



07.05.24

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 **Wednesday, 15 May 2024 at 7.30 pm. The meeting will be held at Council Chamber - Civic Centre.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Pritchard", is written over a dotted grid background.

Andrew Pritchard  
Chief Executive  
**01932 425500**  
Email: [andrew.pritchard@runnymede.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.pritchard@runnymede.gov.uk)

**A G E N D A**

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **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](mailto: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.

3. **Election of Mayor for the 2024/25 Municipal Year**

The Council, at its meeting on 29 February 2024, resolved that Councillor Elaine Gill be nominated at the annual meeting of the Council for the office of Mayor for the 2024/25 municipal year.

**Recommendation:**

**To elect a Mayor for the 2024/25 municipal year.**

4. **Declaration by Mayor of Acceptance of Office**

5. **Appointment of Mayor's Consort**

The newly elected Mayor will announce their consort.

6. **Appointment of Mayor's Chaplain**

The newly elected Mayor will announce their Chaplain (if any).

7. **Appointment of Deputy Mayor**

The Council, at its meeting on 25 April 2024, resolved that Councillor Margaret Harnden be nominated at the Annual Council Meeting for the office of Deputy Mayor for the 2024/25 municipal year.

**Recommendation:**

**To appoint a Deputy Mayor for the 2024/25 municipal year.**

8. **Declaration by Deputy Mayor of Acceptance of Office**

9. **Appointment of Deputy Mayor's Consort**

The newly appointed Deputy Mayor will announce their consort.

10. **Mayor's Announcements**

11. **Constitution of the Council**

1. To note that the Constitution, approved at Council on 25 April 2024, will apply for the 2024/25 municipal year (subject to any in-year amendments).

2. To consider any further amendments to the Constitution.

12. **Appointment of Leader of the Council**

To appoint a Leader of the Council, in accordance with Standing Order 6.

13. **Minutes**

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To confirm and sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 25 April 2024.

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

In pursuance of Standing Order 12.1, public questions or speaking is not permitted at this meeting.

15. **Petitions**

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

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

In pursuance of Standing Order 13.1 v), questions from members of the Council are not permitted at this meeting.

17. **Appointment of Committees**

**a) Establishment of committees and sub-committees**

To establish committees and sub-committees, for the 2024/25 municipal year, in accordance with the provisions set out in the Council's Constitution.

| <b>Committee</b>                         | <b>Seats</b> |
|------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Corporate Management Committee           | 12           |
| Environment and Sustainability Committee | 10           |
| Housing Committee                        | 10           |
| Community Services Committee             | 10           |
| Planning Committee                       | 15           |
| Licensing Committee                      | 11           |
| Regulatory Committee                     | 5            |
| Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee   | 9            |
| Crime and Disorder Committee             | 9            |
| Standards and Audit Committee            | 10           |
| Standing Council Tax Setting Committee   | 12           |
| Standing Appointments Sub-Committee      | 5            |

Notes:

- No further sub-committees can be created without the express approval of Council, unless referred to in the Constitution (in accordance with Standing Order 22.2).
- Notwithstanding the Standing Appointments Sub-Committee listed above, the only other "standing" sub-committees currently approved are Licensing Sub-Committees, and Standards and Audit Sub-Committees which meet as and when required.
- The Standing Council Tax Setting Committee meets as and when required, in accordance with its terms of reference.

**Recommendation:**

**To establish the committees and sub-committees in accordance with the Constitutional arrangements set out above.**

**b) Allocation of seats to political groups**

Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 sets out how ordinary Committees must be constituted when the authority is divided into one or more political groups. The authority is to give effect, as far as reasonably practicable, to the following four principles when constituting its committees or sub-committees:

- a) that not all the seats on the committee or sub-committee are allocated to the same political group;
- b) that the majority of the seats on the committee or sub-committee are allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership;
- c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of a relevant authority which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that Authority as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority;

and

- d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of the seats on the committee or sub-committee which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the Authority.

It is important to note that the commonly accepted definition of a “political group” is a grouping of two or more members. Independent councillors therefore do not have an entitlement to a seat on a committee, although the Council is at liberty to allocate seats to independent councillors, should it so wish.

The Licensing Committee is separately constituted under the Licensing Act 2003. There is no statutory requirement for political balance but it has been the practice of the authority to ensure that this committee is constituted with consideration for proportionality arrangements. The Licensing Committee is therefore included in the wider calculations.

Further information on the calculated entitlement to seats on committees, and recommendations on the proposed allocation of seats to political groups, are to follow after discussions between group leaders.

**c) Appointment of members to committees and sub-committees**

To appoint members to serve on the above-mentioned committees and sub-committees, in accordance with the arrangements set out in the Council’s Constitution and the wishes of political groups.

Members are reminded that should the need for a change in membership arise during the year, under Standing Order 22.8 the Chief Executive, Corporate Head of Law and Governance, or Democratic Services Manager, are authorised to make and change appointments to committees and sub-committees in accordance with the wishes of the relevant political group.

The following provisions, with regard to membership of certain committees and sub-committees, apply:

- The membership of the Crime and Disorder Committee is that of the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee
- The membership of the Regulatory Committee is drawn from the membership of the Licensing Committee
- The membership of Licensing Sub-Committees are drawn from the Licensing Committee, as and when required
- The membership of Standards and Audit Sub-Committees are drawn from the Standards and Audit Committee, as and when required
- The membership of the Standing Council Tax Setting Committee is that of the Corporate Management Committee

To seek to avoid any legal difficulties in making substitute appointments during the year, the Council is asked to agree what Members other than those originally appointed should be eligible for membership of Committees or Sub-Committees. It is suggested that any other Member of the Council from the political groups be eligible, so as to maximise flexibility.

It should be noted that substitution arrangements do not apply to the

Licensing Committee and that substitutes for the Planning Committee will be required to have undertaken appropriate training.

Proposed appointments to committees will follow, at the conclusion of discussions between group leaders.

**d) Englefield Green Committee**

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The lease with the Crown Estate provides that the members of the committee are to be the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and the councillors representing the two Englefield Green Wards, together with “two other persons to be selected by the lessees (i.e. the Council) from amongst the occupying tenants of the several houses from round the Green set out in the Schedule hereto and of such other houses (if any) around the Green as may from time to time be fixed or appointed by the lessor (i.e. the Crown Estate) but in making such selections the lessees shall have regard to the wishes of the general body of such occupying tenants which may be conveyed to the lessees in writing or be ascertained by the lessees in such way as they may consider expedient”.

If elected member representation is entirely local, the political balance requirements will not apply to the Committee in 2024/2025. However, if either the Mayor or Deputy Mayor is not an Englefield Green Member it will be necessary for them to stand down from the Committee to avoid conflict with the Act in line with established practice.

In relation to residents’ representatives, for many years the Council’s practice has been to write to all the ‘qualifying tenants’ to seek nominations. The process for ascertaining residents’ wishes is not a vote. If ‘the general body’ of qualifying residents expresses wishes, the Council must take those wishes into account. This means that it must fairly and properly consider the wishes. Having done so, it must use its judgment to make its own decision.

Three nominations from qualifying tenants have been received:

1. Nigel Bromilow
2. Richard McGregor-Johnson
3. James Saunders

Curriculum vitae for the nominees above are attached as exempt appendices.

**Recommendation:**

- 1. To appoint the councillors representing the wards of Englefield Green East and West Ward Members to the Englefield Green Committee**
- 2. To appoint two local residents’ representatives.**

Background papers - Crown Lease for Englefield Green

**e) Appointment of chairs and vice-chairs of Committees**

To appoint chairs and vice-chairs to the following committees:

- Corporate Management Committee

- Environment and Sustainability Committee
- Housing Committee
- Community Services Committee
- Planning Committee
- Licensing Committee
- Regulatory Committee
- Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee
- Crime and Disorder Committee
- Standards and Audit Committee
- Englefield Green Committee

Unlisted committees and sub-committees may elect chairs and vice-chairs, as and when required, in accordance with existing custom and practice.

**Recommendation:**

**That the Council appoint a chair and vice-chair to the committees above.**

**18. Designation of minority groups**

*Consideration of this item will only be required if there is no single group with a majority of the seats on the Council.*

The Council's Constitution provides the following provision for designating minority groups, for the purposes of consideration of minority group business in accordance with Standing Order 23:

“a political group which is not the majority group, if there is a majority group. If there is no majority group, the Council may designate any political group or groups as a minority group for the purposes of Standing Orders”.

The Council is invited to consider which groups it wishes to designate as minority groups for the purposes of Standing Order 23. This item may be subject to reconsideration, should there be any changes in the political groups represented on the Council.

**Officer's recommendation:**

**That the Council agree which groups on the Council be formally designated as “minority groups” for the purposes of Standing Order 23.**

**19. Appointment to the Surrey Environment Partnership 2024/25**

Councillor L Gillham was the Council's representative in 2023/24.

**Recommendation:**

**The Council is asked to agree its representative on the Surrey Environment Partnership for 2024/25.**

**20. Appointment to the Surrey Police and Crime Panel**

Following the decision of former Councillor Nick Prescott, who was appointed to the Surrey Police and Crime Panel in 2023 for a four year term, to not stand at the election on 2 May 2024, a vacancy has arisen on the Panel. Runnymede Borough Council is invited to appoint a representative to the Panel, in accordance with the Panel's Constitution, for a term of office to be agreed by the Council.

[Further details about the work of the Surrey Police and Crime Panel](#) can be found on the Surrey County Council website.

Officers consider an appropriate term of office to be one year. Should members agree to a one year appointment, this item will feature on the summons of future annual meetings of the Council, along with other relevant appointments.

**Recommendations:**

**The Council is asked to:**

- 1. Agree its appointment to the Surrey Police and Crime Panel.**
- 2. Agree a term of office of one year for the appointed individual.**

21. **Nominations to Surrey Leaders' Group (SLG)**

To consider nominations to the SLG for possible appointment to the following bodies for a period of three years to June 2027. Any members wishing to have their nomination considered by the SLG are required to have completed and returned a nomination form to [democratic.services@runnymede.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@runnymede.gov.uk) by the end of Monday 29 May 2024. Democratic Services will issue nomination forms after the annual meeting of the Council.

**Recommendations:**

**That the Council agree its nominations to each available position, subject to nominees providing their completed nomination form to the Democratic Services by the end of Monday 27 May 2024 i.e. nomination forms not received by this time will invalidate the nomination.**

**a) Adults and Health Select Committee**

Representatives may not be members of the Corporate Management Committee.

One position available.

**b) High Sheriff Award**

One position available.

**c) Surrey County Council Pension Fund Committee**

One position available.

**d) Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**

One position available.

**e) Active Surrey Sports Partners Forum**

One position available.

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

No motions have been received under Standing Order 15.

23. **Minority Group Priority Business**

No minority group business has been received in accordance with Standing Order 23.

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

To consider any items so resolved at the meeting.



Runnymede Borough CouncilFull CouncilThursday, 25 April 2024 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Council present: Councillors S Saise-Marshall (Mayor), R Bromley (Deputy Mayor), A Balkan, A Berardi, T Burton, D Clarke, D Coen, MD Cressey, MK Cressey, V Cunningham, R Davies, S Dennett, J Furey, T Gates, E Gill, L Gillham, T Gracey, M Harnden, C Howorth, S Jenkins, E Kettle, A King, R King, S Lewis, C Mann, J Mavi, I Mullens, M Nuti, N Prescott, S Ringham, M Singh, M Smith, P Snow, S Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte, S Williams, M Willingale and J Wilson.

**Former Councillors Barry Pitt and Chris Norman**

The Council observed one minute's silence in memory of former Councillors Barry Pitt and Chris Norman.

**97 Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor provided an update on the events and engagements that she had attended since the last Council.

**98 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2024 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**99 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hulley.

**100 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no public questions.

**102 Petitions**

There were no petitions.

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

(a) Councillor Sam Jenkins asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

“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?”

The Leader replied in the following terms:

“In short, no. The assessment of last year's planting programme is not scheduled to be

carried out until June to ensure an accurate count. Counting whips in March or April is not recommended as the data would not be reliable. Generally, when planting very young trees, you would expect a survival rate of 70%. To comply with the treescape funding conditions (under which scheme these trees were planted) we are targeting a total of 75%.”

Councillor Jenkins asked whether, once the assessment of trees planted as part of last year’s tree planting programme had been carried out, whether members could be informed of the findings? Councillor Gracey confirmed that he was happy for this information to be shared when it was available.

Councillor Burton, citing difficulties in obtaining a tree preservation order for a tree on her property, asked whether the process for granting tree preservation orders needed to be reviewed? Councillor Gracey said that he was supportive of the principle of preserving trees, but that any such review of Council policy would be limited by what was acceptable within various applicable legal provisions.

Councillor Mullens, citing a previous request from occupants of Frogs Island, asked whether it was possible for the Council to provide resources, such as water bowsers, to residents who wanted support for caring for trees? Councillor Gracey said that any such proposals would need to be reviewed before commitments could be made.

(b) Councillor Isabel Mullens asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

“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?”

The Leader replied in the following terms:

“In terms of the cost on a one off basis, the relevant cabling, audio switch, and contractor costs came to £445. In addition to this, there were additional staffing costs in respect of the four members of staff required to support the arrangement for the duration of the meeting. Were we to make the recording available through You Tube we would also need to take out a licence for £200, though this would cover any additional recordings for a year.

However, this approach only provided a fixed camera view and shared screen of the presenters laptop with audio provided by the one microphone in the laptop. Any participants who could not be heard on the presenting laptops microphone was not recorded so the workaround used would not support public streaming due to the nature of the systems used and is also manually intensive in terms of additional staffing required to support.

It is for reasons like this that provision for a dedicated streaming system which can be integrated with the Council Chamber’s AV equipment was included as a target growth item in the budget put forward to Full Council in February for 2025 – 2026.”

Councillor Mullens asked why the Council was able to livestream the proclamation of King Charles III at no additional cost, in the context of an approximate £45,000 capital cost for introducing webcasting for the Council and its committees? Councillor Gracey stated that the proclamation was streamed from an individual’s handheld device and that such an arrangement would not be appropriate for a formal decision making meeting.

## 104 **Recommendations from Committees**

### 104a **Annual Review of the Constitution 2024 - recommendation from the Corporate**

## Management Committee

It was proposed (by Councillor Gracey), seconded (by Councillor Willingale) and resolved that the adoption of the proposed changes to the Constitution, as detailed in the officer's report to the Corporate Management Committee, to come into effect at the beginning of the municipal year i.e. 15 May 2024, be agreed subject to:

- 1) 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) The division of officer responsibilities document being updated to include the following provision:

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

CHES/PE”.

A named vote was requested on this resolution, with the voting recorded as follows:

### In favour of the resolution (31)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Bromley, Balkan, Burton, Clarke, Coen, MD Cressey, MK Cressey, Cunningham, Davies, Dennett, Furey, Gates, Gracey, Howorth, Kettle, A King, R King, Lewis, Mann, Mavi, Nuti, Prescott, Singh, Smith, Snow, Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte, Willingale and Wilson.

### Against the resolution (5)

Councillors Berardi, Gill, Harnden, Jenkins and Williams.

### Abstentions (2)

Councillors Mullens and Ringham.

## 104b Updates to Article 8 of the Constitution - recommendations from the Standards and Audit Committee

It was proposed (by Councillor Gracey), seconded (by Councillor MD Cressey) and **resolved** that:

- 1) The Standards and Audit Committee be responsible for approving the Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts.
- 2) Authority be delegated to the Corporate Head of Law and Governance, to make any necessary amendments to the Constitution, to give effect to 1) above.

## 104c Sustainable Fleet Management Strategy - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee

It was proposed (by Councillor Gracey), seconded (by Councillor Coen) and **resolved** that the Sustainable Fleet Management Strategy be adopted.

## 105 Preliminary consideration of deputy mayoral selection

It was proposed (by Councillor Gill), seconded (by Councillor R King) and **resolved** that Councillor Harnden be nominated as Deputy Mayor for the 2024/25 municipal year at the annual meeting of the Council.

## 106 Notices of Motion from Members of the Council under Standing Order 15

Motion a) In support of community food growing

The proposed altered motion, as set out in the supplementary summons, was moved by Councillor Berardi in accordance with Standing Order 17.10.

The proposed motion was seconded by Councillor Mullens.

The proposed altered motion was debated by the Council.

The proposed altered motion was **CARRIED**:

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 Community Services Committee to review and propose to the Corporate Management Committee options 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.
- Submitting, for consideration by the Full Council, a proposal for creating a working group tasked with promoting leases for community food growing.

A named vote was requested on the resolution, with the voting recorded as follows:

#### **In favour of the resolution (36)**

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Bromley, Balkan, Berardi, Burton, Clarke, Coen, MD Cressey, Cunningham, Davies, Dennett, Gates, Gill, Gracey, Harnden, Howorth, Jenkins, Kettle, A King, R King, Lewis, Mann, Mavi, Mullens, Nuti, Prescott, Ringham, Singh, Smith, Snow, Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte, Williams, Willingale and Wilson.

#### **Against the resolution (1)**

Councillor Furey.

#### **Abstentions (1)**

Councillor MK Cressey.

[Councillor Gillham arrived.]

Motion b) Debate Not Hate

The proposed motion, as set out in the summons, was moved by Councillor Jenkins.

The proposed motion was seconded by Councillor Williams.

The proposed motion was debated by the Council.

Councillor Mullens proposed that the motion be amended, to reference delaying the press release until the conclusion of the upcoming annual meeting of the Council, to enable the formation of political groups and the list of signatories to be updated to reflect the political makeup of the Council at that time.

Councillor Gillham seconded the proposed amendment.

The proposed amendment was put to the vote and **FELL**.

Councillor D Whyte proposed that the motion be amended to remove references to the press release.

Councillor Burton seconded the proposed amendment.

The proposed amendment was put to the vote and **FELL**.

A named vote was requested on Councillor D Whyte's proposed amendment, with the voting recorded as follows:

#### **In favour of the amendment (15)**

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Burton, Davies, Gill, Gillham, Harnden, Kettle, A King, R King, Mullens, Prescott, Ringham, Singh, D Whyte and S Whyte.

#### **Against the amendment (22)**

Councillors Balkan, Berardi, Clarke, Coen, MD Cressey, MK Cressey, Cunningham, Dennett, Furey, Gates, Gracey, Howorth, Jenkins, Lewis, Mann, Mavi, Nuti, Snow, Walsh, Williams, Willingale and Wilson.

#### **Abstentions (2)**

Councillors Bromley and Smith.

The substantive proposed motion was put to the vote and **CARRIED**:

#### **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 [debatenohate@local.gov.uk](mailto:debatenohate@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](#)

A named vote was requested on the substantive motion, with the voting recorded as follows:

**In favour of the resolution (23)**

Councillors Bromley, Berardi, MD Cressey, MK Cressey, Davies, Dennett, Furey, Gates, Gillham, Jenkins, Kettle, A King, R King, Mann, Mavi, Prescott, Ringham, Singh, Smith, Walsh, D Whyte, Williams and Wilson.

**Against the resolution (14)**

Councillor Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Burton, Clarke, Coen, Cunningham, Gill, Gracey, Howorth, Lewis, Mullens, Nuti, Snow and Willingale.

**Abstentions (2)**

Councillors Harnden and S Whyte.

**107 Minority Group Priority Business**

Councillor R. King read the statement that had been published with the summons for the meeting.

Councillors from across the chamber thanked departing members for their service to the residents of Runnymede.

**108 Press and Public to be Excluded by Resolution**

There was no exempt business.

(The meeting ended at 9.08 pm.)

Mayor

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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