help local governments conduct different forms of surveys and consultations and understand the satisfaction of their citizens as well as the issues that are important to them. This not only includes advice on how to decide what form of consultation is adequate for a specific purpose, but also guidance on issues such as the drawing and size of samples, the communication of results and the evaluation of the consultation process (Local Government Association 2023d; 2023e; 2023f; 2023g). The LGA's Consultation Check List, for example, gives an overview of the different stages of a consultation process and the aspects that should be kept in mind in the process (Local Government Association 2023c).

Citizen Panels (also called residents' or community panels) were successfully implemented as a form of consultation by a number of different councils as early as 1997 (see, Barnet Council 2023) and have provided invaluable insights into the public's opinions, ideas and needs in relation to the local area and the services provided by the council. This section introduces a variety of local examples and discusses where similarities can be found and where citizens' panels proved to be particularly successful in the past.

In the direct vicinity, Surrey County Council (SCC) is currently working on setting up a citizens' panel in order to better understand the views and ideas of residents regarding different issues of central importance, for example health and wellbeing and the local economy (Surrey County Council 2022). As a result, the Council hopes to be better able to target resources and develop services that correspond to the needs and priorities of the local population. The Council plans to run the panel online in order to minimise costs and enable rapid reporting on people's views. SCC is also explicitly reaching out to younger people, as this group is harder to engage in consultation exercises. While the panel will ultimately be run in-house, making use of already existing resources and without additional costs, SCC has commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to contact residents and invite them to join the panel (Surrey County Council 2022).

To rely on external social research agencies for recruiting potential members of the panel is not unusual (e.g., Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 2023; Surrey County Council 2022). In other instances, the selection and consultation processes are university-led (Global Centre on Healthcare and Urbanisation 2022). Georgia Gould, leader of Camden Council, has flagged the importance of

having an independent facilitator to ensure that the panel is perceived as impartial and independent (Gould & Sutcliffe-Braithwaite 2019, p. 46). Indeed, the role of the Council in the process should be communicated clearly and transparently. In Camden Council's Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Crisis, for example, the involvement of Council staff at various stages of the planning and delivery process was seen as problematic (Participedia 2023).

Citizens' panels generally seem to comprise around 1,000 members, although some panels can be considerably larger. For instance, the citizens' panels of the London Borough of Barnet and of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea comprise 2,000 members each (Barnet Council 2023; Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 2023). When panels comprise a specific sub-category of the local population, panel size can be much smaller. Examples can be found in Camden Council's Housing and Property Residents Panel, with 22 members (Camden Council 2023), or Tendring District Council's Tenants' Panel with a membership limit of 40 people (Tendring District Council 2015). In Oxford, the university-led Street Voice project aims at establishing a small-scale citizens' jury consisting of 16 residents from Headington and surrounding areas to consult them on questions about travelling in a climate-friendly and health-promoting way (Global Centre on Healthcare and Urbanisation 2022).

Concerning general citizens' panels, most councils implementing them subscribe to the idea of the panels being representative of the respective area. This includes both key demographics (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity, disability, etc.) and the different types of housing and wards lived in (see, for example, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council 2023; Guildford Borough Council 2023; Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 2023; Woking Borough Council 2023). Where the panel is focusing on specific issues, additional criteria can be applied. The citizens' jury in Oxford, for example, lists 'concern about climate change' among its criteria (Global Centre on Healthcare and Urbanisation 2022). In the majority of examples, those wanting to join the panel must be 18 years old or older (see, for example, Essex County Council 2021; Nottinghamshire County Council 2023; Surrey County Council 2022; Woking Borough Council 2023). Cardiff Council can be seen as an exemplary exception in this regard by having additionally installed the Children and Young People's Citizens' Panel (Cardiff Council 2023).

There is considerable diversity in relation to the renewal time of membership operated by various councils. Woking Borough Council, for example, allows active members potentially to serve indefinitely on the residents' panel, while non-response to two consecutive surveys will result in the council reaching out to check whether that specific citizen still wants to be a part of the panel (Woking Borough Council 2023). Cardiff Council 'refreshes' the council after five years (Cardiff

Council 2023) and Barnet Council 'continually refreshes' its citizens' panels membership (Barnet Council 2023). As reflected in the main report above, some councils, such as the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Woking Borough Council, also run incentive schemes consisting of price draws and/or charity contributions and travel costs for in-person events are generally reimbursed (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 2023; Woking Borough Council 2023).

Panel members are normally consulted a few times per year, predominantly through online or postal surveys, although most councils also include the possibility of occasionally conducting different forms of consultation, such as telephone or one-off-surveys, focus or discussion groups, workshops and forums (see, for example, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council 2023; Essex County Council 2021; Reading Borough Council 2023; Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 2023; Surrey Heath Borough Council 2023). Increasingly, this form of consultation relies on online tools. An example of this can be found in Reading Borough Council's online citizens' panel which has been running since 2017 (Reading Borough Council 2023).

According to the LGA, online engagement provides many advantages, such as cost-efficiency and the ability to reach a larger pool of people, but also comes with certain risks. It is likely that problems to access these online forms of engagement correlate with other factors, such as belonging to a vulnerable group or one less well connected to or comfortable using the internet. Relying solely on online solutions therefore runs the risk of those people ending up on the panel having similar underlying characteristics (Local Government Association 2019a, pp. 86-87). According to Georgia Gould, leader of Camden Council, online platforms can thus turn out to be "[...] another space for those who are already very involved to discuss" (Gould & Sutcliffe-Braithwaite 2019, p. 49). The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea tries to mitigate these risks by providing the option of offline participation through a paper survey (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 2023). In addition to that, according to Ipsos MORI (2021, p. 8), the assumption that online engagement can save money, often does not hold true in practice.

Specific purposes and applications of local government deliberative consultations

Different examples show how the panels give citizens the chance to influence decision-making processes in the council decisively. Reading Borough Council, for example, conducted a citizens' panel survey in November 2018, which showed that more than 50% of the respondents saw 'better roads and pavements' as one of their top priorities for improvement. The council responded to this result by initiating the biggest resurfacing programme it had ever undertaken (Reading Borough

Council 2020). In The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the citizens' panel was particularly successful in initiating changes regarding the borough's environmental policies. The changes resulting from the consultation of the panel included plans for the introduction of a new food waste collection, the planting of more wildflower areas and plans to set up an 'Environmental Coalition' comprising different stakeholders such as residents, community leaders but also key businesses and institution (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 2021). In the past, Guildford Borough Council has consulted its citizens' panel on topics such as community safety and engagement or the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (Guildford Borough Council 2023).

As indicated in the main report above, a recurring issue, however, is that the establishment of citizens' panels can be very resource intensive. Georgia Gould described how, on the one hand, it is very important to remunerate participants for their time in order to support them and show that their time and input are being valued (Gould & Sutcliffe-Braithwaite 2019, p. 44, 48). One the other, however, this requires resources and adds to the costs already caused by the administrative effort surrounding the establishment of a citizens' panel.

In an interview with a senior representative of Tandridge District Council, it became clear that resource intensiveness is one of the challenges which ultimately led the Council to abolish their citizens' panel. Additionally, it was stated that the Council did not have enough issues on which to consult the panel members more frequently than once per annum, which led to members forgetting that they were on the panel, non-responses and attrition. Consequently, new members had to be recruited that matched the 'lost' members in the respective demographics, which led to the need for additional resources. This led Tandridge District Council to give up on the citizens' panel and to return to postal surveys, which were described as the most cost-effective engagement mechanism.

Resources not only play a role in the initial establishment of the citizens' panel but also influence what the council can do in response to recommendations by the panel. It is therefore important for the council to be transparent about resource constraints and communicate this alongside other necessary information relating to the panel's scope, remit and terms of reference, both to the panel members themselves and to the wider population. This is vital for expectations management and will help panel members understand the matters discussed, the council's priorities and the actual process. In this regard, potential knowledge imbalances among both panel members and the wider population need to be taken into account.

By communicating these aspects clearly, Runnymede Borough Council's (RBC's) proposed citizens' panel provides the chance to include the local population in decision-making processes related to

the key competencies of the Council, such as household waste and recycling collection; home insulation and energy efficiency, town centre regeneration; green space and public amenities, blue-green infrastructure and the 'wicked challenge' of tackling climate change and promoting resilience. In its Empowering our Communities Strategy, RBC has declared seven priorities (Runnymede Borough Council 2022, p. 5). The points discussed above demonstrate that the first two – 'evidence-based decision making' and 'listening to our residents' – can be directly positively influenced by means of a clearly constituted and engaged citizens' panel.

To ensure that the citizens' panel lives up to its potential and does not disproportionally recruit those who are intrinsically motivated and easy to engage anyway, it is important that existing data on the demographic make-up of the borough are used to weight the membership of the panel appropriately (Local Government Association 2019a, pp. 76-77). Failure to do this would result in the panel potentially being unrepresentative and could lead to poor decisions and wasting valuable resources. According to the LGA, criteria that could be taken into consideration are age, ethnicity, gender and LGBTQIA+ status, disability, income, religion/faith and location (Local Government Association 2019a, pp. 76-77).

Annex 2

Sample Focus Groups to Gauge RBC Residents' Perceptions

In order to gauge perceptions about different consultative processes and mechanisms, a non-representative sample of four focus group discussions were conducted with different sets of residents and civil society organisations in and around Egham and Englefield Green. These were identified in an effort to include as diverse a set of demographic and related characteristics as practicable. The participants were first asked about their knowledge about Runnymede Borough Council, its responsibilities and activities. Subsequently, questions focused on whether participants had been asked for their opinion by the Council before, what forms those engagements took and what they were about. Participants were then briefly introduced to the Council's strategy and responsibilities. Building on this, the participants were then asked what areas and issues they were particularly interested in and what forms of engagement they would prefer.

Most participants described their *knowledge* about the Council and its activities as rather limited. This was the case across different age groups, apart from one focus groups with parents aged between 30 and 45, in which participants thought they knew quite a lot about what the Council does. When asked about the specific areas under the Council's responsibility, most participants could name at least a few topics. These included, for example, parking, rubbish collection, planning, community activities and local elections.

One central issue that came up in this context was that of *communication*. Most participants agreed that the Council does not successfully communicate what it is working on, what issues tax money is used for and who is responsible for different areas. Some participants additionally criticised that the information material given out by the Council is often not accessible for everyone. For example, bright leaflets, especially when they use bright coloured text on a different, but similarly bright coloured background is not readable for people with certain visual impairments.

When asked about whether they had been asked about their opinion by the Council before, only the minority of focus group participants affirmed that this had been the case. Most forms of *engagement* that were encountered, were one-off surveys, for example after filling out a tax-related document online or after a repair in council housing. Other participants described how they had engaged after receiving surveys and information by post. They were disappointed, however, that they did not get any response to their engagement. Most participants stated that they had never

been consulted by the Council. *One participant summarised that she spent her whole life – 96 years – in Egham and has not once been asked about her opinion.*

In terms of the potential topics on which participants would want to provide input, some could be described as *everyday issues*, such as parking and grass cutting. A second, large group of responses could be described as community activities and a feeling of 'togetherness'. This topic reached from the lack of community activities for children and high rents for non-for-profit organisations to the role of university students in the local community and to community-centred activities more broadly. Climate change and the environment particularly played a role for younger participants (i.e., students), especially in relation to the protection and maintenance of green spaces, but also in relation to the Council's activity in this area more broadly. Other participants were especially interested local issues related to this topic, such as rubbish, recycling, pollution and grass cutting.

In terms of the different forms of engagement, there did not seem to be a common denominator among the different participant categories. Most agreed that the appropriate form of engagement is context dependent, and that both in-person and online engagement options have their advantages and disadvantages. In addition to that, they also agreed that surveys work better for some topics, while a more in-depth engagement and personal contact is more important for others. Regarding the different forms of surveys available, online surveys seem to be the preferred option for most, albeit not all, participants. Older participants agreed that while they understand that 'online is just how it is today', this would hinder them from participating. Telephone surveys were often seen as putting pressure on the participants and not leaving enough time to think about the question, while postal surveys were often perceived as problematic especially for illiterate residents or those with visual impairments. While some participants favoured online engagement options due to their flexibility and accessibility, others criticised them as impersonal and harder to access for some.

In general, all participants showed a high willingness to participate both in surveys and more in-depth exercises, such as focus groups, workshops or forums. They were keen to hear more from the Council, have a better knowledge of where their taxes are going and engage with other residents. By some, however, online and postal surveys in the past were seen as a token exercise and those residents felt like the decision had already been made before they were consulted, rendering their participation meaningless. This made them conclude that their time was spent better on other things. Others repeatedly asked about the effect of their participation, i.e., they were wondering if it would actually influence the decisions made by the Council. To summarise, *most participants were very willing to participate, but were also very keen on their participation being meaningful.*

Annex 3

Local Demographic Characteristics and Suggestions for the RBC Recruitment Process

From the existing literature and local examples of consultation, it can be deduced that a citizens' panel or assembly should reflect the demographic makeup of the broader population it is representing to ensure that minority groups are adequately represented, and existing biases are not reinforced. When looking at the proposed panel size of 900 individuals for Runnymede Borough Council, this means that the 2021 Census data can give a good indication of how the citizens' panel should be structured. Detailed ward-level data are contained in the *Local Insight* policy briefs from the 2021 Census for Surrey County Council by Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) (https://local.communityinsight.org/) in the possession of RBC. These provide invaluable insights for all ward councillors as well as officials.

According to these data, achieving gender parity should be the first goal when recruiting panel members. One noteworthy limitation of the ONS data is the absence of information on non-binary gender identity. Unless the gap can be filled from other sources, this could inhibit the ability to address issues affecting LGBTQI+ groups.

The Council should also take into account the age distribution in the borough. As more than a quarter of all residents fall into the 20-40 age category, for example, the panel should comprise at least 25% of members of this group. More than 15% of the population is aged 65 and over, so it would be advisable that this is also considered in the recruitment process.

As over 15% of the population is non-white, the panel should be made up of at least 15% of non-white residents. In addition to that, 20% of the residents in Runnymede were not born in the UK. These aspects should be considered alongside other characteristics, such as the proportion of people considered disabled under the Equality Act (15%) and the proportions of the different religions present in the borough, when recruiting members.

Additionally, the Council should also take into account the different socio-economic circumstances present among the population. It should also be taken into consideration that more than 45% of the households in Runnymede are deprived in at least one dimension. Nonetheless, more than two thirds of the residents own their house outright or with a mortgage, loan or shared ownership. These dynamics should be considered during the recruitment process. Additionally, as 12.9% of Runnymede's residents are social tenants and 8% live in property rented from the Council, they

should be adequately represented in the panel. A minimum of 10% of social tenants among the members of the citizens' panel could be imagined.

To ensure equal representation of the different wards and an appropriate geographical spread, it would be advisable that at least 45 people (5%) are recruited from each ward. Another aspect that should be taken into consideration in this regard, especially concerning specific ward-focused consultations, are the particularities of the different wards. Thorpe, for example, is home to the largest proportion of older residents (aged 65 and over) (approx. 25 %). In Virginia Water, the proportion of people born outside the UK is about 10 percentage points higher than the average for Runnymede (above 30% rather than around 20%).

The demographic makeup of Egham Town, Englefield Green East, and Englefield Green West is decidedly impacted by Royal Holloway (RHUL) being located in the area. While the influence is most pronounced in Englefield Green East, the other two wards are also influenced by it. This is not only reflected in a high proportion of full-time students (27.9 %, 63.7 % and 32.4% respectively, compared to the Runnymede average of 13.4%) and the correspondingly increased proportion of people aged between 15 and 24 (27.3%, 58.5% and 31.4 %), but also in a higher rate of those living in privately rented property (36.0%, 32.3% and 28.4%). Additionally, in Englefield Green, a higher rate of non-white residents (28.1% compared to 16.5%), especially those of Asian descent (17.2% compared to the average of 9.2%) can be found.

The proportion of social tenants is significantly higher than the average for Runnymede (12.9%) in Chertsey St. Ann's (21%; 15.7% rented from Council) and Egham Hythe (23.7%; 18.0% rented from Council) and more than double in Englefield Green West (27.8%; 16.3% rented from Council). The proportion of those owning their property outright is significantly greater than the Runnymede average of 32.8% in Thorpe (52.2%), Virginia Water (40.8%) and Woodham and Rowtown (44.0%), while these wards also have the highest mean property values (£653,679; £2,261,383; £598,293) and percentages of properties in the highest Council Tax bands (32.9%; 60.1%; 34.6%).

Councillor IT Hardware Refresh
(Linda Norman, Customer, Digital & Collection Services)

Synopsis of report:

Runnymede provides councillors with IT devices to help them fulfil their roles and responsibilities in the community.

This paper summarizes the feedback received from the councillor IT device survey and recommends next steps for the future device replacement cycle.

Recommendation(s):
The Corporate Management Committee are asked to:

1. **Note the findings and outcome of the Members survey on IT devices as outlined in Appendix A.**

2. **Approve the recommendation to begin procurement and rollout of replacement IT devices in early 2024. This will allow us to deploy new devices following the May 2024 elections.**

3. **Approve the recommendation to extend the replacement cycle for councillor IT devices from four years to a minimum of six years. Devices may be replaced sooner if they are lost, stolen, or beyond economic repair.**

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1. **Background**

1.1. In 2019 Councillors for the first time were provided the same device as part of an effort to rationalise and improve IT support for Runnymede Councillors.

1.2. At the time Microsoft Surface Pros were procured and rolled out and in the main this approach has been successful.

1.3. Four years on, technology has evolved and so has the way that Digital Services support devices across our organisation.

1.4. Cyber security has become a priority for any organisation and therefore we must ensure end user devices are fit for purpose and fully protected with the latest security patches as soon as practicable.

1.5. An IT device survey was sent to all Councillors to get feedback on the current device and any future requirements.

1.6. A total of 16 Councillors responded to the survey which was open from the 24th February 2023 to 5th March 2023.

1.7. A high-level summary of findings:

   Device usage
   Most councillors use their devices daily or monthly. The most common uses for devices are viewing committee meeting papers, viewing and writing emails, and scheduling appointments.

Device preferences

Councillors would like devices that are simpler to use, have better access to part two papers, and provide additional support and training. The number one priority for a replacement device is a bigger screen, followed by a touch screen and full size keyboard.

Appendix A includes the full breakdown of questions and answers.

1.8.   In addition to the survey results Digital Services also received direct feedback via email, summarised below.

Device replacement: Councillors are divided on the need to replace devices. Some councillors feel that there is no need to replace devices unless they are broken or outdated. Others feel that it is better to replace devices every 5-6 years, even if they are still working, to ensure that they are up-to-date and secure.

Environmental and cost benefits: Replacing devices every 5-6 years has both environmental and cost benefits. Councillors have feedback that it can help to reduce the amount of electronic waste that is sent to landfills, and it can also help to save the council money on device repairs and replacements.

Councillor satisfaction: Some Councillors are happy with their current devices and would be reluctant to support a replacement device. Others are open to a new device, but would like to have a say in the selection process.

2. Proposed action and next steps

2.1.   The council has taken on board the feedback from Councillors on device usage and preferences. The council understands that Councillors need devices that are easy to use, secure, and have good support. The council also understands that it is important to strike a balance between the needs of Councillors, the environmental benefits of device replacement, and the cost of device replacements in the future.

2.2.   Taking onboard Cllr feedback, budget pressures and the Council's commitment to tackling climate change, it is recommended to refocus the Cllr device refresh to an ad hoc programme driven by need rather than time scale.

2.3.   If agreed by CMC, Councillor devices will be replaced at a minimum of every six years, or before if the device is lost, stolen or damaged and cannot be repaired by the manufacturer.

2.4.   Councillor devices will continue to be returned and reallocated to new Councillors post elections where the device is still available and in good working order.

2.5.   It is recommended to progress the procurement and implementation of new Councillor laptops in early 2024 to enable this new approach to be adopted and embedded.

2.6.   The council needs to progress the replacement of Councillor devices in 2024 for the following reasons:

- To provide remote access, so Councillors can be supported from any location reducing the need for Councillors to drop their devices into the Civic Centre.
- Ability to sync device with wider security and policy patches using Microsoft Intune.

- Improve security by using TPM (Trusted Platform Module) version 2.0 to improve the security of the devices. This will help to protect the devices from malware and other security threats.
- Ability to extend the life of the devices by being able to upgrade RAM, Hard drives, batteries and screens in house extending the life of devices where needed.
- Moving to standard laptops will be straightforward to maintain and support by Digital Services .

2.7.   It is recommended to procure devices consistent with Manufacturer and Specification of Officer roll:
- HP Laptops with convertible touch screen
- 13.3 inch touch screen
- Full size keypad
- HP track pad (mouse)
- Smart Pen
- Laptop sleeve
- Extended Warranty

3. Resource implications

3.1.   £40,000 has been allocated within the Council's Capital programme for the procurement of replacement Councillor IT devices (£30k) and peripherals (£10k). This includes reasonable adjustments and potential additional costs to meet equality requirements.

3.2.   We are allocating a unit cost of £650 per new device, procuring a total of 45 devices with extended warranty. Due to the volume of devices being ordered we hope to secure a good discount throughout an open tender procurement process.

3.3.   Microsoft licensing for Councillors is already budgeted for in our annual corporate license count and renewal, no additional revenue is required as a result of this proposal.

4. Legal implications

4.1.   The council propose to procure the new laptops for Councillors following an open tender process in accordance with Contract Standing Orders. The contract opportunity will be advertised on Contracts Finder and all interested suppliers will be invited to submit a tender. The council will then assess the tenders and select the supplier that offers the best value for money.

5. Equality implications

5.1.   The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010. Section 149 of the Act provides that we must have due regard to the need to;
   5.1.1.1.   eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
   5.1.1.2.   to advance equality of opportunity;
   5.1.1.3.   foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share protected characteristic

5.2.   An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken for this procurement exercise. Feedback has been received from Councillors that they would benefit from larger screens and full-size keyboards to make using the devices easier and more

comfortable. This feedback has been taken on board, the new devices will have both these requested features.

5.3.	It is anticipated that the new IT devices will have the required capacity and tools to deliver the Council's equality and diversity objectives.

6. Environmental implications

6.1.	**Increase device life span**
The council will increase the life span of councillor devices from 4 years to 6 years. This will be done by moving to a laptop model, which allows for in-house repairs and replacements of batteries, screens, RAM, and hard drives.

6.2.	**Remote support**
Moving to laptops will also allow for remote support from Digital Services, which will reduce the need for councillors to visit the civic centre for support. This will save time and reduce carbon emissions.

6.3.	**Larger screens**
Laptops with larger screens will make it easier for councillors to view large volumes of papers, which will support the council's goal of having paperless meetings.

6.4.	**Community and digital inclusion**
Old Microsoft Surface Pro devices and future devices will be reset to factory settings and reprofiled for future community work. This will support the council's corporate business plan by repurposing old assets, reducing IT equipment waste, and providing devices for much needed digital inclusion work in the community.

6.5.	**Damaged devices**
Damaged devices will be disposed of through the council's asset disposal company, Stone Group. Devices are recycled in accordance with the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations.

7. Conclusion

7.1.	In conclusion, this paper recommends to CMC that the council should refocus its Councillor device refresh program to an ad hoc program driven by need rather than time scale.

7.2.	Councillors have expressed a preference for a more flexible approach to device refresh, with devices being replaced when they are needed rather than on a fixed schedule.

7.3.	The council is facing budget pressures, and a more flexible approach to device refresh would help to reduce our replacement costs.

7.4.	Finally, the council is committed to tackling climate change, and a more flexible approach to device refresh would help to reduce the environmental impact of device procurement and disposal.
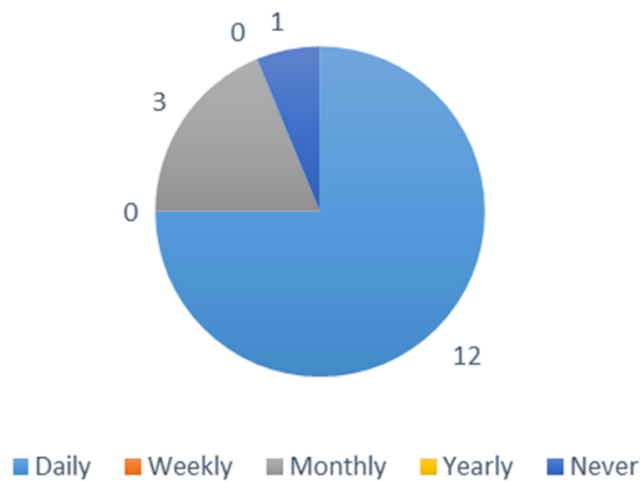
(To resolve)

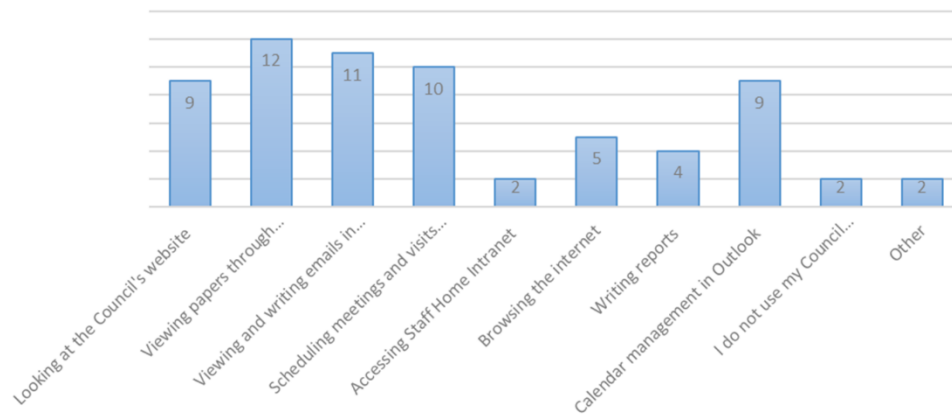**Background papers**

None

Appendix A – Councillor IT Device Survey Results

Q1. How often do you use your Council provided device?

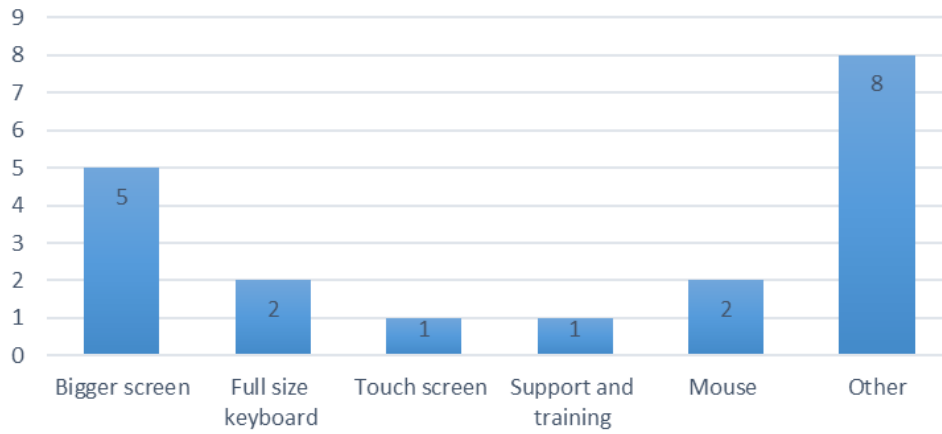**Q2. What do you use your IT device for?**

Q3. How often do you use your IT device at Council meetings?
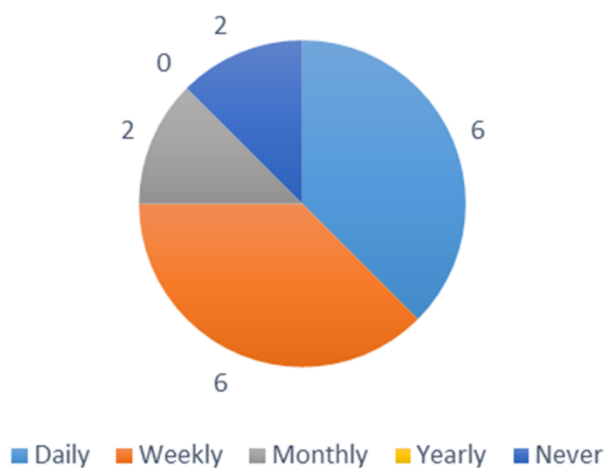
Q4. What would help you use your device more at Council meetings?

Q5. Rank the device features most important to you in a new Councillor device

1	Bigger screen	
2	Touch screen	
3	Full size keyboard	
4	Mouse	
5	Smart pen	

**Annual Appointments to Outside Bodies (Law and Governance –
Carol Holehouse)**

Synopsis of Report:
This report updates the Committee on nominations received during the 3rd round of nominations for outside bodies due for renewal this year.

Recommendations:
i) **The Committee considers the further nominations received and makes appointments; and**
ii) **No further nomination rounds be undertaken in this Municipal year**

1.   Context and background of report

1.1   In accordance with the procedure for appointments to outside bodies agreed at the meeting of the Corporate Management Committee held on 20th January 2022 and adopted in the Council's Constitution nominations for such appointments are set out in this report. The report attached at Appendix 'A' lists all the appointments to the remaining outside bodies due for renewal this municipal year and nominations received during this nomination round. Voting on appointments will be by a show of hands and no debate or new nominations are allowed at this stage.

1.2   After Officers running 3 rounds of nominations there are still some outside bodies where no nominations have been received. Officers recommend that no further nominations rounds be undertaken, and Officers will advise affected outside bodies accordingly.

1.3   For the assistance of Members, Officers have been able to categorise the nature of each body listed for appointment in Appendix 'A' as follows:

A: These bodies are internal Council bodies or are formal joint Committees or joint working groups set up with other authorities. Members serve on them as Council Members and as far as liability is concerned are covered by the Council's insurances.

B: These bodies are independent of the Council but are advisory or consultative and appointees have a representative function rather than an executive one. The purpose of the appointment is to speak on behalf of Runnymede Borough Council. Appointees should not find themselves participating in any act which incurs legal liabilities.

C: These bodies are independent outside bodies, and the appointees are placed there to act as Trustees, members of the Management Committee, or some similar role. They are not there to act as Council representatives but to use their judgement in the best interests of the body if it is a Charity. In many cases, while acting on the outside body, appointees will be under a positive legal duty to act in its best interests rather than those of the Council. Council insurance does not

cover them, but **Members of the Council are currently covered by an indemnity** when appointed by the Council, which the Council has agreed to provide. Appointees who are not Members of the Council, however, are not covered by the Council's indemnity.

4.   For each appointment in Appendix 'A', whether the person appointed must be, should preferably be, or need not be a Member of the Council, is denoted by the use of asterisks as follows:

1)   *   Denotes person <u>MUST</u> be a Member of the Council

2)   **   Denotes person appointed should preferably be a Member of the Council

3)   ***   Denotes person appointed need not be a Member of the Council.

(To resolve)

Background Papers

None

RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL
REMAINING EXTERNAL APPOINTMENTS DUE TO BE MADE IN 2023
3rd Round

NAME OF ORGANISATION/TYPE OF REPRESENTATION	DURATION OF APPOINTMENT	CURRENT REPRESENTATIVE(S)	ACTION NEEDED	NOMINATIONS RECEIVED
BASINGSTOKE CANAL JMC ***A: must be a Member of the Council** **Number of meetings per annum: 3 Frequency: Every 4 Months Time: Usually mornings Venue: Basingstoke Canal Centre, Mytchett Canal Centre**	1 YEAR	None	1 Councillor representative as **Member** to be appointed 1 Councillor representative as **Deputy** to be appointed	Cllr S Ringham has submitted a nomination form for the Member position Cllr S Lewis has submitted a nomination form for the Member position Cllr M Smith has submitted a nomination form for the Deputy position
COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP *** B Member Appointment Note:** It would be logical to suggest that the same person should also be the person whom the Council has appointed to be the representative on the Surrey Police and Crime Panel and possibly who will also serve on the Crime and Disorder Committee. Additionally, one Councillor representative must sit on the Community Services Committee **Number of meetings per annum: 4 Frequency: Quarterly Time: Daytime Venue: On MS Teams**	1 YEAR	None	1 Councillor representative as **Member** to be appointed, desirable to be a member of Community Services Committee or Crime & Disorder Committee.	Cllr T Burton has submitted a nomination form Cllr A Balkan has submitted a nomination form

NAME OF ORGANISATION/TYPE OF REPRESENTATION	DURATION OF APPOINTMENT	CURRENT REPRESENTATIVE(S)	ACTION NEEDED	NOMINATIONS RECEIVED
EGHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE *** C** **Management Committee role: Must be a Member of the Council** **Number of meetings per annum: 10** **Frequency: 3rd Wed. of Month (exc. August and December)** **Time: Daytime – Noon to 1pm** **Venue: High Street, Egham**	1 YEAR	Councillor A Balkan (Member)	1 Councillor representative as **Deputy** to be appointed	<mark>Cllr M Harnden</mark> has submitted a nomination form for the Deputy position
EGHAM UNITED CHARITY *****C Community Representative, either Member or Non Member** **Number of meetings per annum: 10, 5/6 weekly** **Time: 7.30pm** **Venue: United Reform Church, Egham**	4 YEARS	Mr H Shah (until 2027) Mrs D Brickell (until 2025) Mrs J Reynolds (until 2024)	<u>1 representative to be appointed by the charity – no action required</u>	
NOISE AND AIRSPACE COMMUNITY FORUM (NACF) ***B Councillor Representative** *****B Community Representative** **Number, frequency, time and venue of meetings not known**	1 YEAR	Councillor C Howorth (Member)	1 Councillor representative as **Deputy** to be appointed	
NAME OF ORGANISATION/TYPE OF REPRESENTATION	**DURATION OF APPOINTMENT**	**CURRENT REPRESENTATIVE(S)**	**ACTION NEEDED**	**NOMINATIONS RECEIVED**

NAME OF ORGANISATION/TYPE OF REPRESENTATION	DURATION OF APPOINTMENT	CURRENT REPRESENTATIVE(S)	ACTION NEEDED	NOMINATIONS RECEIVED
RUNNYMEDE OPEN AWARDS CENTRE – FORMALLY DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD *** B Advisory/consultative role. Need not be a Member of the Council	1 YEAR	Councillor S Walsh (Member)	1 Councillor representative as **Deputy** to be appointed	
SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS * B Representative role: Must be a Member of the Council **Meetings: Quarterly** **Venue: Engineering Employers' Federation, Broadway House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NQ** Appointments to the SEEC Executive are made each year at the AGM, seats on the Executive are allocated based on political template.	1 YEAR	None	2 Councillor representative to be appointed. One as **Member** and One as **Deputy** *(Normally the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council)*	Cllr T Gracey has submitted a nomination form for the Member position

STAINES SHOPMOBILITY *** B Representative function: Must be a Member of the Council** **Number of meetings per annum: 10-12** **Frequency: Ad hoc – roughly every 5 weeks** **Time: Daytime** **Venue: Spelthorne Borough Council Offices**	1 YEAR	Councillor M Harnden (Member)	1 Councillor representative as **<u>Deputy</u>** to be appointed	
SUSTAINABLITY AND TRANSFORMATION PLAN STAKEHOLDER REFERENCE GROUP *** C Consultative/Trustee role: Must be a Member of the Council**	3 YEARS	Councillor T Burton (Member)	1 Councillor representative as **<u>Deputy</u>** to be appointed ***To note: This group may no longer exist. Officers are currently trying to ascertain the position. When more information is available a Deputy may be sought- currently no further action required***	
THAMES BASIN HEATH SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD *** C Note: Member Representative MUST have Planning Committee experience** **Number of meetings per annum: Ad-hoc – (3 max.)** **Frequency: As necessary** **Time: Daytime** **Venue: Throughout Surrey but predominantly at Surrey Heath**	1 YEAR	Councillor S Whyte (Member)	1 Councillor representative as **<u>Deputy</u>** to be appointed ***Note***: must have planning experience	

VIRGINIA WATER COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION *** B** **Council representative function** **Number of meetings per annum: AGM (1)** **Frequency: Annual** **Time: 8pm** **Venue: Virginia Water Community Centre**	1 YEAR	None	2 **Virginia Water Ward** Councillors to be appointed	

Social Media House Rules (Communications, Peter Le Riche)

Synopsis of report:

The number of followers of the Council's social media channels have grown considerably during the past year. A set of house rules is required to bring a level of control to how the Council deals with unacceptable comments and behaviour by members of the public. This also sets out the standards which the public can expect of the Council's Communications Team when engaging with them via the corporate profiles.

Recommendation(s):

(i)The committee approves the adoption of a set of house rules (appendix A), including that the Council values freedom of speech, and supports the reasons why in a very small number of cases comments may be deleted and users blocked.

(ii)The committee delegate authority to the Head of Public Relations and Marketing and staff he may delegate to authority to make decisions on the application of the house rules on a day-to-day basis as required.

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1. **Context and background of report**

1.1 Members of the public who have social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Linkedin and Nextdoor (the platforms) are able to comment on the Council's posts on its social media accounts. The Council's accounts are open to all to view and therefore people do not have to 'follow' or be approved the Communications Team, which is responsible for the Council's social media activity.

1.2 Comments are usually posted underneath a post published by the Council and the public can write anything they wish to, which can then be read by anyone else viewing the post.

1.3 The number of followers on all four core platforms has grown considerably during the past year thanks to a concerted effort by the Communications Team. Therefore, it is now appropriate to publish a set of house rules. These rules make clear how the Council's Communications staff will behave when posting (polite, factual etc) and the team's expectations of the public (polite, staying on topic etc).

1.4 The existence of house rules is common in the sphere of social media platform management. They provide a framework for managing online behaviour and language including comments which may be offensive or libellous. Posts and people who do not meet the rules can then be managed or blocked in accordance with approved rules rather than purely on the basis of a staff member's opinion.

2. **Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended**

2.1 Primarily house rules exist to encourage sensible and fair behaviour among the public and in their comments. They also set out how the Communications Team would deal with serious or repeated breaches.

2.2   The rules exist to make the Council's social media profiles a place where anyone can give their view without being ridiculed or abused. It is also important that posts published by the Council can add value to local life through explaining its work and decisions without being enveloped in unnecessary argument, rhetoric or other forms of negative social media tactics.

2.3   The Council values freedom of speech and the house rules are therefore 'light touch', allowing people to comment in almost any way they wish. As a public body the Council accepts criticism and the fact that the public are entitled to give their view on its services and decisions. On that basis negative or critical comments relevant to the post and made sensibly would never be removed. However, the Communications Team also believes that while some people use social media to complain, most generally follow the Council's accounts to find out what the authority is doing, rather than to hear other people's views. The ease of access for these people should be the priority.

2.4   There is no rule under which the Council would delete negative comments per se, as long as those comments are related to the post they appear next to, are expressed sensibly, are proportionate (ie not repeated many times) and use non-offensive language. For several years now, the Communications Team has taken a very relaxed approach in this area, with wide-ranging debate allowed to take place. It is expected this will continue.

2.5   The rules will be employed as a last resort, where there are repeated or significant breaches.

2.6   The options open to the Communications Team to deal with breaches of the house rules are to delete posts or in very rare cases, to block users. Blocking means that an individual user will no longer be able to comment on posts by the Council on that specific platform. However on some platforms it is still possible for a person to view the Council's posts without being logged in to the platform. For blocked users who cannot see the Council's posts, other social media platforms remain available, and the Council's website, news stories, newsletters and other forms of communication continue to be open to them.

2.7   There is no right of appeal against deleted posts (it is possible that a similar version of the post which does not breach the rules could be reposted).

2.8   Where a user is blocked, that user may appeal to the Corporate Head of Law and Governance, who will review the decision with the Head of Public Relations and Marketing.

2.9   The Communications Team has carried out research among other councils to create rules which are broadly in common with wider local government social media use.

Among councils reviewed are:
Elmbridge Borough Council
Surrey County Council
Birmingham City Council
Wokingham Borough Council
Glasgow City Council

3. **Policy framework implications**

3.1   The creation of house rules form part of the Communications Team's service area plan commitment to create a social media strategy and policy.

4. **Legal implications**

4.1   As indicated in the body of the report the use of social media is something which can promote the exchange of information and ideas. Whilst undertaken electronically, so to speak, it is still a printed medium. Inappropriate comments could still result in legal proceedings. The use of house rules will enable the Council to promote the use of social media whilst ensuring it does not cause offence or cross the boundary between what is lawful and what is unlawful.

5. **Timetable for Implementation**

5.1   If the committee approves the house rules, they will be published on the Council's website, and shared across all social media channels during the two weeks after the committee meeting. They will be implemented at the end of that two-week period.

(To Resolve)

Background Papers
None stated

Runnymede Borough Council

Social Media House Rules

July 2023

House Rules for social media users

The Council's social media channels will feature a variety of information from our services and partners, keeping residents and the public informed and up to date with what the authority is doing.

The Communications Team is here to help and inform and provide information about what the Council is doing and we will do so politely and professionally. We expect users to offer us the same level of courtesy that we offer them. We want our social media channels to be a place for healthy, open, and insightful discussion and information sharing, which is why we have a short set of house rules.

All users must comply with the social media platform's terms of use as well as our own terms of use (scroll down to read in full).

We value feedback and constructive criticism about all Council services. Feel free to share your thoughts respectfully but we will remove comments which we see and believe are:

- Abusive or obscene.
- Deceptive or misleading.
- In violation of any intellectual property rights, including copyright.
- In violation of any law or regulation.
- Spam and off-topic content including persistent negative and/or abusive comments.
- Promotional material, including links to external websites and promotion.
- Comments which label an individual or group of people in a derogatory way.
- Comments which are not appropriate under the Equality Act 2010 including the protected characteristics.
- Comments which are political in their nature or which are critical of national political parties and seek to connect these to local politics.

If you want to make a complaint about something that you read on social media, the way to do so is through the Council's formal complaints process. Remember, social media is just the messenger.

This is what we promise we will do:

1. We will confirm it's us - if you see a corporate Runnymede Borough Council account online you can check it's us, we have listed our social media accounts below:
   - Twitter: @RunnymedeBC
   - Facebook: Runnymede Borough Council
   - LinkedIn: Runnymede Borough Council
   - Nextdoor: Runnymede Borough Council
2. We will listen - we will read all messages and look to flag-up problems users identify with the most relevant part of the organisation.
3. We will say when we'll be active on each account - we will not be online 24-hours a day, but we will say when we will be online on each social media account we use.
4. We will be human and polite.

5. We will follow people where we can - but this doesn't mean endorse.
6. We will publish content which is factually accurate and not politically motivated.

Our aim is to create a space that is relevant and valuable to our community. Our social media team will evaluate situations and take appropriate action if necessary if we become aware of them.

We must remain politically neutral at all times which is why Council officers are unable to reply to, endorse or engage with, any content that is of a party-political nature. If you wish to discuss political issues, please contact your local councillor, details here.

Below are our full terms of use, which are the terms you agree to when interacting with the Council on social media.

Breaches of our terms of use may result in users being blocked from our social media platforms.

Terms of use

1. Be respectful: Treat all users with respect and courtesy, regardless of their opinions or beliefs. Differing views on a topic the Council has posted about are acceptable when expressed sensibly.
2. No hate speech: Do not engage in or tolerate any form of hate speech, including discriminatory or offensive comments about race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation or other protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010
3. No spamming or posting repetitive content. Engage in meaningful conversations instead.
4. Maintain privacy: Respect the privacy of our staff and residents. Do not share personal information or engage in doxing (publishing personal information with a malicious purpose).
5. Our staff are doing their jobs, usually working to set policies or processes. You may disagree with what they do, but it is not appropriate to photograph or name them without permission and publish these details on social media.
6. No conspiracy theories, misinformation, or speculation: Do not spread or promote conspiracy theories, false information, irrelevant theories, or baseless speculation about our staff, actions, or operations.
7. No comments that don't add value to the discussion: Please refrain from making comments that do not contribute meaningfully to the ongoing discussion.
8. Ensure that your comments are relevant to the content of the post and the topic being discussed.
9. Keep the conversation focused on matters directly related to the council and its work.
10. Avoid discussions or comments that are solely focused on national politics.
11. Use appropriate language: Avoid the use of offensive, vulgar, or inappropriate language in your interactions.

Any accounts repeatedly engaging with us using content or language which falls into the above categories will be blocked and/or reported to the associated social media platform. We also reserve the right to contact the police, and we may keep screenshots of abusive messages on file. We will not tolerate or respond to abusive messages.

Remember, you are wholly responsible for any content you post including content that you choose to share, and you are solely responsible for maintaining the security of your own account. If necessary, the account owner will be held liable for the actions of their account.

If you have any questions about our social media, please email communications@runnymede.gov.uk.

Blocking

Blocking means that a person's social media account will be prevented from viewing or commenting on the Council's posts on the social media platform where they have been blocked.

Other forms of communication remain open to individuals who are blocked, such as other social media platforms, enewsletters, the website and news articles.

The Constitution – ANNEX 1 Procedure On Receipt Of A Complaint

We will treat vexatious complaints or comments according to our Constitution, which states:

Residents complaints will not be accepted if the complaint is malicious, trivial, politically motivated or 'tit-for-tat'; or if the Complainant is unreasonably persistent, malicious and/or vexatious. There is no right of appeal against the Monitoring Officer's decision.

For all information contained within this document contact:

Runnymede Borough Council
The Civic Centre
Station Road
Addlestone
Surrey KT15 2AH

Tel 01932 838383

email: communications@runnymede.gov.uk

www.runnymede.gov.uk

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Runnymede
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Urgent Action – Standing Order 42

A copy of proformas 1,023 and 1,025 detailing action taken after consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee are both enclosed.

1,023 – Household Support Fund Policy Tranche 4
1,025 – Temporary Graduate Climate Change Officer

(For information)

Background Papers

None

Standing Order 42

Consultation with Appropriate Chairman and Vice-Chairman for Urgent Action to be Taken Under Standing Order 42

To (Chair & Vice Chair):	Councillors Tom Gracey & Chris Howorth
Relevant Committee:	Corporate Management Committee
Date:	June 2023
Report Author:	Ed Bowen
Report Title:	Household Support Fund Policy Tranche 4
SO42 Proforma Number:	1023

1.   Synopsis of report

To create and implement a policy to administer the next tranche of Household Support Fund which will support the Borough's most vulnerable residents during the current cost of living crisis within the guidance laid down by central government and Surrey CC.

2.   Reasons why this matter cannot wait for a Committee Decision.
(Please state if agreement of Chairman and Vice-Chairman required within 24 hours, and why)

On 17 November 2022 in the Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced, as part of a number of measures to provide help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living, that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 with a further £842m of funding.

The funding has gone to Upper Tier Authorities and there has been a delay in receiving the allocation whilst County considered how best to target the monies.

Runnymede's share of the Fund is £326,504 and covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. It is not ring-fenced to any particular group but Local Authorities are expected to especially consider how they can support households with the cost of energy crisis. The Government also expect an application process for some of the funding to give residents the opportunity to come forward and ask for support.

It is therefore important to create a local policy to support our vulnerable residents and ensure they are not adversely affected whilst the Council goes through the democratic process of approving this policy.

3.   Recommendation(s)

To approve Runnymede's Housing Support Fund (Tranche 4) policy and for officers to start administering the scheme as quickly as possible, working with partner organisations to facilitate an efficient and effective process.

4. Context of report

The expectation is that the Household Support Fund should be used to support households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need and who require crisis support. This includes the Cost-of-Living payments and the energy support for 2023/24 set out on 17 November 2022.

For the Cost-of-Living payments this may include, but is not limited to, people who are entitled to but not claiming qualifying benefits, people who are claiming Housing Benefit (HB) only and people who begin a claim or return to payment of a benefit after the relevant qualifying date. There may be groups who are vulnerable to rising prices even though they are supported through these schemes, for example large families or single-income families. It is important to stress that the Household Support Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low-income households in need including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people and so Local Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the guidance set out by Central Government.

The Government expects councils to create local policies that support vulnerable households and can be provided as soon as is practically possible. Councils should work collaboratively with other organisations in their area who may encounter those households who are eligible and would benefit from this grant.

As the fund will be distributed in four tranches, the scheme will change to meet the seasonal demand for fuel during the colder winter months and where possible to react to changes in the cost of living crisis.

5. Report and, where applicable, options considered

Vulnerable households across Runnymede will be able to access the support fund to help them with essentials over the coming months as the country continues struggle with the cost-of-living crisis. Payment is made under Section 31 Local Government Finance Act 2003. Runnymede Borough Council has been allocated £326,504 to support families who have been adversely impacted.

Powers have also been granted under the Localism Act 2011, which allow Runnymede to set up a local scheme for the granting of discretionary relief where such relief would be of benefit to the local community.

The Government is asking local authorities to prioritise support for local communities:

- The objective of the Household Support Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of help with significantly rising living costs.
- To use their discretion on how to identify and support those in most need
- To use the funding to meet immediate need preferably within 12 weeks of funding allocation being distributed
- Help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills and other essential expenditure due to the global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living.

This grant is primarily aimed at:

- supporting households with the cost of energy. Support which can make a quick but sustainable impact on energy costs is particularly encouraged; for example, the insulation of hot water tanks, fitting draft excluders to a door, or replacing inefficient lightbulbs or white goods.
- The grant can also be used to support households with the cost of food and water bills, essential costs related to energy, food and water, and with wider essential costs. The grant can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this need.

Eligibility will be for those residents whose liability for Council Tax is because their sole or main residence at the time of the award is within the Runnymede Borough Council area and where applicable the claimant a partner or a dependant child are in receipt of an eligible benefit.

All other eligibility will be assessed on need by our trusted partner organisations, Citizens Advice, Adult Social Care Team, and Runnymede Borough Council Housing and Revenues Teams. Eligibility is assessed per household, considering household composition

Ukrainian guests will be able to claim help with essentials linked to energy and water, travel expenses and wider essentials where they and/or their household are unable to pay buy essential items, pay for travel, clothing, or mobile phone bills.

The Council has a duty to carefully consider every application on its individual merits, considering the relevant circumstances affecting each resident.

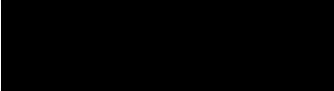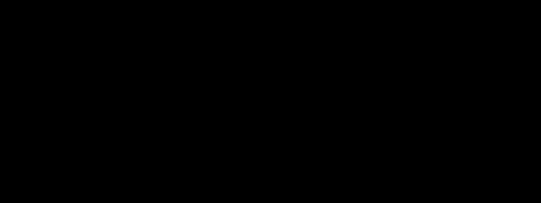The Council and its trusted partners will assess the need and complete a nomination application form.

The Council will publicise the scheme through the Council's website and social media.

Residents will be required to make an application with supporting documentary evidence either to the Council or a trusted partner organisation during the period 1st June 2023 to 11th March 2024, or sooner if the fund has run out. If the resident is unable to meet any of the criteria, they should clearly explain why.

The level of relief awarded will be capped at £2,000.00 per household to ensure as many people as possible are supported.

6. Policy framework implications

- This policy underpins the Council's Corporate Theme of 'Supporting Local People'
- This policy underpins the Council's commitment to supporting the Government's Cost of Living crisis initiative

7.	**Financial and Resource implications (where practicable)**

Resource implications of suggested course of action: -

The Council will receive ring-fenced funding of £326,504 to deliver this scheme paid in four tranches:

May £32,650	November £163,252
August £81,626	January £48,976

8.	**Legal implications**

Powers have granted under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 and payment is covered by Section 31 Local Government Finance Act 2003.

9.	**Equality implications**

By creating a local policy to support our vulnerable residents with the current cost of living crisis will have a positive impact on any resident with protected characteristics

10.	**Other implications** (Environmental/Biodiversity/Sustainability must be addressed)

There are none

11.	**Background papers**

Housing Support Fund (Tranche 4) policy

12.	**Chief Officer(s) Decision**

Signature of authorised officer .... ███████████████ ....

I have been consulted and am in ag█████████████████

Signature(s) and position(s) of
other relevant Chief Officer, Corporate Heads or authorised representatives

████████████ ....

NB: this <u>must</u> include the Assistant Chief Executive or his authorised representative where the decision involves expenditure, loss of income, or future implications for budget or financial forecast.

13.	**Chief Executive's Decision**

Signature of Chief Executive ..... ████████████████

I have been consulted and am in agreement with the abo█████████████

14. **Chairman and Vice-Chairman Comments**

I concur in the Chief Officer's decision

Signed ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Date _CC JUNE 2023_

Signed ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Date _22nd June 2023_

I have the following further comments:

The completed copy is to be returned by the Councillors to the Corporate Head of Law and Governance (Democratic Services) who will send a copy to the Chief Officer and report to the relevant Committee for information.

Standing Order 42

Consultation with Appropriate Chairman and Vice-Chairman for Urgent Action to be Taken Under Standing Order 42

To (Chair & Vice Chair):	Cllr Tom Gracey Cllr Chris Howorth
Relevant Committee:	Corporate Management Committee
Date:	7th June 2023
Report Author:	Georgina Pacey
Report Title:	Request for approval for an 9 week temporary contract for Graduate Climate Change Officer support over the summer period
SO42 Proforma Number:	1025

1. **Synopsis of report** On 25th May, a public engagement programme on climate change was approved. This will take place between 1st June and 31st August 2023. In May, a Graduate Climate Change Officer was appointed following a successful recruitment process, however the Council's preferred candidate is not able to start with the Council until 4th September. A temporary contract to employ the 2nd placed candidate in the interview process for a 9 week period over the summer is therefore requested, using the salary allocation from the vacant Energy Manager post.	
2. **Reasons why this matter cannot wait for a Committee Decision.** **(Please state if agreement of Chairman and Vice-Chairman required within 24 hours, and why)** The report deadline for the 22nd June Corporate Management Committee (CMC) has now passed. The next meeting of CMC beyond this is 13th July, beyond the requested start date for this temporary 9 week temporary contract which ideally would commence on 3rd July.	
3. **Recommendation(s)** It is recommended that a temporary 9 week temporary contract is agreed for a Climate Change Support officer from 3rd July – 1st September to support the summer public engagement programme on climate change using the salary allocated to the vacant Energy Manager post. It is proposed to offer the candidate a part time role for 24.5 hours per week. Based on FTE of £25,524, this equates to a pro rata salary of £16,901 per annum.	
4. **Context of report** Corporate Leadership Team gave approval in March 2023 for the vacant 22.5 hour a week Energy Manager post within the Climate Change team to be made full time for 24 months for a Graduate Climate Change and Sustainability Officer. The post has been regraded to target a graduate, at a level of pay which is in line with the National Graduate Scheme. This regraded post is due to be taken up from 4th September 2023 following a recent recruitment process.	

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5.	Report and, where applicable, options considered

At Corporate Management Committee on 25th May, a 3 month programme of public engagement on the topic of climate change was approved which will help identify issues and/or barriers that the Council should consider in developing the actions under the behavioural change theme of its Climate Change Action Plan. Engaging the public early in the process will enable officers and members to build a deeper understanding of local preferences, aspirations and needs. This will support the development of policies/actions that are more likely to achieve public buy-in.

It is proposed that a series of online surveys, and a number of focus groups/one-to-one interviews be carried out from 1 June to the end of August 2023 (although the online surveys will only be live for a period of 6 weeks given the additional time that will be needed to analyse the results).

In relation to the focus groups/one to one meetings specifically it is also proposed that a focus group session takes place with local Residents Associations and Neighbourhood Forum representatives. Other voluntary/community groups will also be invited to the session in order to understand the barriers/issues that our communities face in delivering climate change actions, including through the neighbourhood planning process.

In addition, feedback will be sought from Council staff representatives across all business centres at the internal Climate Change Officers Working Group in July. A session will be held as part of this meeting to gain insights into proposed CCAP actions and priorities for delivery, including those that fall under the theme of education, communication and influencing behaviour. Focus group sessions and/or one-to-one interviews, including with members of the Town Centre groups (a mix of local businesses and community representatives) and Egham Chamber of Commerce are also proposed. There are also several opportunities to attend a number of business engagement meetings to discuss barriers/challenges directly with attendees

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager has recently offered the Graduate Climate Change Officer's role to her preferred choice following a successful recruitment process. However this candidate is unable to take up the role until 4th September due to the final part of their current degree being a 2 month summer placement followed by a reflective report in lieu of a dissertation.
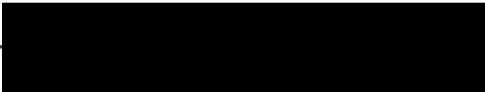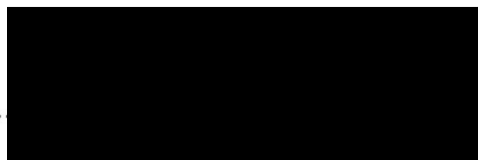
This leaves a gap between 1st June and the end of August when a comprehensive engagement programme with the public and other stakeholders on climate change will be being rolled out across the Borough. It had initially been hoped that the successful candidate would be in post in June to support this engagement process. To bolster resource over this period, it is requested that a 9 week temporary contract is offered to the second highest placed candidate who applied for the Graduate Climate Change Officer's post. This role would commence on 3rd July and would assist in:
-Arranging and delivering focus groups and 1 to 1 interviews with stakeholders about climate change (and writing up any meeting notes),
-Analysing feedback from the Climate Change online survey and producing a report on the findings,
-Carrying out background research on Behavioural Change strategies and commencing work on the production of such a document for Runnymede.

No additional funding would be required for this temporary contract. The existing, and vacant Energy Manager's post still sits within the Climate Change team and will remain as part of the Establishment List until it is replaced (for a temporary period) with the 2 year fixed Graduate Climate Change Officer's Post from 4th September.

6.	Policy framework implications

The 'Workforce Planning' section of the Corporate Organisational Development Strategy states that consideration could be given to having internships or more trainee or apprenticeship positions for school or college/university leavers linked to competency-based career grades and a flexible benefits package. The temporary 9 week contract proposed in this report seeks to recruit a University leaver and give him some industry experience, whilst, in return the Council gets the benefit of some additional resource over the summer months which will be a busy period from a Climate Change perspective, and when annual leave commitments in the team are generally high.

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7.	**Financial and Resource implications (where practicable)**
	As set out in the body of this report, no growth is requested to fund this temporary contract. Instead, it is proposed to use the existing and vacant part time Energy Manager post to fund this temporary contract. Payroll has calculated that the part time salary for 24.5 hours a week for the temporary contract based on FTE £25,524 is 24.5/37ths = £16,901 per annum.
8.	**Legal implications**
	No legal implications identified
9.	**Equality implications**
	This 9 week temporary placement for a graduate Climate Change Support Officer would have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of age by allowing a University leaver to get some local authority experience in the area of climate change in a competitive industry.
10.	**Other implications (Environmental/Biodiversity/Sustainability must be addressed)**
	In late January 2023, the day to day climate change response of the Council was moved under the management of the Local Plans Manager. Resource from the Planning Policy Team is being used to accelerate the Council's response to climate change. The current focuses of the team are on finalising key elements of the climate change evidence base, developing a policy framework to guide the Council's response to climate change and developing the Council's monitoring and reporting systems. In addition, a key priority of the Local Plans Manager has been the regarding and recruitment of the Graduate Climate Change Officer's post. Whilst the successful post holder will not be starting their employment with the Council until 4th September 2023, the proposal to offer the second placed candidate through the recruitment process a 9 week temporary contract over the summer period will ensure that resource levels remain high for progressing priority pieces of work in the climate change area. Moving forward, the Council's response to climate change in the ways described in this report are anticipated to help the Council meet its 2030 and 2050 net zero commitments contained in its Climate Change Strategy, for the good of the environment.
11.	**Background papers**
	None
12.	**Chief Officer(s) Decision**
	Signature of authorised officer .... ███████████████████████ ....
	I have been consulted and am in agreement with the above ███
	Signature(s) and position(s) of other relevant Chief Officer, Corporate Heads or authorised representatives
	..... ███████████████ ....
	NB: this must include the Assistant Chief Executive or his authorised representative where the decision involves expenditure, loss of income, or future implications for budget or financial forecast.
13.	**Chief Executive's Decision** ███████████████
	Signature of Chief Executive ... ████████████
	I have been consulted and am in agreement with the above

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14. Chairman and Vice-Chairman Comments

I concur in the Chief Officer's decision

Signed ██████████████████

Date _22 JUNE 2023_

Signed ████████████████

Date _June 23rd 2023_

I have the following further comments:

The completed copy is to be returned by the Councillors to the Corporate Head of Law and Governance (Democratic Services) who will send a copy to the Chief Officer and report to the relevant Committee for information.

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