

Runnymede Borough Council

Full Council

Thursday, 18 July 2024 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Council present: Councillors E Gill (Mayor), M Harnden (Deputy Mayor), A Berardi, D Clarke, MD Cressey, MK Cressey, R Davies, J Furey, P Gahir, T Gates, L Gillham, T Gracey, K Graham, C Howorth, J Hulley, S Jenkins, E Kettle, A King, R King, K Lee, S Lewis, C Mann, J Mavi, P Mehta, R Milstead, I Mullens, M Nuti, C Parry, S Ringham, K Rowsell, S Saise-Marshall, M Singh, M Smith, P Snow, P Tucker-Brown, D Whyte, S Whyte and J Wilson.

25 **Presentation from Holme Farm**

Representatives of Holme Farm were welcomed to the meeting and thanked for their plaque, made from recycled wood gathered on the Holme Farm estate, which commemorated Runnymede Borough Council's 50th anniversary.

26 **Mayor's Announcements**

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

27 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

28 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cunningham, Moudgil and Williams.

29 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

a) David Curran asked the Co-Leaders of the Council

"I would like to ask if there is any truth in a rumour going around about the building of flats/housing in Kingthorpe Gardens. As one of the neighbourhood watch coordinators for Burleigh Road I have been requested by other residents to enquire about this rumour.

The land now known as Kingthorpe Gardens was donated to the people of Addlestone for all to enjoy. The Council are custodians of this land and there is a covenant preventing any building on this land. Many years ago a public library was built at the top of the park on Church Road. At that time this was deemed as acceptable as this was for the good of the people.

Are the Council intending to use this land or any part of the park including the old library for residential property?"

Councillor D Whyte, on behalf of the Co-Leaders, replied in the following terms:

“There are no plans to develop the site.”

There was no supplementary question.

b) Michael Kusneraitis, on behalf of Clive Husselbury, asked the Co-Leaders of the Council:

“Since the study by Lord Mawson et al 3 years ago we have not heard about any progress on this project. I understand there has been much conversation between Council and North West Surrey Alliance regarding the development of the site known as Addlestone 2. I'd like to ask what the latest situation is and when dialogue can be opened up with the GP partners at Crouch Oak Family Practice. Please note that the building with the clinicians' rooms is leased through NHS Property Services and the tall building alongside is owned by the GP partners. At a meeting at the end of June, one of the partners and the practice manager indicated that they have never been approached directly about this matter. Addressing the issue of space would reduce pressure not just on COFP but the whole of COCO PCN which also includes Chertsey Health Centre and Ottershaw Surgery.”

Councillor R King, on behalf of the Co-Leaders, replied in the following terms:

“The work of WellNorth Enterprises, in partnership with the North West Surrey Alliance, focusses on various subjects, including identification of potential future estate developments and partnerships. Opportunities in Addlestone, working with COCO Primary Care Network and other health partners has, and continues to be considered, with discussions relating to NHS estate across Runnymede ongoing. Any such opportunities will now need to be considered within the context of the Council's engagement with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the receipt, in December 2023, of a Non-Statutory Best Value Notice. The Notice may limit the Council's ability to deliver major regeneration projects without significant external support, and consideration given to the need for the Council to reduce its overall financial leverage. Equally, consideration is to be given to the financial position of Surrey Heartlands, and the evolving programme for delivery of community-based health services in North West Surrey, the priorities for which have evolved over the past three years. The new administration looks forward to working with these partnership agencies and supporting their work in continually improving any such health outcomes and services.”

There was no supplementary question.

31 **Petitions**

There were no petitions.

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

a) Councillor Snow asked Councillor Gillham – Co-Leader of the Council

"My question goes to Cllr Linda Gilham and refers to a three-quarter page article dated the 7 June 2024 on page 14 of the Surrey Advertiser.

The article refers to the success of the Royal Holloway University and its increasing number of students. The report highlights the loss of residential accommodation something we are all aware of.

Bearing in mind the RHUL is a major employer and contributor to the wealth of this great borough does she agree with me that councillors from her RIR Group would do better to assist in tackling the problem instead of taking sides and inflaming the situation.

Demonising one side against the other is not the way to proceed and brings all of us associated with RBC into disrepute.

What direct action will Cllr Gilham take within her group to ensure this does not reoccur?"

Councillor Gillham thanked Councillor Snow for highlighting the work that goes on between the university and local councillors. She acknowledged that houses in multiple occupation had been a long-term issue for the area surrounding the university and that she doubted this was unique to Royal Holloway. Thanks were passed to Councillor Gates and other Englefield Green councillors for their work on addressing this issue with leaders at Royal Holloway. Councillor Berardi's recent award for community engagement from Royal Holloway was also acknowledged. Councillor Gillham concluded by expressing disappointment in the tone of Councillor Snow's question, in particular the use of the word "demonising", which she felt risked violence against elected members.

Councillor Snow, in accordance with Standing Order 17.19 (point of personal explanation), stated that he was reflecting the language used in correspondence that he had received on the matter. He had no supplementary question.

Councillor Gracey asked whether Councillor Gillham agreed that the role of a local councillor was to listen to residents or local organisations and to amplify the voices of those who had not been heard? Councillor Gillham agreed.

Councillor Berardi asked whether it was the duty of local councillors to work with Royal Holloway to address residents' concerns around matter such as antisocial behaviour, the affordability of property in the area, and car parking. Councillor Gillham agreed.

b) Councillor Howorth asked Councillor R King – Co-Leader of the Council:

"Would Cllr King and his co-leaders, join with me in congratulating Dr Ben Spencer and Jack Rankin on their election to Parliament to represent, respectively, the Runnymede and Weybridge, and Windsor, parliamentary constituencies which cover the Runnymede Borough Council area and commit to working, constructively, with Dr Spencer and Mr Rankin in the interests of Runnymede residents?"

Councillor R King, replied in the following terms:

"As was said to Dr Spencer privately at our count in Runnymede, I offer my congratulations and also the hope that we would have at least a few months respite from elections. In the spirit of public service, the new administration at Runnymede will look to work with whoever shares the common goals and outcomes for the betterment of our residents, and we indeed look forward to working directly with the new government to begin to put into action resolutions to a range of complex and demanding problems we have inherited from the change of political leadership at Runnymede.

I would also add, as a candidate in that election, who faced similar levels of abuse that I know Dr Spencer did, I personally will continue to work closely with his office to assist with ensuring he and his family are supported and kept safe in carrying out his work as a member of parliament. If, through my Co-Leadership of this Council, we can assist with ensuring their safety in any way, I know we will. I know the strain public service can place on your family and it is completely unacceptable that any public official, of any political stripe or none, should face any form of abuse and intimidation. I would of course extend that respect and courtesy to the Right Honourable Jack Rankin MP, even though I have had no professional communication with him so far. I will ensure we provide the shared communication methods of the Co-Leadership team to both of their offices following this meeting."

There were no supplementary questions.

c) Councillor Gracey asked Councillor D Whyte – Co-Leader of the Council:

“Is the RBC Co-Leadership team committed to ensuring any new development must be delivered alongside improvements to infrastructure, and retaining community voice in planning decisions?”

Councillor D Whyte said that the Co-Leadership was committed to delivering high quality developments in accordance with the local and national planning framework. He added that hearing the views of the local community was important element in determining planning applications.

Councillor Gracey asked whether the Co-Leaders would commit to writing to the new Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, emphasising the importance of the community’s voice, and whether this correspondence would be shared with all councillors? Councillor D Whyte said that he would consider writing to the Secretary of State once the new government’s plans became known.

d) From Councillor Nuti asked the Co-Leaders of the Council:

“At the 2024 Borough elections the public had their democratic say at the ballot box voting for their preferred candidate of choice. The candidates promoted themselves as a member of a specific political group and their literature told the public what their party would do if elected and how this would benefit them as residents.

In the case of the independents / resident groups they suggested that residents should ignore political groups and vote for councillors that could make decisions that would not be influenced by party politics.

Could each of the four co-leaders explain to me how their political allegiance (or in the case of the independent / residents’ groups, no political allegiance) will impact / be reflected in the strategic direction and decision-making process of this Council?”

Councillor Gillham replied in the following terms:

“For more than 50 years, the residents of Thorpe and Egham have voted for independent residents’ councillors. During that time, we were unable to influence important aspects of the Council’s direction and our experience had been pushed aside. Last year it became apparent that the electorate may not give one group a mandate to form an administration. The current arrangement means that our residents now have that opportunity and we can repay their loyalty. We explained to residents that we would need to work with others in order to have a voice and have a say in setting the agenda. Back in 2016, Thorpe residents agreed with their councillors that we needed a neighbourhood plan. Not only were we the first in Runnymede, but our plan was the first and I believe may still be the only one to push back the green belt and allow 40 houses to be built in the centre of the village rather than on the edge of the M25. This was an innovative move, praised by the Planning Inspector, and it was recognised in the national planning press. We were innovative then and will be innovative now.”

Councillor Ringham replied in the following terms:

“Up and down the country, at every election cycle, candidates make pledges and promises to their residents regarding what they intend to do if elected. And when elected, they will find themselves either part of the administration or part of the opposition. Being an opposition councillor, such as I have for the last 2 years, has been an exercise in frustration when faced with an administration which has been so ideologically opposed.

So I am beyond pleased at this recent turn of events for 2 reasons. First and foremost, I am pleased for all the residents who voted for myself, Councillor Singh and Councillor Mehta, as well as those who have voted Green across the borough in recent years, that they finally have full-partner representation at the heart of this new administration.

Secondly, Runnymede Borough Council has entered a new phase of grown-up consensual politics where all members of the alliance have an equal voice, regardless of their political background (or non-political in some cases) and are enthused in working together for the betterment of our borough and its residents. Myself and my fellow Green councillors will still bring forward our election promises for consideration and will work hard to see these adopted, with the confidence that we are finally in a much better position to see these succeed.

Lastly, I recognise that Councillor Nuti has many more years on me as an elected representative of the residents of Runnymede. However, I have spent more time than him as a member of the opposition. So if he or any other member of the Conservative group wishes for specific advice on how to achieve their election promises now they are in opposition, my door and, I am sure, that of my fellow Co-Leaders, is always open.”

Councillor Whyte said that the Liberal Democrat party had told residents that it would work constructively with others, and that Liberal Democrat councillors did so across the country where appropriate. He added that he would be guided by his Party’s core values when approaching decision making.

Councillor R King said that he put borough before party. He added that he was committed to addressing challenges such as the cost of living crisis, and would work with anyone when delivering for residents.

Councillor Nuti asked whether it was appropriate for parties to be part of a coalition when they had a small number of councillors.

Councillor D Whyte said that his party was careful about who it chose to work with and that the Co-Leadership was working together as an alliance.

Councillor Gillham reiterated remarks that she made earlier, regarding informing residents that her councillors would need to work with others.

Councillor Ringham stated that his party worked within the electoral system and that it was not appropriate for the last administration to be formed on the result that was delivered at the last election.

33 **Recommendations from Committees**

33a **Consent streets in the borough - recommendation from Environment and Sustainability Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor D Whyte), seconded (by Councillor Ringham) and **resolved** that approval be given to proceed with public consultation to re-designate The Broadway, New Haw from a consent street to a prohibited street.

33b **The Treatment of War Pensions in the Calculation of Housing Benefit - recommendation from Corporate Management Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor R King), seconded (by Councillor Gracey) and **resolved** that war pensions income, when calculating entitlement to Housing Benefit, be fully disregarded, in accordance with the arrangements set out in paragraph 5.4 of the officer’s

report to the Corporate Management Committee.

33c Overview and Scrutiny Function - Annual Report 2023/24 - Recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee

It was proposed (by Councillor Saise-Marshall), seconded (by Councillor Mann) and **resolved** that the Overview and Scrutiny annual report for 2023/24 be approved.

33d Developer Contributory Advisory Group - recommendation from Corporate Management Committee

It was proposed (by Councillor Gillham), seconded (by Councillor R King) and **resolved** that:

- 1) The creation of a Developer Contributions Advisory Group, in accordance with the adopted Developer Contributions Governance Arrangements and as set out in the Corporate Management Committee report of January 2023, be endorsed.
- 2) The terms of reference for the group, as attached at Appendix 1 of the officer's report to the Corporate Management Committee, be endorsed.
- 3) The Corporate Head of Law and Governance be authorised to make any necessary amendments to the Council's Constitution to give effect to the Developer Contributions Advisory Group and the terms of reference.

33e Review of Certain Special Responsibility Allowances Provided Under the Members' Allowances Scheme - recommendation from Corporate Management Committee

It was proposed (by Councillor D Whyte), seconded (by Councillor Ringham) and **resolved** that:

- 1) That the Runnymede Members' Allowances Scheme be amended to provide that in the event of the appointment of more than one elected member to be Leader of the Council i.e. the appointment of co-leaders, the elected members so appointed shall receive a Special Responsibility Allowance.
- 2) The amount of the Special Responsibility Allowance payable to each elected member appointed as a Co-Leader shall be, for the year 2024/25, £4,249. This sum to be uplifted in line with the formula contained in the Members' Allowance Scheme.
- 3) For the year 2024/25, the sums allocated in the Runnymede Members' Allowances Scheme for the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance for the position of Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, shall be used to fund the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance to elected members appointed as Co-Leaders.
- 4) The Special Responsibility Allowance payable for the post of Chair of the Corporate Management Committee shall be increased to the sum of £11,330 for the year 2024/25. This sum to be uplifted in line with the formula contained in the Members' Allowance Scheme.
- 5) The Special Responsibility Allowance for the post of Vice-Chair of the Corporate Management Committee shall be increased to the sum of £5,665 for the year 2024/25. This sum to be uplifted in line with the formula contained in the Members' Allowance Scheme.
- 6) That the Runnymede Members Allowances Scheme be amended pursuant to the power granted by Regulation 10(6) Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England)

Regulations 2003 to provide where an amendment is to be made which affects an allowance payable for the year in which the amendment is made, the scheme will provide for the entitlement to such allowance as amended to apply with effect from the beginning of the year in which the amendment is made.

Resolutions 4) and 5) above were the subject of a named vote, with the voting noted as follows:

In favour (23)

Councillors Gill, Harnden, Berardi, Davies, Gahir, Gates, Gillham, Graham, Jenkins, Kettle, A King, R King, Lee, Mehta, Milstead, Mullens, Parry, Ringham, Rowsell, Singh, Smith, D Whyte and S Whyte.

Against (15)

Councillors Clarke, MD Cressey, MK Cressey, Furey, Gracey, Howorth, Hulley, Lewis, Mann, Mavi, Nuti, Saise-Marshall, Snow, Tucker-Brown and Wilson.

Abstentions (0)

34 Notices of Motion from Members of the Council under Standing Order 15

Motion a)

Councillor Mavi proposed the following altered motion, in accordance with Standing Order 17.10:

Motivation:

This motion is being brought forward to raise awareness about cardiac risk in young people (18 - 35 years old) with a view to taking steps to address the risk.

This Council notes:

Sudden cardiac death describes the unexpected death of an individual due to a cardiac cause where the death occurs soon after symptoms start (within one hour) or they are found dead having had no symptoms 24-hours previously.

In young individuals SCD can be caused by a range of cardiac conditions, including cardiomyopathy, channelopathies, and coronary artery disease. The risk of SCD varies by condition, as does the diagnostic process and treatment strategies.

Every week in the UK, 12 people apparently fit and healthy, aged 35 and under – die from a previously undiagnosed heart condition.

The intention of screening for SCD is to detect an underlying cardiac condition, which, through the initiation of early treatment, reduces the likelihood of sudden cardiac death. In addition to preventative screening, treatment with an Automated External Defibrillator within one minute of a sudden cardiac arrest can give survival rates of up to 90%. This drops to less than 20% after three minutes.

This Council believes:

Awareness, screening, early treatment, and public access to defibrillators will help save lives from Sudden Cardiac Death.

This Council resolves to:

- 1) *Work in partnership with the health service and voluntary sector partners in North Surrey to raise awareness of the risk of undiagnosed heart conditions and the steps that can be taken by people to address this risk.*
- 2) *Promote and facilitate access to cardiac screening programmes, particularly for young people and those with a family history of heart conditions, as well as educational workshops and resources.*

The Mayor consented to the altered motion being considered.

The proposed altered motion was seconded by Councillor Clarke.

Following debate on the proposed motion, it was proposed (by Councillor D Whyte), seconded (by Councillor Jenkins) and agreed that the proposed motion be amended to include the following as a third element to the Council's resolution:

Ask the Community Services Committee to review Runnymede's web facility that details locations of defibrillators across the borough, with a view to ensuring that it is up to date.

The amended altered motion was put to the vote and **CARRIED**:

Motivation:

This motion is being brought forward to raise awareness about cardiac risk in young people (18 - 35 years old) with a view to taking steps to address the risk.

This Council notes:

Sudden cardiac death describes the unexpected death of an individual due to a cardiac cause where the death occurs soon after symptoms start (within one hour) or they are found dead having had no symptoms 24-hours previously.

In young individuals SCD can be caused by a range of cardiac conditions, including cardiomyopathy, channelopathies, and coronary artery disease. The risk of SCD varies by condition, as does the diagnostic process and treatment strategies.

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This Council believes:

Awareness, screening, early treatment, and public access to defibrillators will help save lives from Sudden Cardiac Death.

This Council resolves to:

- 1) *Work in partnership with the health service and voluntary sector partners in North Surrey to raise awareness of the risk of undiagnosed heart conditions and the steps that can be taken by people to address this risk.*

- 2) Promote and facilitate access to cardiac screening programmes, particularly for young people and those with a family history of heart conditions, as well as educational workshops and resources.
- 3) Ask the Community Services Committee to review Runnymede's web facility that details locations of defibrillators across the borough, with a view to ensuring that it is up to date.

35 **Minority Group Priority Business**

There was no minority group priority business.

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

There was no exempt business.

(The meeting ended at 9.11 pm.)

Mayor