

Runnymede Borough CouncilCorporate Management CommitteeThursday, 17 October 2024 at Time Not Specified

Members of the Committee present: Councillors R King (Chair), L Gillham (Vice-Chair), T Gracey, C Howorth, S Jenkins (In place of A Berardi), C Mann, J Mavi, R Milstead, S Ringham, M Smith, P Snow and D Whyte.

61 Notification of Changes to Committee Membership

Councillor Jenkins substituted for Councillor Berardi.

62 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2024 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

63 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

64 Declarations of InterestAgenda item 15 – Addlestone One Letting

Councillor Milstead declared that he knew the director of the business concerned and withdrew from the meeting for this item.

Agenda item 18 – Letting at Magna Square

Councillor Mavi declared that she worked with the Egham Chamber of Commerce, who had given the prospective tenant a licence for a market stall. She confirmed that this did not influence her consideration of the matter before the Committee.

65 Calendar of Meetings - 2025/26 Municipal Year

It was **resolved** that the Council be recommended to approve the proposed calendar of meetings.

66 Update on Recruitment for an Independent Remuneration Panel and Members' Allowances Scheme for 2025/26

The Committee agreed that the proposed approach to establishing a new Independent Remuneration Panel was pragmatic, and that it hoped that work on recruiting panel members could start as soon as possible. It was confirmed that preparatory benchmarking work had already been started, in order to expedite the review as much as possible. Members were reminded of the importance of promoting the opportunity to join the panel when the role was advertised again.

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

- 1) Withdraw the existing Members' Allowances Scheme with an end date of 31 March 2025 inclusive.

- 2) Agree the provisions of the current Members' Allowances Scheme (subject to any subsequent necessary and practicable amendments that may come forward in the intervening period), including an uplift to basic and special responsibility allowances commensurate with the staff pay award (but not including any lump sum provisions or similar), for 2025/26 with an implementation date of 1 April 2025 inclusive.
- 3) Delegate authority to the Corporate Head of Law and Governance to implement the 2025/26 Members' Allowances Scheme to give effect to the above, and undertake any necessary measures to do so (such as advertising it in a local newspaper, authorising the recovery of payments made, etc).
- 4) Request officers bring forward, for members' consideration, a revised financial offer and recruitment process for an Independent Remuneration Panel.

[Councillor Gracey did not vote on this item or the previous item (Calendar of meetings – 2025/26 Municipal Year) because he was not present for the entirety of the items.]

67 **Climate Change Update**

The Committee discussed the activities that had been taking place since the last update. The anti-idling campaign had not been in place long enough to reach any conclusions on its effectiveness.

The report was noted.

68 **Runnymede Borough Council Green House Gas Emissions Report 2023/2024**

There was discussion about decarbonising the Council's assets. Work was ongoing with the Assets and Regeneration team to collect data for assets where reliable data was not yet available. Progressing this work required the co-operation of those occupying the buildings concerned. Further work was to take place on scoping potential building works, aimed at reducing the Council's carbon footprint. Any such works were dependent on the level of resource available and whether proposals represented value for money. It was however stated that some works were likely to be prohibitively expensive.

Progress against the Council's plan to be 'net zero' by 2030 was discussed. Various activities had been taking place to reduce the Council's carbon footprint. A number of remaining areas of work would however be gradually more challenging to progress. It was suggested by some members of the committee that progress towards the council being 'net zero' by 2030 had been delayed by not declaring a 'climate emergency' sooner.

The report was noted.

69 **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

The Committee noted that the financial forecast contained in the report would be subject to revisions, as some information such as the local government financial settlement, were awaited. Some of the proposed growth items within the Strategy were also subject to further reports to the relevant committees, such as the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025/26

There was discussion about the proposed depot works. The figures within the Strategy were estimates, pending the conclusion of the scoping works that were currently taking place. A report would be considered by the Community Services Committee in due course.

Members asked about the benefits likely to be delivered under the Corporate Debt and

Financial Inclusion pilot which included an example of a tenant supported to remain in their home and apply for a raft of benefits, avoiding potential eviction and enabling debt to be reduced.

Members discussed the potential opportunity for the restructuring of debt and any consequential discount for early repayment, which needed to be considered in light of the current level of internal borrowing. Further work was being undertaken to model the impact of any repayments.

Members were reminded of upcoming training opportunities, all of which were open to all councillors.

It was **resolved** that the Council be recommended to approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy including:

- 1) The approval of the growth items as set out in Appendix 4 of the officer's report, for inclusion in the budget for 2025/26, to be presented to the January 2025 Corporate Management Committee, subject to the processes set out in section 5 of the report being undertaken.
- 2) The transfer of £337,000 to the Local Plan Reserve to support preparation of the Local Plan review over the next 3 years.

70 **Business Rates Pooling Arrangements 2025 - 2026**

It was noted that the additional income derived from this arrangement related only to the financial year 2025/25 and that the opportunity for future Pooling arrangements would be impacted by the timing of changes to the Business Rates Retention Scheme, such as the resetting of the baselines within the scheme.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) Surrey County Council be confirmed as lead authority, and that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government be notified via the Delta system, of the Council's intention to enter into the Surrey Business Rates Pool for the financial year 2025/26.
- 2) That the Assistant Chief Executive (Section 151) Officer be authorised to sign the Memorandum of Understanding governing the pooling arrangements for 2025/26.

71 **Member Working Parties**

There was a debate over the co-leaders' proposals.

Some members felt that discontinuing the Regeneration and Major Projects Member Working Party would be disadvantageous in the context of member involvement in reviewing and being aware of proposals from external partners. A contrary view was expressed, highlighting the Council's ability to arrange ad-hoc member briefings as and when matters required member input or awareness. It was also suggested that a proposal to commission focused task and finish groups may be forthcoming in due course.

Concerns were raised on the suspension of the Property and Assets Task Force, pending a review of arrangements by the Constitution Member Working Party. It was suggested that the Council's portfolio of properties required detailed and regular member oversight and that suspending its meetings was an unduly risky approach to take, particularly in the context of the Non-Statutory Best Value Notice. It was contested that the task force had itself been the cause of delays to time sensitive matters which it was felt had put the Council at a commercial disadvantage. It was therefore stated by some members that the

Corporate Management Committee should be reviewing issues directly.

Concerns were raised by some members who stated that the proposals represented an overall reduction in councillor engagement.

The Committee noted that, pending the outcome of the Council's meeting on 24 October 2024, member working parties would be able to begin meeting shortly after. It was hoped that the review of working parties by the Constitution Member Working Party would result in a more agile system in 2025/26.

Officers would be presenting updated constitutional provisions for the Council's consideration at its meeting on 24 October 2024.

It was **resolved** that the Council be asked to agree:

- 1) The proposals put forward by the co-leaders, as detailed in the officer's report, i.e.:
 - a) The Constitution and Climate Change Member Working Parties to continue in accordance with their current remits.
 - b) The remit of the Service Review, Communications and Transformation Member Working Party be revised to focus on Digital Transformation.
 - c) The discontinuation of the Regeneration and Major Projects Member Working Party.
 - d) That the Property and Assets Task Force be held in abeyance pending a review of its functions by the Constitution Member Working Party, and the completion of any necessary Constitutional matters via the Corporate Management Committee and the Council.
- 2) Politically proportional membership arrangements for the agreed member working parties, on the basis of seven members per working party.
- 3) That the Corporate Head of Law and Governance be authorised to make further changes to Runnymede's provisions in relation to member working parties, in consultation with the chair and vice-chair of the Corporate Management Committee, should unforeseen matters arise during the course of the remainder of the municipal year.

The Committee requested that officers prepare amended member working party constitutional provisions for the Council's consideration, taking into account the recommendation of the Corporate Management Committee and any other proposed adjustments that officers feel are required to facilitate the smooth operation of the Council's member working parties for the remainder of the municipal year.

72 **Q2 2024/5 Project Portfolio Report**

The Committee was advised that, since the report was published, the housing development projects that had previously been reporting as 'red' in quarter one had now been updated to 'green', subject to a newly appointed Housing Development Manager taking up their post towards the end of the year.

In response to a question, the Committee noted that further information on the Shared Prosperity Fund was likely to be the subject of a report to the Corporate Management Committee on 21 November 2024.

The sites that were the subject of projects H021, H033 and H034 were confirmed.

The report was noted.

73 **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.

74 **Procurement of Temporary Staffing Contract**

The Committee considered proposals to tender for a contract to supply the Council with temporary staff. The report set out various proposals for the tender arrangements, along with a recommended approach.

In response to a question, the Committee heard that the tender document would be placing some weight on prospective suppliers' abilities to provide development opportunities to local people who were currently out of work.

The Committee agreed that the proposals were clear and well reasoned.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The procurement of a new contract, for the supply of agency workers, via Lot 1 of the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Managed Services for Temporary Agency Resources (MSTAR4) framework, be agreed.
- 2) A contract for a period of four years, with the option to extend for up to one further year, up to the value stated in the report (amount inclusive of any extensions), be agreed.

75 **Addlestone One Letting**

The Committee considered a proposal to let a unit in the Addlestone One development. It was noted that the price agreed with the prospective tenant was comparable to similar units within the development.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The proposed lease be granted, on the terms set out in the officer's report.
- 2) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (Section 151), in consultation with the Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration, the Chairman, and Vice Chairman of Corporate Management Committee, the ability to make necessary amendments to the proposed terms in order to ensure that the matter progressed to completion, subject to ensuring that it achieves best consideration reasonably obtainable in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

76 **Assets Regearing - Pine Trees**

The Committee considered a proposal to vary the lease currently granted to a tenant. The Committee reviewed the proposal, in particular the financial elements of the report. It was agreed that the proposal was a positive outcome for the tenant and the Council.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) A Deed of Variation be granted in accordance with the terms set out in the officer's report.
- 2) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (Section 151), in consultation with the Chairman, and Vice Chairman of Corporate Management Committee, the ability to make necessary amendments to the proposed terms in order to ensure that the matter progressed to completion, subject to ensuring that it achieves best consideration reasonably obtainable in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

77 **Addlestone One Update**

The Committee considered proposals relating to specific tenancies in the Addlestone One development. The Committee was mindful of the need to ensure that Addlestone One retained a complementary range of offerings, in order to safeguard it as a locally valuable facility. Specific consideration was given to the risks and alternative options highlighted within the officer's report.

It was noted that many town centres, particularly those with a focus on leisure offerings, had been facing challenging conditions because of the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing rises in the cost of living.

It was **resolved** that the Council be asked to:

- 1) Grant a new lease on the terms set out in the officer's report, subject to the Assistant Chief Executive (Section 151) being satisfied with the trading estimates and other financial data they require being presented by the tenant detailed in the officer's report.
- 2) Agree a capital contribution for the amount set out in the officer's report, to be drawn from the existing capital provisions, to facilitate the transaction subject to necessary permissions being obtained.
- 3) Delegate to the Assistant Chief Executive (Section 151), in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Corporate Management Committee, the ability to agree various terms outlined in the officer's report, to enable the transaction to be delivered.
- 4) Delegate to the Assistant Chief Executive (Section 151), in consultation with Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Management Committee, the ability to vary the terms of the new lease for the area shown in Appendix C, in line with the Heads of Terms outlined in the officer's report, subject to ensuring that it achieves best consideration reasonably obtainable in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

78 **Letting at Magna Square**

The Committee considered a proposal to let a unit in the Magna Square development. It was noted that the unit concerned had been the subject of significant marketing. Clarification was provided on how the prospective letting impacted the information provided in the previously agreed Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The proposed lease be granted, on the terms set out in the officer's report.
- 2) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (S151 Officer), in consultation with the Chair and Vice chair of the Corporate Management Committee, to make the necessary amendments to agree final terms for the unit identified in the officer's report.

79 **Asset Disposal**

The Committee reviewed a report that proposed the disposal of an asset, following officer consideration of the options available to the Council. The unit in question had proven to be unattractive to prospective tenants, having suffered from the challenges brought about by the pandemic and subsequent economic downturn.

The Committee discussed the financial information provided in the officer's report. The cost of refurbishing the unit, to make it competitive in the current market, was likely to be prohibitively expensive. The Committee agreed that the proposal represented the best possible outcome for the Council, and noted that it would provide a significant capital receipt. The impact of the capital receipt would be reflected in future iterations of the Medium-Term Financial Forecast.

It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The asset in question be disposed of in accordance with the provisions set out in the officer's report.
- 2) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive (Section 151), in consultation with Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Management Committee, to sign off the terms of the transaction.

(The meeting ended at 9.38 pm.)

Chair