

Runnymede Borough Council

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Thursday, 11 January 2024 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Council present: Councillors D Coen (Chair), V Cunningham (Vice-Chair), A Berardi, D Clarke, MK Cressey, S Jenkins, S Ringham and D Whyte.

Members of the Council absent: Councillors R Bromley and N Prescott.

In attendance: Councillors T Gates.

38 **Changes to Committee Membership**

There were no changes to committee membership.

39 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 November 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

40 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from councillor Bromley.

41 **Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

42 **Chertsey Town Centre Street Licensing**

Following Full Council approval in June 2023 to commence the process of designating Guildford Street, Chertsey as a Licence Street to enable opportunities for markets and events, a consultation exercise had been undertaken, which had yielded no response from the police or public, and no issues identified from Surrey County Council as highways authority.

The Committee were therefore asked to recommend to the next Full Council meeting that Guildford Street, at the junction of Riverdell close and Heriot Road, and the junction that meets Windsor Street and London Road, be designated as a Licence Street.

The committee were supportive of the proposal and positive about the impact on the local economy of regular markets and the vibrancy this would create.

Responding to questions about the possibility of setting up similar arrangements in Addlestone town centre, it was advised that the design of Addlestone was more complex and would likely require a road closure order for Station Road, impacting bus routes and businesses. Smaller-scale markets had been possible on previous occasions as they took place outside the Civic Centre on land owned by the Council. It was therefore the intention to focus on Chertsey and consider other locations options at a later date when the full impact could be better understood.

The terms and conditions for market operators would be updated and presented to a future committee, but it was confirmed that the vast majority of professional market operators were extremely ethical in their processes and this would be a major consideration in the

vetting process.

It was **resolved** that the following be recommended to the Council:

That the Council resolves that:

1. All previous resolutions of the Council made pursuant to paragraph 2 of Schedule 4 to the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1982 (the Act) be hereby rescinded
2. Pursuant to Paragraph 2 of Schedule 4 to the Act, that as from the date when this resolution takes effect, all areas of land within the Borough of Runnymede which are “streets” within the definition of that term contained in Paragraph 1 of Schedule 4 to the Act shall be designated as prohibited streets with the exception of any streets referred to in resolution 3 below.
3. The streets and parts of streets set out below be designated as Consent Streets and Licence Streets, as defined in Schedule 4 to the Act:

Consent Streets

- Broadway, New Haw - at the eastern service road adjacent to the street from the northern boundary of the Black Prince Public House for a distance of fifteen (15) metres in a northerly direction

Licence Streets

- High Street, Egham
- Station Road North, Egham
- Guildford Street, at the junction of Riverdell close and Heriot Road, and the junction that meets Windsor Street and London Road

43 **No Mow May**

The Corporate Head of Environmental Services acknowledged the No Mow May initiative, which had been a grassroots campaign encouraging garden owners and green space managers not to mow their lawns during the month of May.

It was the Council's intention to continue with the current mowing schedules rather than implement No Mow May, and focus would be on the management of the existing wildflower meadows to more effectively increase biodiversity in the borough.

The Committee applauded the sentiment of the initiative but several members advised that it would have a detrimental impact due to enticing species out of their natural ecosystems to lay their eggs into these flourishing areas only for them to then be extinguished when mowing resumed at the end of the campaign.

There was therefore widespread support for the recommendations, however the Committee were keen to ensure that communication to residents was clear that the campaign was not being supported for good reason, and for the Council's own initiatives and examples of promoting biodiversity to be made clear.

The Committee were keen to progress identifying areas within the borough that had the potential for wildflower meadows, as well as engage with residents and councillors to get their input on potential locations. It was added that most locations were likely to be microsites that were part of a larger open space.

Whilst it was acknowledged that site-specific management plans were in place for each location, it was felt that an overarching policy with methodology was required for how the Council managed its wildflower meadows.

Officers were encouraged to engage with Surrey County Council and the Blue Heart campaign that aimed to protect wildflower meadows from being inadvertently cut by contractors. Some of the verges identified within this campaign would be entirely compatible with a Runnymede approach to improve and increase biodiversity.

A Member emphasised the two different strands in supporting biodiversity in that some locations in the borough, such as Chertsey Meads, were meadows, whilst the other strand was specifically planting wildflowers in non meadows.

Resolved that –

- 1) Officers to continue with current mowing schedules rather than implement No Mow May
- 2) Officers to focus on the management of the existing wildflower meadows to more effectively increase biodiversity in the borough.
- 3) Officers to develop a meadow management policy to include site specific management plans, methodology and map
- 4) Officers to identify and map further areas within the borough that offer the potential for naturalisation.

44 **Grave Digging Contract**

The Corporate Head of Environmental Services briefed the committee on the recent procurement exercise for a grave digging contract, which due to the estimated contract value had been taken to and approved by Corporate Management Committee.

Due to the specialist nature of the role and intermittent workflow it had been decided to retender the service rather than bring it back inhouse under the grounds maintenance team. It was added that the removal of excess spoil would be included as part of the contract.

(The meeting ended at 8.21 pm.)

Chair