

**Runnymede Borough Council**

**Corporate Management Committee**

**Thursday, 22 September 2022 at 7.30 pm**

Members of the Committee present: Councillors T Gracey (Chairman), C Howorth (Vice-Chair), M Cressey, L Gillham, J Gracey, M Heath, N King, R King, I Mullens, M Nuti, D Whyte and M Willingale.

In attendance: Councillors S Jenkins.

**1 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2022 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

**2 Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received. All Committee Members were present.

**3 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**4 Corporate Plan**

The Chief Executive advised that four of the five strands of the Corporate Plan had previously been approved by this Committee, with the Organisational Development Strategy the only strand that remained subject to approval ahead of the entire strategy going forward for final approval at October's full Council meeting.

The Chief Executive thanked the Members who had provided feedback on the Corporate Plan, and whilst the comments did not affect the overall strategy they had been noted to help develop the associated action plans. The Chief Executive confirmed to a Member that the action plans, containing some 200 actions that would be divided into Committee areas, would be circulated to all Members in advance of October's full Council meeting. Those actions would also help to prepare for next year's budget by identifying which actions required growth.

In responding to a Member's question about the Climate Change strategy, the Chief Executive confirmed that regular reporting on climate change initiatives would take place across all Committee areas, with the Leader confirming that an overarching report would be a regular item at Corporate Management Committee.

When introducing the Organisational Development strategy, the Corporate Head of HR and Organisational Development confirmed that collaborative working with other authorities was already in place across a number of areas, whilst the strategy was closely linked to the Talent Management Strategy, which would be going forward for approval at October's Corporate Management Committee.

A further initiative would be to introduce a corporate induction course to go with the Induction checklists and a 'Train the Trainer' course for managers with the aim of encouraging internal talent.

**Resolved that –**

- a) The Organisational Development Strategy was recommended to full Council on 20 October 2022 for approval;**
- b) The overarching Corporate Plan was recommended to full Council on 20 October 2022 for approval.**
- c) All other elements of the Corporate Plan, already approved by this Committee, were recommended to full Council on 20 October 2022 for approval.**

**5 Elections Act 2022**

The Head of Electoral Services briefed Members on the Elections Act 2022, which would see the introduction of voter ID cards and the provision of votes for life for overseas electors.

The Act would have an impact on the May 2023 Local Election, most prominently the requirement for voters to show photo ID at polling stations before a ballot paper is issued.

The Head of Electoral Services confirmed that where an elector does not have any form of photo identification they could apply for one free of charge from their Local Authority, whilst late applications could result in photos being taken and identification issued at the Civic Centre. Research has shown that this would be between 2-4% of the electorate.

Other provisions of the Act would be introduced after the May 2023 poll and they include the requirement for electors to reapply for a postal vote every three years, replacing current rules whereby a postal voter must refresh their signature every five years.

There would also be implications for a person's ability to act as a proxy, with the Act proposing that a person can now only act as a proxy for two electors

Overseas electors will be able to register regardless of when they left the United Kingdom.

Members were keen to receive a Briefing ahead of an upcoming Council meeting, and instructed the Head of Electoral Services to include political agents and association officers in that briefing.

It was confirmed that the practise of writing to those residents whose postal votes would soon expire would continue. There would be a multi-step process to ensure sufficient notice and warnings were provided to those residents.

The Council's Communications team would be key to the delivery of the message throughout the borough, whilst consideration would be given on how to reach residents with disabilities.

**Resolved that –**

- a) Members noted the report.**
- b) Agreed to host an all Councillor briefing prior to an upcoming full Council meeting, to include political agents.**

**6 Budget Monitoring**

The Corporate Head of Finance presented the Council's financial position and projections for the end of the current year based on the activity by the end of June 2022.

The general fund budget for the year was approved at February's Council meeting which included an ongoing savings target of £2m.

The position at the end of June showed a net reduction in the original surplus in the net expenditure on services was around £2m, partly due to £1m of budgets being carried forward and partly due to £0.5m of income targets built into the original budget not being met.

The Council started the year with around £18m in general fund reserves, with net savings of £2m desired. Whilst there was still a large balance predicted for the year end, consideration had to be given to annual ongoing commitments, together with the £2m deficit identified within the MTFS, along with the effects of inflation and other measures.

The detailed HRA budget would see the deficit for the year expected to increase by £333,000. However, this would be offset by increased balances resulting from delayed works last year.

## 7 **Provisional Outturn Report**

The Section 151 officer set out the provisional outturn report for the Council's finances for 2021/22, summarising what would be in the Council's statement of accounts.

The revenue accounts revealed a significant underspend compared to the previously anticipated position, which put the Council in a good position to meet rising costs and demands for services.

The overall general fund balance was greater than the minimum threshold set in the last MTFS, however this threshold was currently under review considering considerable inflationary pressures, in addition to expected growth pressures and ongoing uncertainty around central government funding.

The Housing Revenue Account had also underspent, primarily because of a major capital scheme not proceeding, however further programmes were expected to come forward in its place in due course.

The Section 151 officer concluded that the Council had achieved a favourable position against its budgets for the year, which provided some comfort in facing the challenges ahead, which would be further explored when considering the MTFS later this year.

The Leader added that whilst it was undesirable to underspend in 2020/21, the contribution to the General Fund provided a greater buffer than expected against expected challenging time ahead.

The Section 151 officer reassured a Member that when a capital project was replaced with a new one that a new business case would be received and a new budget established. Any inflationary pressures on existing project budgets, where schemes have been delayed, would be considered as part of the normal budget monitoring process.

### **Resolved that –**

- a) **The provisional financial outturn for 2021/22 was noted.**
- b) **The creation of a new Earmarked Reserve to hold surpluses generated by Parking Services which were ring-fenced for future reinvestment in the service was approved.**
- c) **Transfers were approved.**

## 8 **Referral from Community Services Committee - Refurbishment of Tennis Courts, an Increased Participation Project**

The Corporate Head of Law and Governance advised Members that at its most recent meeting Community Services Committee had received a report that reviewed the quality of the borough's Council-run tennis courts and provided the opportunity to apply for funding from the Lawn Tennis Association to enhance and improve the provision of courts.

The report sought Corporate Management Committee permission to submit a bid to the Lawn Tennis Association.

The Chair of Community Services emphasised that this would be cost-neutral to the Council, and added that only the courts run by the Council and considered in a bad condition state would be eligible for the fund.

This was part of a larger review by Community Services Committee looking at a larger review of leisure facilities across the borough to increase the overall numbers where growth allowed, as well as ensuring there was an even distribution of facilities across the borough.

### **Resolved that –**

**a) A Capital Estimate in the sum of £168,000 for the works to the courts was approved, to be entirely funded from the grant awarded by the Lawn Tennis Association; and**

**b) The creation of a new Earmarked Reserve and an annual transfer of any unused court maintenance budget into it to specifically fund future maintenance works associated with the courts was approved.**

## 9 **Urgent Action - Standing Order 42**

The Committee noted proformas 1,002 and 1,004, detailing action taken after consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

A Member advised Committee that since the Standing Order 42 was signed the Household Support Fund had closed to new applicants. This was due to the funding having been allocated in full to applicants, as the funds were required by Government to be spent or committed by 30 September. However the Section 151 Officer alerted Members to a recent notification of a second tranche of funding, and would ensure a further programme was put in place once understanding of the allocation had been established. Details would be shared with Members once further details were known.

## 10 **Cost of Living Squeeze - Urgent Item, Part I**

The Chief Executive outlined the efforts officers had made to support residents in the short-term with the cost-of-living crisis, as well as longer term around measures such as improving the energy efficiency of the Council's properties.

Residents would be encouraged to seek early intervention. It had already been established that the Citizens' Advice Bureau were struggling with the volume of referrals, and there was the prospect of the Council needing to provide debt counselling support.

The plans were in their preliminary stages, however officers were scanning the horizon to be able to utilise appropriate grants and reaching out to voluntary services to work in partnership as much as possible.

A Member was concerned that the strategies did not go far enough and expressed concern

that voluntary organisations would be forced to take on much of the burden without appropriate funding. The Leader emphasised that the cost-of-living squeeze was likely to be a long-term issue and funding the Council provided would need to be spread over a long period rather than be front-loaded.

A Member stressed the importance of partnership working with other organisations, highlighting Surrey County Council's fuel poverty campaign.

**Resolved that –**

- a) **Members recognised the support Runnymede Borough Council had been able to provide to residents with the rising cost of living and approved the new measures designed to provide additional relief for some of the most vulnerable households within the borough.**
- b) **Members approved a supplementary budget estimate in the sum of £50,000 – to the effect of transferring £50,000 from the Council's Homelessness Support Grant, into staff salaries within Community Services previously approved in the 2022/23 budget to fund the specific work streams set out in the report where costs were likely to be incurred during 2022/23.**

**11 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.

**12 New Letting at Charter Place**

The Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration recommended a letting opportunity at Charter Place, Egham, which would coincide with the expiry of the existing lease at the premises.

The Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration went on to set out the terms and rent for the lease, adding that the rent represented market rental value in current market conditions.

**Resolved that –**

**Members approved the letting at ground floor Charter Place, High Street, Egham to coincide with the expiry of the existing lease to the tenant vacating the property.**

**13 Procurement of Student Accommodation Facilities Management**

The Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration sought permission to procurement of student facilities management services for Parish Hall in Magna Square.

The new build accommodation provided the Council with a significant gross annual income, albeit one that fluctuated due to the volatility of the student market.

The contract would provide the Council with welcome annual revenue, and the Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration added that the scale and round-the-clock nature of the work meant that it would not be possible to resource this in-house.

**Resolved that –**

**The procurement of Student Facilities Management Services for Parish Hall, Magna Square through an appropriate framework that specialises in this field was approved.**

**14 Grounds Maintenance Structure Regrade**

The Corporate Head of Environmental Services requested a supplementary estimate primarily to facilitate additional management of the green spaces team.

The restructure and interim solution had provided the opportunity to consider the way the team had been operating, and it was hoped the new structure would provide more flexibility for cross-service working with other departments to avoid working in silos or duplicating efforts.

A further supplementary estimate was requested to regrade two operational support officers. The Chief Executive confirmed there was no knock-on effect elsewhere in the Council that would prompt a similar process.

Due to some uncertainty around contractors, the prospect of approaching other boroughs to share services in the short-term would remain under consideration to ensure standards were being maintained.

There was concern from some Members that the item had not been through Environment & Sustainability Committee, and Councillor D Whyte asked for it to be recorded that his decision to vote against the resolution was down to the fact that the item had not previously been presented to Environment & Sustainability Committee.

**Resolved that –**

**a) A supplementary estimate to facilitate creation of a small Green Spaces team within Environmental Services offering land management, enforcement and strategic operational management capacity for Parks and Open Spaces was approved.**

**b) A supplementary estimate was approved to regrade two operational support officers.**

**15 HR and Payroll Update**

The Committee Chair advised Members that the item had been deferred to the next meeting.

**16 Future Management of Property**

The Committee Chair confirmed that the decision set out in the papers had been deferred to the next meeting whilst financial details and potential terms of any lease were being clarified.

**17 Referral from Community Services Committee - Eileen Tozer Social Centre - Addlestone 2**

The Head of Law & Governance advised that Community Services Committee had received a report at its most recent meeting providing options on the future use of the Eileen Tozer site.

It was considered that the Addlestone Community Association site had been under-utilised, and the report recommended moving the provision of the Day Centre facilities to the

Community Association site and consider options for the Eileen Tozer site.

The Chief Executive highlighted the importance of delivering 'Addlestone 2', which would deliver improved care facilities to Addlestone residents.

The Chief Executive advised that he had received a lot of correspondence from residents about the poor ratio of health facilities in Addlestone, and a communications strategy would be devised, emphasising the importance of the existing users of the Eileen Tozer centre. Furthermore, various 'plan B' options were under consideration in the event of the proposal not going forward and avoiding an unused asset in a town centre.

**Resolved that –**

- a) the relocation of service provision from Eileen Tozer Centre to Addlestone Community Centre was approved, providing the five days per week service delivery model**
- b) a supplementary budget estimate for 2 years to be grant aided to Addlestone Community Association, to support the development of a local community asset was approved**
- c) A one-off grant funded by existing budgets, to Addlestone Community Association was approved, in recognition of their set up costs in facilitating the relocation of the Eileen Tozer Centre service.**

#### 18 **Referral from Community Services Committee - Aviator Park**

The Corporate Head of Law & Governance reported on another item that had recently been to Community Services outlining a court decision on the future of the skatepark at Aviator Park, and setting out options for future use.

This resulted in the Committee decision to close the skatepark and seek an alternative community provision elsewhere in the borough. Members were keen to utilise the Citizens' Panel as a form of consultation for local residents.

**Resolved that –**

- a) A supplementary capital estimate was approved for the replacement of skateboard facilities at Heathervale Park, subject to Officers confirming financing arrangements.**
- b) Approval was given to a design and build contract to be procured using the ESPO framework.**
- c) A supplementary revenue budget was approved for the removal of Aviator Skate Park.**
- d) The full closure of Aviator Skate Park on a temporary basis, from 5 October 2022, until such time as the skatepark facilities were removed, was approved.**

#### 19 **Urgent Action - Standing Order 42**

The Committee noted proformas 1,003, 1,005, 1,006, 1,007 and 1,008, detailing action taken after consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

(The meeting ended at 9.35 pm.)

Chairman