

Runnymede Borough CouncilCommunity Services CommitteeTuesday, 1 February 2022 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors C Howorth (Chairman), M Adams (Vice-Chairman), T Burton, D Clarke, D Coen, M Harnden and S Lewis.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors R Bromley, C Mann and S Walsh.

In attendance: Councillors T Gracey and S Williams

**1 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2021, were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**2 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Mann and S Walsh.

**3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4 Holme Farm Grant Funding Request**

The Committee's approval was sought to award a one-off grant to the local Holme Farm Community Project in the sum of £25,000. This would be drawn from underspends in various budgets under the remit of Community Services.

The Committee recalled that, at its last meeting in November 2021, representatives of the Holme Farm Community Project (HFCP), had presented an overview of the proposals for a piece of unused brownfield site land in the Woodham and Rowtown ward, belonging to DEFRA. It was confirmed that DEFRA were willing to lease the land to the HFCP who had now become a registered charity called Community Workshops and Gardens @ Holme Farm.

This was a community based project aimed at improving and enriching the lives of people through a series of activities and facilities covering educational, health and wellbeing as well as promoting environmental sustainability and biodiversity.

Members reviewed the list of projects it was planned to execute on site; including a wood workshop, sensory garden, allotments, furniture restoration and upcycling, wellbeing therapies and re-wilding. A detailed plan and business case were noted.

The Committee was very supportive of the project which was described as 'Green Social Prescribing' which fully aligned to the Council's commitment to such things and NHS England's recognition of the importance of being outside and its positive impact on mental and physical wellbeing.

Officers confirmed that the requested sum of £25,000 would be used for set up and mobilisation costs, and local ward Councillors were able to inform the Committee of how work was progressing, including the sign up of approximately 200 active volunteers to help deliver and develop the project to be a resource for the community and north Surrey. The

assistance given by Dr Ben Spencer MP was also much appreciated. Also thanked were Councillors T Gracey, S Lewis and M Cressey for their support of the project.

The Committee was keen to be updated on the project and how funds were being spent and discussed how best this might be achieved by way of for example, newsletters, a monthly bulletin, quarterly review, and inviting the charity to present again in the future. The importance of maintaining a partnership with the Council through local Ward Councillors and others involved with the project was noted.

The Committee agreed that a similar approach to all future requests for funding from other organisations would assist in providing a structure to review and account for how funding was utilised and measure outcomes in a consistent way.

Officers confirmed that should future requests for funding be received the organisation would, as with others, be required to follow the Council's existing grant aid application process.

#### **RESOLVED that –**

**Approval is given for a one-off funding amount of £25,000 to Holme Farm towards the overall cost of project initiation, utilising underspends in the current Community Services budget.**

#### **5 Community Safety Update**

The Committee received a detailed report on aspects of the Community Safety Co-ordinator's work around Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs), including a recommendation that the Councillor representation on the Community Safety Partnership be increased from one to two.

The Committee recalled that PSPOs had been discussed at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee in July 2021 following the call in of a decision made by the Committee in June 2021 not to recommend making a PSPO for an area of Egham Hythe. Members had requested a number of actions which were set out in detail in the report.

Firstly, Members noted all the different reporting channels that had to be used for evidence to be officially recorded and count as evidence to justify consideration of a PSPO. It was agreed these needed to be promoted widely in order to be effective as there was a perception that residents did not feel 'heard' by the official channels. Officers assured the Committee that reports in to Community Safety were logged and acknowledged.

Officers confirmed that elected members could present evidence to the Joint Action Group through the Community Safety Co-ordinator using a dedicated referral form available from Officers.

The Committee was disappointed that the Police were unable to break down anti-social behaviour data further than they already did; specifically, Members had requested this for the Hythe and Thorpe areas.

Members noted the process for making a PSPO from building up an evidence base through the various official reporting lines to its recommendation by the relevant multi-agency organisations for Officers to make the order under delegated authority following consultation. A helpful flowchart was appended for information. Members asked Officers to consider whether the reporting process could be made into simple guidance and promoted on the Council's website as well as stressing that only reports made in this way counted as evidence.

Members were given an overview of the key meetings of the different agencies and

processes within Community Safety; these being the Community Safety Partnership, (CSP) Joint Action Group and Community Harm and Risk Management Meeting.

The Committee was advised that the Community Safety Partnership fulfilled a statutory role under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for local agencies to work together to reduce crime and disorder. The local agencies included Surrey Police, the Borough and County Council, including the Fire authority, the Probation service and Clinical Commissioning Group. Additionally, in Runnymede Housing Providers were also invited. Under the CSP sat the Joint Action Group and Community Harm and Risk Management Meeting, complemented by a number of other agencies. Data on crime was reported to these groups and then to the CSP on a quarterly basis.

With regard to the CSP, the Council had appointed one Borough Councillor who was also a County Councillor and it was agreed that it would be beneficial to recommend that a Member of the Community Services Committee be nominated, subject to the new procedure for making external appointments, recently approved by Corporate Management Committee. It was noted that the second Councillor did not have to be a Member of Community Services, but that it was preferable they were and/or had the appropriate experience, as was the case with the Council's Armed Forces Champion representatives.

Officers confirmed that there was dialogue between meetings and that urgent issues could be dealt with without having a formal meeting. Evidence of this was a recent report about cruelty to wildlife reported to the Surrey Police Wildlife Officer.

Officers described other developments that might be possible following the merger of Community Development and Community Services. These were that the process for deploying CCTV be prioritised during 2022/2023, with the CSP, now chaired by the Safer Communities Manager, being able to authorise their placement and chosen locations in the borough. In addition, it was considered that further partnership working and information sharing would be beneficial to promote Community Safety and more effective working between agencies.

It was agreed that the role Members played was important in encouraging people to report issues officially so that their evidence did not remain as 'anecdotal'. Officers confirmed that if there was reluctance to report for fear of reprisals, Councillors could report on their behalf by way of one of the channels as described. Members were also asked to encourage participation in surveys such as the annual Community Safety Partnership one.

Officers were asked to consider producing an article for 'Runnymede Talks' about reporting anti-social behaviour to explain the official process and importance of 'report it' and to raise with Surrey Police promotion of 'silent solutions', a mechanism to report a crime when the person was unable to do so if in immediate danger, and feedback to residents and Councillors on incidents reported to them direct.

Officers were thanked for their comprehensive report and the Committee was pleased to support the recommendation accordingly.

#### **RESOLVED that –**

**A Member of Community Services Committee be nominated to serve on the Community Safety Partnership for 2022/2023, subject to the outcome of discussions at the Community Safety Partnership and subject to the new provisions for external appointments approved by the Corporate Management Committee.**

[Subsequent to the meeting, Officers confirmed that the Partnership was happy to increase the number of elected Members nominated to serve on the Partnership from one to two]

## 6 **Runnymede Pleasure Grounds Draft Estimates 2022/2023**

The Committee, in its role as Trustees of the Pleasure Grounds, reviewed the proposed budget for 2022/2023 as appended to the report.

Members noted that the budget remained very healthy with a projected yield of £138,777, with reserves standing at £251, 145 for 2020./2021. The installation of an ANPR system in March 2021 improved car parking income significantly, with the Pleasure Grounds being even more popular during the Covid lockdown as a local valued Open Space.

In light of the projected income, the Committee was content that car parking charges be frozen again for 2022/2023.

Members noted that the Trust was still owed £12,500 in respect of the HM Queen Statue. Officer were asked to confirm what the current position was with regard to the outstanding payment and legal agreement regarding the statue.

**RESOLVED that –**

**The proposed financial projection for 2022/2023, be approved.**

## 7 **Runnymede Pleasure Grounds Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) System and Update on Improvements**

The Committee received for information a report regarding Runnymede Pleasure Grounds and the first year of operation of the new Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) System. An overview of future improvements to the Pleasure Grounds was also noted.

Officers confirmed that after a delay owing to Covid and problems obtaining hardware and supplies for its installation, ANPR was introduced and went live on 22 March 2021. The Council used SAGOSS, for which a waiver was agreed with the system costing £50,000 and an annual maintenance fee of £18,000. These were funded from the Runnymede Pleasure Grounds budget, administered by Financial Services on behalf of the Trust.

Officers reported that there were a few teething issues with the system. Initially, staff were on-site to assist all the time; this reduced to the weekend in the summer of 2021 and café staff are also a point of contact should visitors have any problems with the machines.

Members noted the current charges were £1.50 for 1 hour, £3 for 2 hours, £4.50 for 3 hours and over 4 hours had a charge of £6. Visitors had the option to purchase an annual pass for £50. The first 30 minutes were free which reduced the above charges slightly and visitors were encouraged to use cashless payments, but paying by cash was retained in the interests of accessibility. Officers advised that 61% of visitors used a cashless payment, 24% RingGo and 15% cash.

Officers were asked to check whether RingGo recognised the first 30 minutes being free as some Members reported it did not appear to take it into account.

With regard to promoting equalities, all blue badge holders could enjoy 3 hours free parking if they pre-booked so that the ANPR would not register a non-payment for their stay. The Committee agreed that this and the initial 30 minutes free could be better publicised with more prominent signage on site. It was suggested that 'Runnymede Talks' and the local Talking Newspaper service would be appropriate ways of publicising the benefits of free parking for blue badge holders. Officers confirmed there were also several whitelists such as for members of the skiff and punt club on site.

Members reviewed the income received both before and after the ANPR system was installed, and the effects of the pandemic, lockdown and subsequent lifting of restrictions.

The result was income from the ANPR machines which far exceeded the budget, despite some poor weather in the early summer of 2021.

In terms of visitor numbers, Members were impressed that the ANPR had recorded 44,619 cars between April and September 2021, which according to industry standards equated to approximately 145,581 people. There were 350 blue badge holders at the Pleasure Grounds making 3,136 visits over a six month period, which equated to an additional 10,442 visitors and excluding the 4,184 visits by people on the various whitelists.

Members noted that the Pleasure Grounds Reserves stood at £251,145 at the end of the 2020/2021 financial year. Officers confirmed that this would mean making improvements at the Pleasure Grounds could be prioritised over the next three years and reports would be submitted in due course for the Committee to approve the works they would like to see realised. A priority for the Committee was the upgrading of play equipment and the Splashpark and it was confirmed this was in hand as part of a wider review of play areas and equipment, currently being undertaken by Officers in the Green Space team.

In the context of making improvements, Members also mentioned that the layout at the entrance of the Pleasure Grounds could be awkward and asked if the flow plates could be removed.

Another issue raised was the uses to which on-site CCTV could be deployed which Officers agreed to discuss the Borough Inspector.

## **8 Community Services Key Performance Indicators Quarters 2 & 3 2021/2022**

The Committee noted the key performance indicators for Community Development in Quarters 2 and 3 and Community Services in Quarter 3.

Officers reported that since the merger of the two service areas the indicators would be reviewed and updated as part of future plans to develop the service.

In Community Development, Officers drew Members' attention to the consistently high performance of Safer Runnymede's answer rate of Careline calls, and the numbers attending Chertsey Museum and accessing their Education sessions. These had exceeded targets despite the Pandemic which was pleasing to record and reflected the hard work and diligence of staff at the Museum. Opportunities to develop additional income for the Museum were being investigated. The Community Halls continued to be used as vaccination centres and other indicators were affected by continued Covid restrictions. A full recovery plan was being developed, to be reported in due course.

In respect of Community Services, Members were advised that it had been another quarter of strong performance across the business centre, including the hospital discharge service and Home Improvement Agency, as well as showing recovery from the pandemic, especially in Community Transport and Day Centres, where service provision would be consulted on to establish current and future patterns of need and delivery. As funding became available, further developments to the hospital discharge service would be reported to the Committee.

Officers undertook to make contact with the Constellations Swimming Club to find a cost effective solution for them to make full use of transport available, where capacity had been affected by Covid restrictions.

With regard to Community Alarms, Officers planned to consider adding a performance indicator for the number of referrals in 2022/2023.

The Committee was pleased that the Social Prescribing and Home Improvement Agency had now recruited staff to some of the vacancies and those arising from the restructure.

Officers planned to re-launch the Agency when the backlog of demand had been cleared, delayed owing to staff shortages and the difficulties of carrying out work during the Pandemic. This would be the subject of a future report to the Committee.

Officers were thanked for their reports.

9 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

There was no discussion of the Exempt Appendix A to item 4, Holme Farm Grant Funding Request.

(The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.)

Chairman