

Runnymede Borough Council

Corporate Management Committee

Thursday, 23 June 2022 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors T Gracey (Chairman), C Howorth (Vice-Chair), M Cressey, M Heath, N King, R King, I Mullens, M Nuti, T Burton (Substitute, in place of D Whyte), E Gill (Substitute, in place of L Gillham), N Prescott (Substitute, in place of J Gracey) and P Snow (Substitute, in place of M Willingale).

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2022 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

2 Apologies for Absence

None received.

3 Declarations of Interest

None received.

4 Empowering Communities Strategy

The Chief Executive advised Committee that the Empowering Communities strategy straddled all other elements of the corporate plan and was an eclectic mix of priorities.

There were seven key elements to the strategy over the next five years, and the Chief Executive emphasised that the strategy was not starting from scratch, with many examples contained within of work well underway. However, there was now the opportunity to continue doing these things in a more cost-effective and targeted manner.

The seven key elements would be:

- Evidence Based Decision Making
- Listening to our Residents
- Enabling Communities to help themselves
- Enabling Communities to take control of services of plans for their areas
- Advocacy-standing up and pressing government and other organisations to meet Runnymede residents' priorities.
- Working effectively with partner organisations.
- Dealing with inequalities. Identifying those pockets of deprivation that exist in Runnymede and where particular cohorts in the population are not benefitting from the relative prosperity of the area. This could be because of skills, poorer housing, less access to education and life chances or physical factors such as poor transport and access to facilities

Part of the strategy would be the creation of a Citizens' Panel, which would aim to have around 800 residents from a mix of backgrounds. This panel would be statistically significant enough to be able to be utilised for Council wide consultations and despite an initial outlay would save the Council money in the long-term.

The Chief Executive highlighted the work undertaken by the Forest Estate and Holme Farm as a good example of enabling communities to help themselves, whilst formal engagement with residents about taking control of activities, facilities or services on the Council's behalf

would also be considered.

Shaping the county devolution deal was cited as an example of advocating and meeting residents' needs and working closely with voluntary sector organisations who could run services better and more effectively would also be key, and part of this would include reviewing how grant funding was distributed.

The final part of the strategy looked at dealing with inequalities; identifying areas of deprivation and ensuring issues in those areas were tackled in a targeted way.

The Committee Chairman advised the strategy was in draft form, and feedback from Members was now welcomed by 8 July 2022 ahead of a final strategy coming to Corporate Management Committee on 14 July.

A Member felt that a community hub strategy was needed, and a better long-term vision with what was done with the Council's community assets. The Chief Executive agreed and felt there was more that could be done with community halls post-covid.

Members were concerned about how the Council would recruit and monitor some 800 volunteers for the Citizens' Panel. The Chief Executive advised that professional support would be required to recruit, admitting it could take 12-18 months to set up, whilst a budget would be required to provide incentives such as shopping vouchers for participants. Furthermore, once the Panel was set up it would be managed by the Elections Team, who would maintain numbers and replace those who no longer wish to participate.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Panel could be sub-divided as necessary to focus on participants of certain age, faith groups, sexual orientation, etc. Members felt that it was important that the Panel reported back to Council on an annual basis.

A Member felt it was important for the Council to consider the Constitution, as it was currently not conducive to having a two-way conversation with residents and involving them in the decisions the Council makes, whilst another Member felt that web-streaming Council meetings needed to be given more prominence in the overall strategy.

The Head of Law and Governance confirmed to a Member that the c1,000 residents who volunteered during Covid could be contacted with a view to mobilising some of them for the Panel, but urged caution due to the need for the Panel to be a representative sample of all spectrums of society. Therefore a range of approaches to recruiting would be required.

Resolved that –

The Committee and wider Members to provide comments on the draft Strategy for reporting back to the July CMC for approval and final sign-off by Full Council as part of the Corporate Plan.

5 Organisational Development Strategy

The Corporate Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development explained that the purpose of the strategy was to articulate how the Council would develop itself over the next four years.

A number of key themes were proposed, such as how people would be developed, the type of culture the Council wanted to see and how that would be achieved, adapting to external drivers and imaginative ways of talent sourcing, including utilising modern technology.

The Committee Chair added that people were fundamental to the organisation, and ensuring they were suitably identified, motivated and incentivised was critical to the Council's success.

The Committee Chair amended the recommendation to enable Members to provide feedback on the strategy by 8 July with a view to the final strategy being reported back to Corporate Management Committee on 14 July.

A Member felt that success was achieved when teams and individuals worked more collaboratively rather than in rigid silos, and this needed to be reflected more in the strategy, along with making the most of the technology on offer.

A Member noted that a cohesive strategy was needed with neighbouring authorities on the talent management strategy given the current staffing shortage and the need to prevent unnecessary salary inflation. There was also the need to concentrate on home-grown talent. Both of these points would be reflected in the updated strategy.

Resolved that –

The Committee and wider Members to provide comments on the draft Strategy for reporting back to the July CMC for approval and final sign-off by Full Council as part of the Corporate Plan.

6 Review and Replacement Runnymede Council Tax Support Scheme

The Housing Benefit Technical Manager advised that the report set out four options for Council Tax Support Scheme, to be introduced from April 2023.

Officers felt that the options proposed delivered a fair scheme, which would still utilise means testing to determine eligibility, but would also stabilise Council Tax support entitlement and deliver a simple administration of claims.

The proposed changes would provide a scheme close to being cost-neutral, and would also accommodate the rollout of Universal Credit.

An all-Member briefing to deep dive into the options was planned for the coming weeks to consider any amendments or additional recommendations ahead of a wider public consultation, and Members were encouraged to submit questions or suggestions in advance of that briefing.

The Committee Chair advised that should any significant material changes to the options be decided through the Member consultation then there was the opportunity to change the options via Standing Order 42, however the Committee Chair allayed Members' fears about the prospect of options being removed prior to the public consultation against Members' wishes.

The Housing Benefit Technical Manager confirmed that Surrey Citizens' Advice Bureau and Surrey Welfare Rights would be included as part of the consultation.

Resolved that –

1) The Committee approved consultation on options 2 and 4 for Runnymede's Council Tax Support scheme to come into effect from April 2023.

2) The results of the consultation will be brought back to this Committee for consideration in the Autumn, prior to a final recommendation being made on the scheme to be considered for adoption by full Council in December.

7 Runnymede Joint Committee - Constitution Changes

The Head of Law & Governance reminded the Committee that Local Authorities could

discharge its functions via delegations to Committees, Sub Committees, Officers or in some cases, including Runnymede, Joint Committees.

Following a review of its powers of delegation, Surrey County Council had decided that the transfer of executive highway functions be removed from the Runnymede Joint Committee's remit and returned to Surrey County Council to be discharged by its officers.

The Head of Law & Governance confirmed to a number of Members that as the decision had already been made by Surrey County Council there was no conflict of interest for any dual hatted Councillors. The report therefore merely sought to amend the constitution of the Joint Committee to reflect the decision of Surrey County Council.

The Head of Law & Governance added that Surrey County Council's rationale for making the decision was to try and expedite the issues raised by residents.

Members were disappointed with the action as the Joint Committee was considered a useful gateway into addressing county functions on residents' behalf.

A twin-hatted Member reported that changes were afoot with how Surrey County Council would communicate with residents, as well as District and Borough Councils that was hoped would benefit all parties.

Resolved that –

The Committee recommended to Full Council that the Runnymede Joint Committee be updated to reflect the transfer of executive highway functions from its remit.

8 Standing Order 42 - Urgent Action

The Committee Chair drew the Committee's attention to the Standing Order 42 dated 16 May 2022 that was signed to create a Local Council Tax discount under Section 13A (1) (C) equivalent to any potential loss of Local Council Tax Support that could potentially arise by having the £350 'Thank you payment' under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

The Committee Chair also raised a Standing Order 42 generated earlier this week to appoint two temporary resources to support the administration of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The proposal was expected to be cost neutral due to the availability of grant funding from Central Government for the scheme. There were no objections raised by Members to the Committee Chair and Vice Chair signing the Standing Order 42.

9 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 of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

10 Chertsey Depot Site - Proposal for Refurbishment

The Corporate Head of Environmental Services sought Committee approval for a capital estimate for the purposes of refurbishment and upgrade of the Chertsey Depot following a report into Health and Safety that begun in November 2020.

A feasibility study of the depot was subsequently undertaken and three options were presented for the site. The proposal would deliver all essential work to bring the depot up to the minimum Health & Safety standard, including enhanced security arrangements for

the depot premises including new lighting, CCTV and clocking on and off capacity for staff.

It would also ensure a provision for electric charging capability for new equipment and vehicles in anticipation of future electrification of equipment and fleet.

The Corporate Head of Environmental Services confirmed that opting for the minimum option would not preclude the Council going for a comprehensive redevelopment of the site in future, but the middle ground option was being sought in the interim partly due to the Council not being in a position to fully electrify its fleet, but an alternative fuel source would be considered in the interim.

The Corporate Head of Environmental Services confirmed that the Corporate Head of Community Services was also aware of the proposals.

Resolved that –

The Committee recommended to Full Council a capital estimate and the procurement of the works contract for the commencement of refurbishment and upgrade of the Ford Road Depot prior to grounds maintenance and green spaces services being relocated and delivered in-house from the depot premises in April 2023.

11 **Commercial Letting of Magna Square**

The Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration sought Committee approval for a commercial letting on the Magna Square development. Incentives had been included in the lease, which the Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration had considered normal in the current market. It was considered that the premises would be a good fit for the development.

In response to a Member's query about the potential for rubbish and littering, the Corporate Head of Law and Governance advised that under the Environmental Protection Act of 1990 a Notice could be served on a premises requiring them to address any such issues.

Resolved that –

1. **The Committee granted a lease on the terms outlined in the body of the report.**
2. **The Committee granted delegated authority to the Chief Executive, or in his absence the Assistant Chief Executive, along with Corporate Head of Law and Governance and Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Management Committee to agree minor amendments to these terms, if required.**

12 **Reference from Community Services Committee - Safer Runnymede Staffing.**

The Chief Executive reported that following the awarding of several new contracts Safer Runnymede would require an increase in staff to be able to deliver those contracts as well as provide capacity to pursue other revenue opportunities with neighbouring authorities.

The Committee Vice Chair considered it a good investment that moved the Council towards being self-sufficient with its CCTV, as well as providing the lead throughout the county to offer a good quality CCTV service and support police colleagues.

Resolved that –

The Committee recommended to Full Council, subject to Community Services Committee supporting the increase in staffing establishment, to approve the recruitment of 1.5 Full-time CCTV operators, funded from revenues associated with providing CCTV monitoring services to other Councils.

(The meeting ended at 9.22 pm.)

Chairman