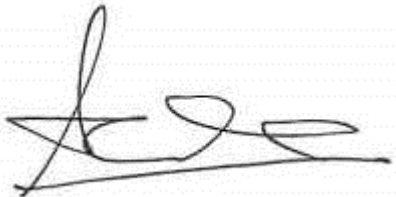


17.04.24

Dear Councillor

SUMMONS TO A MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL

I hereby summon you to attend the meeting of the Full Council to be held on **Thursday, 25 April 2024 at 7.30 pm. The meeting will be held at Council Chamber - Civic Centre.**



Andrew Pritchard
Chief Executive
01932 425500
Email: andrew.pritchard@runnymede.gov.uk

A G E N D A

1. **Mayor's Announcements**

2. **Minutes**

11 - 20

To confirm and sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2024.

3. **Apologies for Absence**

4. **Declarations of Interest**

If Members have an interest in an item, please complete a member interest form and email it to Democratic.Services@runnymede.gov.uk by 5pm on the day of the meeting. Members are advised to contact the Corporate Head of Law and Governance prior to the meeting if they wish to seek advice on a potential interest.

5. **Speaking or Questions from Members of the Public under Standing Order 12**

Any questions received will be circulated separately following the deadline for submission of questions from the public.

6. **Petitions**

To receive any petitions from members of the Council under Standing Order 19.

7. **Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order 13**

a) From Councillor Sam Jenkins to the Leader of the Council

“At the previous Full Council, the Leader of the Council confirmed that RBC had been responsible for the planting of approximately 540 trees within the last twelve months. Please can the Leader confirm how many of these trees are still alive?”

b) From Councillor Isabel Mullens to the Leader of the Council

“During last month’s Planning committee meeting, the proceedings during the debate on the Fairmont Planning application were viewable in the Committee Room, using existing equipment, and an audio recording of the item was also made by a Council officer. Could the Leader of the Council tell me what extra expense would have been required in order to make the proceedings of the meeting viewable by the public at large via YouTube?”

8. **Recommendations from Committees**

a) **Annual Review of the Constitution 2024 - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee**

The report associated with this item was circulated to all members with the agenda for the [21 March 2024 Corporate Management Committee](#).

The Committee was supportive of most of the Constitution Member Working Party’s (CMWP) proposed changes to the Constitution. It was noted that, should the Council agree to them, the amendments would be in effect for the annual meeting of the Council on 15 May 2024.

Members felt that the proposed timeline in Standing Order 27.5 was unduly long.

There was extensive debate on the proposed amendments to the process for appointing to outside bodies.

The Committee supported the concept of simplifying the appointments process, in particular not undertaking three rounds of appointments in the coming months.

The removal of mandatory nomination forms, and the ability to appoint individuals not nominated in advance, was challenged. It was held that such a process did not facilitate the appointment of individuals with sufficient knowledge and skills. Consequently, the ability to nominate individuals at the time of consideration i.e. during a meeting was also challenged. This viewpoint was contested, with some feeling that the need to complete nomination forms in advance unduly deterred members putting themselves forward for consideration, resulting in there being reduced representation for residents on some outside bodies. Disappointment was also expressed over the perceived inability of some members to trust their colleagues.

Additional concerns were raised around the removal of requiring annual reports from those appointed to outside bodies. This belief was again

challenged on the basis that it unduly deterred people from nominating themselves. It was also stated that in many instances, such reports were not forthcoming.

Some members expressed disappointment over these concerns not being raised at the CMWP. The low level of attendance at some member working parties was noted.

It was proposed and seconded that the amendments put forward by the CWMP, in relation to not requiring mandatory nomination forms and annual reports from appointed representatives, not be recommended for agreement by the Council. A named vote was requested on this proposal, with the voting noted as follows:

In favour of requiring the mandatory completion of nomination forms and annual reports (6)

Councillors Balkan, Gillham, Jenkins, R. King, Ringham and D Whyte.

Against requiring the mandatory completion of nomination forms and annual reports (6)

Councillors Gracey, Howorth, Coen, MD Cressey, Nuti and Snow.

Abstentions (0)

As the vote was tied, Councillor Gracey exercised a second/casting vote in accordance with Standing Order 39.10.

The proposal recommending the mandatory completion of nomination forms and annual reports **FELL**.

It was **resolved** that the Council be recommended to adopt the proposed changes to the Constitution, as detailed in the officer's report, to come into effect at the beginning of the municipal year i.e. 15 May 2024, subject Standing Order 27.5 being amended to read:

"Members who wish to request that a particular item of business be included on the agenda for a meeting must consult with the Chief Executive and other chief officers as appropriate, with a view to defining the scope of any such item, prior to giving notice under this Standing Order. Notice must be given in writing to the Chief Executive by 9.30am of the tenth working day before the meeting."

Following the discussion at the CMWP and the Corporate Management Committee, officers identified the need to delegate authority to determine applications for consent submitted under the Council's Land Drainage Bylaws. The Council is therefore asked to agree the following:

- 1) The adoption of the proposed changes to the Constitution, as detailed in the officer's report, to come into effect at the beginning of the municipal year i.e. 15 May 2024, subject Standing Order 27.5 being amended to read:

"Members who wish to request that a particular item of business be included on the agenda for a meeting must consult with the Chief Executive and other chief officers as appropriate, with a view to defining the scope of any such item, prior to giving notice under this

Standing Order. Notice must be given in writing to the Chief Executive by 9.30am of the tenth working day before the meeting.”

- 2) That the division of officer responsibilities document include the updated provision, as set out below:

“The Enforcement of Land Drainage Bylaws, including the authorisation or refusal of any application for consent submitted under the said Bylaws.

CHES/PE

b) Updates to Article 8 of the Constitution - recommendations from the Standards and Audit Committee

The Standards and Audit Committee, as part of its discussion on its proposed programme of work, discussed the process for agreeing the Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts. Relevant excerpts from the minutes of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 19 March 2024 are below:

“Members noted that Article 8 of the Council’s Constitution set out the Committee’s current remit. This was essentially divided between a governance role and one of auditing and oversight of risk management and internal control. It was acknowledged that the audit role had expanded, with the Local Code of Corporate Governance and Annual Governance Statement being two large responsibilities and having significant input from both internal and external auditors.”

“it was agreed to request that full Council approve transferring ownership of the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement from Corporate Management Committee to the Standards and Audit Committee. This would also reduce the duplication of currently submitting identical reports to each committee.”

The committee agreed the following resolution:

“v) full Council be requested to confirm that responsibility for the Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts sits with the Standards and Audit Committee.”

[View the report and full minute from the Standards and Audit Committee’s meeting of 19 March 2024.](#)

Officers have considered this request and advise that should the Council agree to the request of the Standards and Audit Committee, the Corporate Management Committee will retain oversight of the financial position of the Council, in accordance with its current terms of reference including all of its existing financial decision-making powers. This oversight would be provided through the Corporate Management Committee’s consideration of the Council’s financial strategy and budget preparation, budget monitoring and the provisional outturn report.

The role of the Standards and Audit Committee in approving the Statement of Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement for publication, is around ensuring the published data is consistent with knowledge obtained throughout the year from the Committee’s review of governance processes, their consideration of risk reporting, recommendations from the internal and external auditors and their understanding of the risk of fraud.

Officer's recommendations:

- 1) The Council is asked to confirm whether the Standards and Audit Committee should have responsibility for the Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts.
 - 2) Should the Council agree to 1) above, that the Corporate Head of Law and Governance be delegated authority to make any necessary amendments to the Constitution, to give effect to the Council's decision.
- c) **Sustainable Fleet Management Strategy - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee**

The report associated with this item was circulated to all members with the agenda for the [7 March 2024 Environment and Sustainability Committee](#), which made recommendations to the [21 March 2024 Corporate Management Committee](#).

The discussion at the recent Environment and Sustainability Committee was noted by the Corporate Management Committee. Members were supportive of the strategy, with it being stated that this work could be a useful basis for the sharing of similar services with other local authorities.

It was **resolved** that the proposed Sustainable Fleet Management Strategy be:

1. Endorsed.
2. Recommended to the Council for adoption.

9. **Preliminary consideration of deputy mayoral selection**

Consideration of this item was deferred at the meeting of the Council on 29 February 2024.

In accordance with Standing Order 7, the Council is asked to consider candidates for the office of Deputy Mayor for the 2024/25 municipal year.

If there is more than one nomination, the selection of Deputy Mayor will be conducted by secret ballot. In the event of an equality of votes on the nomination, the Mayor will exercise a casting or second vote.

The nominee will be put forward as a candidate for the office of Deputy Mayor at the Annual Council meeting on 15 May 2024 providing that they are still a member of the Council.

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

To receive and consider any notices of motion from members of the Council under Standing Order 15.

- a) From Councillor Andrea Berardi

In support of community food growing

This council notes:

- The cost-of-living crisis and the continued efforts to recover from the pandemic brings a new focus on ensuring that residents have access to enough healthy fresh food for day to day living.
- The increasing need to put the health and well-being of residents at the heart of our corporate strategies.
- The powerful evidence which demonstrates the link between people's health and wellbeing and the availability of fresh locally produced food.
- That communities coming together to grow food can radically reduce costs to NHS and social care budgets by reducing loneliness and providing healthy food.
- That localising food growing reduces food miles, reduces food waste in the production and consumption process, and can contribute to supporting biodiversity and community cohesion.
- That Runnymede Borough Council is a major landowner and some of its land could be used for community food growing while also improving the public realm.

This council resolves to request the Corporate Management Committee to review options (or commission other committees as appropriate) for promoting lease agreements for the purpose of community food growing with constituted community groups on council owned land which is suitable for cultivation.

This is a distinct policy strategy different to allotments where agreements are with individual plot holders.

Suggested considerations for the Corporate Management Committee include:

- Developing a policy enabling community food growing on sites awaiting development for other uses on a fixed term basis for a term agreed with the council to allow at least one growing season (i.e. 1 year with the possibility to extend on an annual basis) a minimum 2-year term.
- The production of a map of all council owned land and buildings suitable for community cultivation and ancillary activities (e.g. equipment storage) and making this land and buildings available for cultivation by a simple license to community organisations at no cost.
- Exploring external grants in order to support local Community Food Growing Coordinators and to provide utilities and materials (raised beds, mobile planters, water butts, composting bins, tools, seeds, etc).
- Promoting community food growing activities through the council's public communication channels (printed newsletter, website, and social media)
- Designating an officer to champion community food growing in the borough
- Providing support to communities that wish to establish a constituted community group to enable them to qualify for adopting a community food growing site.
- Integrating community food growing in citizen panel deliberations to explore the role communities, the council and other stakeholders (such as businesses) can play in order to encourage community food growing.
- The inclusion of community food growing within the council's climate change, biodiversity and community wellbeing strategies and action plans to the extent that such actions are not already reflected in Council documentation.
- The inclusion of community food growing within planning policies and frameworks, such as the emerging Local Plan and the Green and Blue Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document.
- The inclusion of community food growing within non-mandatory planning advice i.e. proactively explore with planning applicants the possibility of integrating community food growing spaces and edible landscapes in

developments involving communal spaces within flats, student halls of residence and public spaces. Examples may include community fruit orchards and gardens.

b) From Councillor Sam Jenkins

Debate Not Hate

Motivation:

This motion is being brought forward to publicly demonstrate the commitment of Runnymede Borough Council to improving the quality of public and political debate and to challenging abuse and intimidation of people in public life, by supporting the Local Government Association (LGA) Debate Not Hate Campaign.

The Council notes:

Increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact of local democracy.

Prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians must improve to ensure councillors feel safe and able to continue representing their residents.

The LGA Debate Note Hate campaign (see footnote 1) aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in local communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the response to and support those in public life facing abuse and intimidation.

Guiding Principles of the Debate Not Hate Campaign

Based on workshops and interviews with council officers, the LGA are proposing some guiding principles to help councils who wish to support the Debate Not Hate Campaign (see footnote 2):

- 1) Zero-tolerance approach to abuse: Establish and enforce a strict policy that clearly outlines expectations for interactions and promotes respectful debate.
- 2) Clarity of process and responsibility: Clearly define the process for raising concerns and assign responsible individuals within the council to provide support to councillors.
- 3) Relationships with local police: Proactively develop strong relationships with the police to enhance coordination and foster mutual understanding of abuse affecting councillors and the role of police in addressing it.
- 4) Tailored risk assessments: Consider individual councillors' needs and proactively identify risks through dynamic and periodic risk assessments.
- 5) Prioritise councillor wellbeing: Recognise and consider how your council can support councillor wellbeing and address the negative impacts of personal attacks.

The Council believes that:

- The intimidation and abuse of councillors, in person or online, undermines our community; preventing elected members from representing the wards they serve, deterring individuals from standing for election, and undermining public life in democratic processes.

- Some councillors have been put off from standing in future elections due to abuse and intimidation.
- A cross-party approach is required to ensure that Runnymede can remain a Council where healthy debate and discourse thrives without turning into personal abuse.

The Council resolves:

1. To endorse the LGA Debate Not Hate Public Statement and its guiding principles.
2. To ask the Chief Executive to email debatenothate@local.gov.uk on behalf of the Council to add Runnymede Borough Council's signature to the LGA Debate Not Hate Public Statement.
3. To ask all Group Leaders and the proposer of this motion (Cllr Jenkins) to sign the attached Press Release and to ask the Chief Executive's Office to publish the signed release via the Council website, newsletters to all residents and RBC social media.
4. To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Member of Parliament for Runnymede and Weybridge to ask him to support the LGA Debate Not Hate Campaign.

The Council additionally resolves to ask the Standards and Audit Committee to consider:

1. Including the LGA Debate Not Hate Campaign as a standing item on the committee work programme from May 2023 onwards, allowing it to be kept informed of any developments.
2. Reviewing the Council's Complaints Procedure to ensure a robust, zero-tolerance approach to harassment, intimidation or abuse with clear reporting and monitoring mechanisms, and to ensure that the guiding principles of Debate Not Hate are supported by the Protocol for the Management of Unreasonable Complaint Behaviour.
3. Regularly reviewing the support available to Councillors and Officers in relation to abuse, intimidation and safety.

The Council additionally resolves to ask the Crime and Disorder Committee to consider:

1. Working with the Borough Commander and the Police to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors and their families and discuss the need to take a preventative approach that accounts for the specific risks that councillors face, as they do with other high-risk individuals, like MPs.

Footnote 1 - <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/debate-not-hate>

Footnote 2 - <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/debate-not-hate-ending-abuse-public-life-councillors>

Proposed press release

LGA Debate Not Hate Campaign

Title: Debate Not Hate – council supports bid to tackle abuse and intimidation against Councillors

At Full Council on 25th April 2024, Councillors voted to pass a motion committing

to challenge the normalisation of abuse against councillors and uphold exemplary standards of public and political debate at their meetings.

The vulnerability of elected representatives has been at the forefront of the political sphere in recent years with high profile incidents like the murders of Jo Cox MP and Sir David Amess MP.

The most recent Local Government Association Councillor Census revealed 7 in 10 councillors reported experiencing abuse and intimidation within the last 12 months and one in 10 experienced abuse frequently.

At the meeting, Councillors agreed to work together on a cross-party basis to set an example of healthy debate and denounced abusive or threatening behaviour from anyone within the community on social media and in-person.

The council also pledged to support the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign to remind everyone that while democracy thrives on good, frank discussions these should never turn into personal abuse.

In addition, the council resolved to:

- Use the LGA template letter to write to the Member of Parliament for Runnymede and Weybridge to ask them to support the campaign.
- Regularly review the support available to councillors in relation to abuse and intimidation and councillor safety
- Work with the local police to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors and their families
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and officers.

Cross-party statement:

Democracy is at the heart of local government and councillors are as much part of the community they represent. While debating and disagreeing with each other are an integral part of the process, councillors should not be subjected to abuse and intimidation because of their role. In passing this motion, Runnymede Borough Council is fully committed to standing up against abuse and working to promote positive, constructive public and political debate within our community. Further information on the motion and the campaign can be found on the council's website <link>

Cllr Tom Gracey – Leader of the Council

Cllr Linda Gillham – Leader of the Runnymede Independent Residents' Group and Englefield Green Independents

Cllr Robert King – Leader of the Labour, Cooperative and Green Group

Cllr Don Whyte – Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Cllr Malcolm Cressey – Leader of the Independent Group

Cllr Sam Jenkins – Egham Town ward Councillor and Motion Proposer

Notes to editors

1. [Link - Debate Not Hate: Sign our public statement | Local Government Association](#)
2. [Link - Debate Not Hate | Local Government Association](#)

11. **Minority Group Priority Business**

To consider any item of minority group priority business registered under Standing Order 23. Any item of such business will be circulated separately with this summons.

Statement from Councillor R King - record of thanks to Councillor N Prescott

In political life it's easy to ignore the work of your opposite number. That is often not right and ignores the many positive contributions we all make to our communities. Not only because of his length of service, but also because of the many positive contributions Councillor Prescott made when he was Leader of this authority, to our residents, and his own ward in Englefield Green West. In his retirement from Runnymede, my group and I would like to pay tribute to him for his service.

Despite our occasional public disagreements, and a number of decisions made by his group that my own continue to disagree with, one of the most notable and recognisable set of decisions we all, I hope, can agree was an indisputable good, was his service and his leadership throughout the pandemic. Separate to national politics and the goings on in Westminster, he along with all the leaders of the political groups, fostered a sense of togetherness throughout Covid. One where we could all work on one mission, and on one drive to support our residents through what were very dark times. That sense of togetherness thanks to his leadership at that time, of one Council working to one goal, should be seen as example and one we should all, as do I, look back at with gratitude.

It may not have been the case we all brought the same types of skills or even the same transport to the events or organisations we helped to run, but whether it was a Volvo or what our former Leader christened the Councillors' chariot, a fine Peugeot 107, we all were able to get stuck in.

Political life, done well, takes a considerable amount of personal sacrifice and requires support from our families. We often forget that behind leaders, are supportive partners or children, who often miss out on times of togetherness or have family events interrupted because of the considerable contributions leaders make to their organisations. Councillor Prescott I know has a loving family, and a very understanding and supportive wife who I'm sure will be glad to enjoy what I hope is a temporary political retirement, but most of all is a well-earned rest.

Can I conclude by thanking him, from all in this Council, for the leadership he showed and wish him well in whatever the future holds.

12. **Press and Public to be Excluded by Resolution**

To consider any items so resolved at the meeting.