

Runnymede Borough CouncilCorporate Management CommitteeThursday, 22 February 2024 at 7.30pm

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

In attendance: Councillor M Smith.

142 Notification of Changes to Committee Membership

Councillor Michael Cressey substituted for Councillor Malcolm Cressey.

143 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

144 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

145 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

146 Public Consultation for Guildford Street, Chertsey, Improvements

The Committee was appreciative of the level and quality of work being undertaken to demonstrate the Council's commitment to Chertsey Town Centre.

It was **resolved** that the consultation exercise, to run between 29 February 2024 and 24 March 2024 and as outlined in the officer's report, be approved.

147 Pay Policy Statement

The Committee reviewed the draft Pay Policy Statement. It was noted that the Council's pay scales were not based on a postholder's age, except for apprenticeships. It was therefore unlikely that the recent changes in the National Living Wage from 23 to 21 years of age would impact employees. It was confirmed that provision had been made in the 2024/25 budget for the increase in the National Living Wage and consequential remodelling of the affected pay scales.

It was **resolved** that the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 be recommended for approval by the Council, subject to confirmation being provided on the recent changes to the National Living Wage being reflected in the Statement where necessary.

148 Climate Change Action Plan

The Committee noted that a substantial body of work had been delivered in the previous 12 months, in pursuance of the Council's commitment to addressing climate change.

It was noted that the Action Plan was intended to be a 'living' document which evolved over time, both in terms of actions and reporting. Progress updates on the Action Plan would be

considered by the Corporate Management Committee twice a year. Progress on each relevant action would be noted in these updates.

There was discussion about maintaining the Council's commitment to climate change, particularly in light of the relevant team's wide-ranging responsibilities. Additionally, whilst the proposed Action Plan was aspirational, it also needed to be deliverable within the level of resource available to the Council. The Chief Executive stated that he monitored officers' workloads and would review the level of resource available for this work should it become necessary. More general staff training was also being explored, as this was an important element in maintaining the Council's commitments to addressing climate change.

It was **resolved** that the following recommendations be made to the Council:

1. The Runnymede Borough Council Climate Change Action Plan, attached at Appendix 1 of the officer's report, be adopted subject to the following matters being reviewed, for inclusion where required via the proposed officer delegation in 2 below:
 - a) The text in action 3.8 of the Plan, in relation to London Heathrow, being amended to avoid giving the impression that the Council supported its intentions for expansion.
 - b) Local Plan Review actions under the Active and Sustainable Transport section to being amended to reference the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods.
 - c) The addition of figures to show the number of actions falling under the indicators of the Action Plan key, in relation to timeframes, indicative carbon impacts and costs.
2. The Corporate Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development, in consultation with the Chair of the Corporate Management Committee and the Climate Change Members Working Party, be authorised to carry out annual high-level reviews and make minor amendments to the Climate Change Action Plan as necessary.

149 **Request to use the Service Transformation Reserve for critical spend associated with the Non-Statutory Best Value Notice Response**

The level of openness and transparency, both with the borough's residents and the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), was lauded by the Committee.

Disappointment was expressed over the receipt of the Non-Statutory Best Value Notice (NSBVN), and the need to allocate additional resources to responding to it. It was however felt that the lowest level of intervention possible by the DLUHC was an endorsement of the Council's approach.

The proposed review of the Council's companies was discussed. Some members felt that residents had a limited understanding of why the Council used separate companies to deliver some of its functions. In order to foster greater clarity over the functions of the Council's companies, it was planned to review the original reasons for creating them and examine whether they remained the most appropriate vessels for the management of the Council's assets going forward.

The role of the Standards and Audit Committee (S&AC) in reviewing the work being undertaken to respond to the NSBVN, as well as its wider role within the committee structure, was the subject of a separate piece of work that would report back to the S&AC in due course.

It was **resolved** that:

1. The use of the Service Transformation earmarked reserve to fund expenditure arising from the NSBVN response work programme be approved.
2. A Supplementary Revenue Estimate in the sum of up to £125,000 in 2024/25 to provide a budget for the expenditure that may be incurred in response to the non-statutory Best Value Notice, to be funded from 1) above, be approved.
3. It be noted that Officers would seek the Corporate Management Committee's approval should further funds over and above the budgeted sum be required.

150 **Financial Services Resourcing**

The Committee recognised the pressures that staff from Financial Services were under, particularly with the new workstream related to the NSBVN. The Committee was also pleased to note that the resource for this additional capacity was being found from within existing budgets.

Previous unsuccessful attempts at recruitment were discussed. It was hoped that the market had improved since the previous attempt, and that the person specification was now sufficiently attractive to prospective candidates.

It was **resolved** that a new Chief Accountant post, at grade of SMA/SMB, to be financed from virements from existing budgets as set out in the report, be created.

151 **Preliminary Consideration of Mayoral Selection**

The Committee discussed Councillor Elaine Gill as a potential candidate for the role of Mayor. Members from across the Chamber considered Councillor Gill to be an excellent candidate by virtue of her dedication to the community. It was stated that Councillor Gill had previously served as Mayor during the Covid-19 pandemic, and deserved a further opportunity to serve the residents of Runnymede as Mayor.

It was **resolved** that Councillor Elaine Gill be recommended to the Council, for appointment as Mayor for the 2024/25 municipal year.

152 **Members' Allowances Scheme 2024/25**

This was the final year of the three-year arrangement that was agreed following the Independent Remuneration Panel's review of the Members' Allowances Scheme in 2022. It was confirmed that advertising the scheme in the local newspaper was a statutory requirement.

It was **resolved** that the following be recommended to the Council, for implementation at the point the staff pay award was agreed:

1. The 2023/24 Members' Allowances Scheme be withdrawn with an end date of 31 March 2024 inclusive.
2. An updated Members' Allowances Scheme, to incorporate an uplift to the basic allowance and special responsibility allowances, commensurate with the staff pay award (but not including any lump sum provisions or similar), be agreed with an implementation date of 1 April 2024 inclusive.
3. Any adjustments to basic and special responsibility allowances (either additional payments or recovery of payments made) be backdated 1 April 2024 inclusive.
4. That the Corporate Head of Law and Governance be delegated authority to implement

the revised Members' Allowances Scheme to give effect to the above, and undertake any necessary measures to do so (such as advertising it in a local newspaper, or authorising the recovery or payments made).

153 **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.

154 **Post Project Report on Addlestone One Re-Cladding Exercise**

The Committee discussed the report, which was for the Committee's information only. The report had been requisitioned by Councillors R King and D Whyte in accordance with Standing Order 27.

Officers were thanked for preparing a comprehensive post project review of the cladding replacement activities. It was noted that the project had concluded early and under budget, and that the Council had maintained a constructive working relationship with the residents of the Addlestone One development and contractor throughout. The result of this work was that the development was able to receive its ESW1 certification, thus allowing tenants to enjoy their homes or sell them should they wish to.

The Committee felt that the Council proceeding in the way that it did – i.e. funding the re-cladding works itself – was the best decision for residents.

The decision to proceed with the re-cladding project did not preclude the Council exploring legal options to recover its costs from the developer. The legal considerations, which were being done in consultation with an external legal expert, were however extensive and complicated. Careful consideration needed to be given to balancing the likelihood of recovering any funds and the cost to the public purse of seeking legal remedy. The practicalities of pursuing legal remedy with the developer before the Council agreed to fund the works directly were debated.

The Committee discussed communication with members during the project. Some felt that there should have been more proactive communication with members at key stages, including prior to the announcement of the works' completion. It was however contested that sometimes urgent communication was necessary. It was further stated that particularly in cases where the Council was working in partnership with third parties, such as with the Addlestone One re-cladding project, news may enter the public domain through channels beyond the Council's control or involvement. Members had recently reviewed the documents relating to Council communications and publicity and it was hoped that this would provide clarity over the issue of communication with members.

The report was noted.

155 **Asset disposal - terms of sale**

Members' attention was drawn to the addendum, which had been issued due to the prospective purchaser of the site deciding to withdraw from the transaction. The Committee was disappointed at the actions of the recommended purchaser and noted that other bidders identified as part of the initial marketing exercise had also decided to withdraw.

The Committee therefore gave consideration to the officer's recommendations, as set out

in the addendum.

There was a debate over the delegation that was being sought and whether it was at an appropriate level to enable the authority to act with the necessary speed to fulfil a developer's requirements when they were seeking to purchase sites. It was noted that the marketing materials would be bespoke to site and that the agent would actively identify prospective purchasers, with a view to obtaining as much interest as possible.

It was **resolved** that:

1. The asset noted in the exempt resolution be remarketed and offers in excess of the sum specified in the exempt resolution invited, noting that market changes may dictate a sale price not in line with the current preferred offer specified in the exempt officer's report.
2. To enable officers to act quickly and swiftly on any offer, and to execute the transaction and crystallise the capital receipt as soon as possible, delegated authority be given to the Assistant Chief Executive Officer (S151) in consultation with the Corporate Head of Law and Governance and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Management Committee to agree final terms for the disposal at a price in excess of the sum and timeframe specified within the exempt resolution.
3. In the event of the sum in 2 above not being achieved, the matter be brought back to a meeting of the Corporate Management Committee for determination.

[See separate exempt minutes.]

(The meeting ended at 9.23 pm.)

Chairman