

Runnymede Borough CouncilCorporate Management CommitteeThursday, 14 September 2023 at 7.30 pm

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

In attendance: Councillors M Smith.

50 **Notification of Changes to Committee Membership**

Councillor Cressey was substituted by Councillor Mann and Councillor Mullens was substituted by Councillor Jenkins.

51 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

52 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

53 **Declarations of Interest**

Agenda item 8 – Shared Prosperity Fund

Councillor R. King left the room and did not participate in this item because the report affected the location of his political party's office in Chertsey.

54 **Great Big Green Week**

The Committee was pleased to note that there had been a good level of engagement with the Borough's Great Big Green Week (GBGW) activities. Members were positive about the proposals for next year's GBGW. It was suggested that local Surrey County Councillors be approached, with the hope that they would be able to make a contribution from their ward budgets. The timing of next year's GBGW events was discussed. It was hoped that these events would complement existing fairs and fetes, in particular those that were free for residents to attend.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The information detailing the Council's participation in the 2023 Great Big Green Week be noted.
- 2) In relation to making arrangements for Great Big Green Week 2024, 'option 4' be agreed as the Council's approach (noting that the 'participation' element of this option was currently unfunded).

55 **Update on Climate Change Strategy**

The Committee was generally supportive of the new reporting format, and members were pleased to hear that further enhancements would continue to be developed to improve monitoring and reporting around the Council's response to climate change. There were

discussions about the current committee report template, and how climate change considerations could be incorporated.

It was **resolved** that the report be noted.

56 **Carbon Baseline**

The Committee discussed the report, which had been the subject of several months' of work. Senior staff were being provided with similar training to that provided to members on carbon literacy. In addition, further all staff training on climate change was due to be provided.

There was discussion around the methodology for collecting the baseline data. It was noted that this was a standardised practice within the sector. Officers would look into whether it was possible to incorporate elements that related to the consumption and/or production of meat and dairy products.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The Aether Ltd Council Estate and Area GHG Baseline report (Appendix 1) be agreed, alongside other sources of information (including consultation feedback from Summer 2023), and that it should be used to develop a Climate Change Action Plan for the Borough.
- 2) The Committee recommend the Council note the content of the Aether Ltd Council Estate and Area GHG Baseline report.

57 **Shared Prosperity Fund**

Councillor R. King left the room and did not participate in this item because the report affected the location of his political party's office in Chertsey.

The Committee was pleased that improvements to the public space around Chertsey town centre were planned. The proposed feasibility study would be conducted before the end of the financial year.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The progress on the development of the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment plan, as detailed in the officer's report, be noted.
- 2) The release of a £20,000 provision, as set aside in the General Fund Revenue Budget to support the feasibility study to improve the public realm in Guildford Street in Chertsey (as detailed in 2.8-2.10 of the officer's report), be agreed.
- 3) The business case to procure a contractor to carry out a wayfinding audit and to develop proposals and purchase new signage in the Borough's three main town centres (as detailed in Appendix 2) be agreed.

58 **Equalities Objectives**

The Committee was pleased that the Council's equalities objectives had been reviewed and updated.

It was **resolved** that the Committee recommend the Council adopt the refreshed Equalities Objectives for the period 2023 – 2027, subject to the Equalities Group reviewing the proposed objectives document to reference the Council's level one membership of the

government's Disability Confident Employer Scheme, and to express a desire to progress to higher levels of the scheme in due course.

59 **Alcohol, Drug and Substance misuse at Work Policy**

The Committee was supportive of the proposed policy, noting that it was important to provide appropriate support to staff living with substance dependency. The directors of the various Council owned companies were encouraged to adopt similar policies.

It was **resolved** that the Alcohol, Drugs and Substance Misuse at Work Policy be agreed, subject to consultation with UNISON.

60 **Approach to Financial Sustainability - Savings, Income Generation and Efficiency Process**

A revised approach, incorporating the feedback received at the recent meeting of the Council, was presented to the Committee. The revised process now incorporated the opportunity for Service Committees to provide their feedback on the outcomes of service reviews, before consideration by Corporate Management Committee, as part of the overarching savings, efficiencies and income generation process.

It was **resolved** that the Committee recommend the Council agree the amended approach for the identification and delivery of savings, income generation and efficiencies, as set out in the officer's report.

61 **Treasury Management Outturn Report 2022/23**

There was discussion about the practice of inter-local authority lending. It was noted that the risks associated with this practice were limited and that officers were not aware of any instance of a local authority defaulting on payments. It was stated that the government had a responsibility to act as guarantor of last resort in such arrangements.

The report was noted.

62 **Treasury Management Q1 Report 2023/24**

The report was noted.

63 **2022/23 Provisional Outturn Report**

The challenging financial situation facing Runnymede Borough Council was discussed. Whilst the Committee was pleased that a contribution to the Council's reserves was possible, the underlying budget deficit remained an important consideration going forward.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The provisional financial outturn for 2022/23 be noted.
- 2) The transfers to and from reserves, as set out in the General Fund Summary section of the officer's report, be agreed.

64 **Budget monitoring report - April 2023 to June 2023**

Members were reminded of the savings target set out at the start of the year and that with further cost pressures having been identified, at the current rate of spending, General Fund reserves would fall below the recommended level in three years' time. Members were also reminded that the financing of the Capital Programme remains heavily dependent on

income from the sale of development properties and unless sales start to pick up it may be necessary to delay some capital schemes or find alternative methods of financing them.

The report was noted.

65 **Local Land Charges Migration**

The report had been brought before the Committee due to changes with the process by the government. The loss of income would be factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The potential impact on the level of staffing for this service was noted.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The requirement for the migration of Land Charges to HM Land Registry be noted.
- 2) The allocation of the external funding to support the costs of data cleansing and other migration costs be agreed.
- 3) Note the loss of income from 2024/25 would be added to the MTFS and that it would be a factor of future savings targets.

66 **Town Centre Events**

The Committee welcomed the creation of a structured budget, in lieu of the various ad-hoc events of past years. The use of funding would be determined by local business stakeholder groups. The Committee was pleased to note that the increased footfall associated with events held in town centres had had an overall positive impact on local businesses.

There was discussion about how the impact of any event funding could be monitored. Generally, and clarification that data was currently gathered through discussions with local businesses. More detailed information around footfall would be costly and time consuming to obtain.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The business case (as contained in Appendix 1 of the officer's report) for the release of the growth budget to support town centre events in 2023/24 financial period be agreed.
- 2) The release of a £15,000 provision set aside in the General Fund Revenue Budget and Business Plan for this purpose be agreed.

67 **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.

68 **Repairs on Civic Centre**

The Committee was disappointed to learn of the need for extensive repairs on what was a relatively new building. Work was taking place to examine what assurances and warranties were provided on the lifespan on various elements of the building such as the roof and ventilation systems. It was also important to understand the cost and impact of any

neglected planned or reactive maintenance on the Civic Centre.

There was detailed discussion around the need to obtain the best possible value for money for remedial works on the Civic Centre. It was felt that external consultancy was required in order to fully understand the level of works required and the options for undertaking them. An approach, to incorporate the engagement of a consultant and closer monitoring by the Corporate Management Committee, was therefore proposed. A consultant would be asked to assess a number of options, including the possibility of undertaking costlier, but more environmentally friendly repairs to the Civic Centre.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) A phased approach to progressing the essential replacement of Civic Centre end of life components be agreed, with:
 - a) Phase 1 to be the procurement and appointment of building technical and M&E design consultancy to support the cost data and specification development for phase 2 of the project.
 - b) Phase 2 to be the procurement of the contractors to deliver the works.
- 2) The commencement of Phase 1 of the procurement process, to secure technical and design consultancy with an estimated contract value of the amount set out in the addendum, and the consequential release of the said amount of the provision set aside in the Capital Budget for this purpose, be agreed.
- 3) A further report be brought back to the Committee to consider the route to market in respect of the procurement process and the release of the Capital provision for Phase 2, being the works to the Civic Centre, following receipt of the consultant's report.

69 **Write off of Arrears**

Officers had been attempting to recover unpaid rent on a number of accounts for a considerable time. Many of the businesses concerned had not recovered from the disruption brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was now considered that the sums detailed in the report were irrecoverable. The majority of the Council's assets were performing well, and it was noted that the vast majority of the irrecoverable debt related to a small number of commercial tenancies.

Clarification was provided that should the debtors' situations change, the debts could still be recovered if within the statutory deadlines.

It was **resolved** that the write offs in respect of the bad debts detailed in section 2.1 of the officer's report be agreed.

70 **Standing Order 42 - Urgent Planning Service Staffing Matter**

The urgent decision relating to the urgent planning service staffing matter was noted.

71 **Recommendations from committees**

71a **Recommendation from the Environment and Sustainability Committee - Approval of ANPR in Four Car Parks**

The Environment and Sustainability Committee had reviewed the proposal and made a recommendation to the Corporate Management Committee.

There was discussion about the issues being experienced at the Hummer Road car park in Egham. Due to the layout of the site, ANPR was not practical. Officers were liaising with Tesco and had, in the meantime, installed signage on the site to ensure that it was clear where parking charges needed to be paid. The provision of cashless only payment options and the availability of a freephone telephone number for parking payments were also discussed.

It was **resolved** that the release of the provision for the sum set out in the officer's report, set aside in the Capital Programme for the procurement and implementation of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems in four Council-owned car parks, be agreed.

71b **Recommendation from the Environment and Sustainability Committee - Procurement of Replacement Pay and Display Machines**

It was **resolved** that a capital estimate for the sum set out in the officer's report, for the purchase and implementation of the new pay and display machines, be agreed.

(The meeting ended at 10.25pm.)

Chairman