

Runnymede Borough CouncilCorporate Management CommitteeThursday, 21 March 2024 at 7.30 pm

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

In attendance: Councillors T Gates and I Mullens.

156 **Notification of Changes to Committee Membership**

Councillor Balkan substituted for Councillor Willingale.

157 **Minutes**

The public and exempt minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

158 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

159 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

160 **Referral from the Environment and Sustainability Committee - Sustainable Fleet Management Strategy**

The discussion at the recent Environment and Sustainability Committee was noted. 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.

161 **Net Zero Carbon Toolkit**

It was noted that this piece of work stemmed from a motion at a meeting of the Council. The Committee agreed that the toolkit was a useful resource.

It was **resolved** that:

1. The amendments made to the original Net Zero Carbon Toolkit, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the officer's report, be noted.
2. The Net Zero Carbon Toolkit, as contained in Appendix 1 of the officer's report, be adopted and promoted to relevant stakeholders as part of the 2024/25 Planning, Economy and Built Environment Service Area Plan.
3. Authority be delegated to the Corporate Head of Planning, Economic and Built

Environment to update the Toolkit as appropriate to reflect updated policy, best practice guidance, regulations and legislation.

162 **Climate Change Communications Plan 2024/25**

The Committee heard that there was a constructive debate at the Climate Change Member Working Party.

The Committee agreed that the plan provided a useful mechanism for the Council to use its resources effectively, target where there was potential to have the greatest impact, and ensure the even distribution of effort across the borough.

Some members felt that the plan not including the crossings at Vicarage Road, Pooley Green, and Thorpe was regrettable. Officers agreed to reconsider the crossings which would be the focus of the campaign as part of the early evidence gathering stage.

It was **resolved** that the proposed Climate Change Communications Plan 2024-25, as contained at Appendix A of the officer's report, be agreed with an implementation date of 1 April 2024.

163 **Service Area Plans for Assets and Regeneration, Finance, Customer, Digital and Collection Services, HR, Legal and Governance and the CEX Office and the Corporate Action Plan 2024/25**

There was discussion about the deliverability of some workstreams, particularly due to workloads associated with the Non-Statutory Best Value Notice (NSBVN). However, some members felt that both residents and staff welcomed aspirational service area plans. Additionally, some of the planned activities in the service area plans were linked to the wider efficiencies programme and responding to the NSBVN.

It was **resolved** that:

1. The 2024/25 Service Area Plans for the following areas be approved:

- Assets and Regeneration
- Finance
- Customer, Digital and Collection Services
- Human Resources
- Legal and Governance
- Chief Executive's Office

2. The collective Corporate Action Plan, collated from planned activity across all Service Area Plans and for delivery in 2024/25, be approved.

164 **Corporate key performance indicators - proposed indicators and targets for 2024/25**

The Committee reviewed the proposed corporate indicators and targets for 2024/25. It was noted that in addition to the performance indicators monitored at a corporate level, that some service areas had separate service performance indicators that were reported to the relevant service committee.

There was discussion about whether performance indicators could be linked to the findings of audits. It was stated that whilst the results of audits were closely monitored by senior officers and committees where necessary, such findings did not always lend themselves to the creation of measurable targets. Additionally, some activities related to statutory duties placed upon the Council where there was no discretion around the performance of

services.

It was confirmed that further information on performance indicator F1 (percentage of invoices paid in 30 days), and in particular whether this disproportionately affected payments to smaller businesses, could be provided in due course.

It was **resolved** that:

1. The proposed 2024/25 Corporate Performance Indicators descriptions, as shown at Appendix A of the officer's report, be approved.
2. The proposed 2024/25 quarterly/annual targets be approved.
3. The amended process for reporting corporate performance for member scrutiny be approved.

165 **Treasury Management Report - Q3 2023/24**

The Committee was pleased to note that the Council's treasury management function had performed strongly.

The report was noted.

166 **Gender pay gap**

The Committee was pleased to note that there had been a reduction in the Council's mean average gender pay gap. It was felt that the Council's adoption of flexible working arrangements had made senior roles more attractive to women.

The report was noted.

167 **Remodelling of the pay scales**

The remodelling of the Council's pay scales was necessary due to the upcoming increase in the National Living Wage.

Work on the simplification of the Council's pay and reward structure was due to begin early in the upcoming financial year. This was however a complicated task that necessitated benchmarking with a number of comparator authorities. Runnymede was however believed to pay less than most other nearby local authorities, although it was not considered an outlier. It was hoped that there would be staff involvement in the upcoming review of the pay and reward structure.

It was **resolved** that:

1. The re-modelling of the pay scales, in line with Option 2 set out in the officer's report, be approved.
2. The Chief Executive be delegated authority to conclude negotiations with the recognised trade union and implement a new arrangement.
3. The implementation of the new National Living Wage rate, with effect from 1 April 2024 (in accordance with the legislation), be approved.

168 **Annual Review of the Constitution 2024**

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.”

169 **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.

170 **Referral from the Environment and Sustainability Committee - Procurement of rural refuse collection vehicles**

It was noted that the Environment and Sustainability Committee was supportive of the proposal and that it was planned for the new vehicles to run on hydrotreated vegetable oil when the depot was equipped to store it.

It was **resolved** that a capital estimate for the sum set out in the officer’s report, to meet the cost of purchasing the vehicles as set out in the report, to be financed from the equipment replacement reserve, be approved.

171 **Gazetteer system procurement**

The Committee was pleased that this service would benefit from the use of modern software.

It was **resolved** that:

1. The procurement approach (an open tender using the ‘Find a Tender Service’), for the contract value as set out in the officer’s report, be approved.
2. A capital estimate for the sum set out in the officer’s report, drawing down from the pre-approved capital provision held in the Capital Programme for the Digital Transformation Programme, be approved.

172 **Replacement Finance Management System**

The Committee supported the long overdue update of the Council’s principal financial management system, which had been previously delayed due to pandemic related workloads. It was noted that the proposed facility would operate more efficiently with better integration with a range of systems in use by departments across the Council. It was hoped that, once the new system had been implemented, a review of processes could be undertaken with a view to making all processes more efficient.

It was **resolved** that:

1. The procurement approach (a competitive procurement procedure) for a new Financial Management System be approved.
2. Authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (S151), for the Council to enter into a contract of up to 10 years (plus optional extensions of up to 5 years), for the provision of a new Financial Management System up to the value of the sums stated in the officer’s report.

173 **Update on Abbey Groves**

The Committee lauded the comprehensiveness of the officer's report.

The Committee was disappointed that this asset had underperformed, which was largely attributable to the previous tenant's insolvency. Some members questioned whether sufficient scrutiny had been undertaken when the asset was acquired.

The ongoing void costs and volatility of the property market dictated the need to dispose of the asset as swiftly as possible. It was hoped that the prospective purchaser would bring employment opportunities to the Chertsey area.

The purpose of the proposed overage clause, which sought to safeguard the Council's financial position, was clarified for the Committee.

It was **resolved** that:

1. The results of the marketing exercise be noted.
2. The disposal of the freehold for the asset known as Abbey Groves, to the purchaser stated in the officer's report, be approved.
3. Authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (S151), in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Management Committee, and the Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration, to agree the terms of the disposal, including the Deed of Overage, provided that the deal fulfilled the Council's statutory obligation of best consideration reasonably obtainable.

174 **Debt write off**

The Committee noted that the majority of the write-off related to a single asset, and that all of the proposed write-offs were considered to be irrecoverable.

It was **resolved** that the write offs in respect of the bad debts be authorised in accordance with the provisions set out in the officer's report.

175 **Release of growth provisions**

The Committee received an overview of the current staffing arrangements within the Assets and Regeneration team. The current workload, particularly due to staffing shortages and responding to the NSBVN, was undeliverable within the current level of resource. The use of agency staff would be carefully monitored to avoid such costs from rising unnecessarily.

It was **resolved** that the release of £100,000 of the budget provision outlined in the 2023/2024 budget, to cover the temporary costs of staffing shortages within the Assets and Regeneration Team over the next 6 months, be approved.

176 **Letting at ADD1**

The Committee agreed that the proposed tenant's activities would complement the offerings of other businesses in the Addlestone One development. The prospective tenant was confident that their offering would be successful.

It was **resolved** that:

1. A lease be granted on the terms set out in the officer's report.
2. Authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (S151), in consultation with the

Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Management Committee, and the Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration, to make necessary amendments to the proposed terms in order to ensure that the letting progressed to completion, provided the deal continued to fulfil the Council's statutory obligation of best consideration reasonably obtainable.

(The meeting ended at 10.03 pm.)

Chair