

Runnymede Borough CouncilCorporate Management CommitteeThursday, 15 December 2022 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Cressey, L Gillham, J Gracey, T Gracey (Chairman), R King, I Mullens, M Nuti, N Prescott (in place of N King), D Whyte and M Willingale.

402 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

403 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M. Heath.

404 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

405 Business Growth and Innovation Service

Runnymede had received confirmation of its UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation which meant that it was now able to proceed with developing its previously agreed indicative projects into investment plan.

Runnymede's local economy was generally competitive, but its growth rate had slowed compared to other local economies. The proposed service was intending to support growth among small businesses in particular. There would be partnership working with local organisations such as Royal Holloway, but also with the neighbouring borough of Spelthorne, in order secure the best possible value and impact from the service.

It was noted that whilst technology companies would be a focus, due to their prominence in Runnymede, they were not to be the only type of business to benefit. It was hoped that an indirect effect of the service, through increased employment opportunities, would help the most deprived areas of the borough.

Resolved that the procurement of the Runnymede Business Growth and Innovation Service, as part of a joint business support service with Spelthorne Borough Council, be approved.

406 Medium Term Financial Strategy

The strategy covered the financial period up to 2025/26 and would be used to inform the upcoming budget setting process. The committee was reminded of the current economic context, which had had a significant impact on the figures set out in the report. The government's upcoming Levelling Up Bill was also expected to have an impact on the strategy.

The council's longstanding financial prudence had provided some budgetary resilience, however there was a sizeable deficit predicted by 2025/26, which would require some difficult decisions to be made before then. The council's capital programme was likely to require careful scrutiny, particularly with regard to when capital receipts were received.

The proposed change to the minimum recommendation for the council's working balance was welcomed.

There was discussion about the upcoming pay award and the increasing cost of living. Discussions were ongoing with the local union branch and a report would be considered by the Corporate Management Committee and Council in due course. The proposed offer was aiming to be both fair and affordable.

The proposed additional Assistant Chief Executive role was debated. Some members considered that more information, particularly around targets for growth and savings, was required before a decision could be made on whether to proceed with the creation of the post. It was however asserted that the role was going to manage various key areas with their own savings, growth and performance targets. It was also the belief of the administration that additional strategic capacity was required in order to deliver a demanding workload in the coming years.

Separate named votes were requested on each part of the officer's recommendation.

Proposed motion (i)

That the Medium Term Financial Strategy be recommended to Council for approval.

For the motion (10)

Councillors T. Gracey, Howorth, Cressy, Gillham, J. Gracey, Prescott, Mullens, Nuti, D. Whyte and Willingale.

Against the motion (1)

Councillor R. King.

Abstentions (0)

Motion (i) was passed.

Proposed motion (ii)

That the following be approved:

(a) the creation of an additional Assistant Chief Executive post, with an annual budget of £150,000 including on-costs, be included in the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy.

(b) a supplementary estimate of £20,000 in 2022/23 for associated recruitment costs for the additional Assistant Chief Executive post.

For the motion (7)

Councillors T. Gracey, Howorth, Cressy, J. Gracey, Prescott, Nuti, and Willingale.

Against the motion (4)

Councillors Gillham, R. King, Mullens and D. Whyte.

Abstentions (0)

Motion (ii) was passed.

407 **Council Tax: Determination of Tax Base for 2023/24 and Estimated Collection Fund Surplus or Deficit at 31 March 2023**

The anticipated council tax collection rate had decreased slightly, although the overall rate of collection had remained strong. The committee thanked the team responsible for this work.

The method of calculating the tax base and surplus was summarised for the committee. The figure relating to armed forces accommodation related to the level of occupation at the time of its generation, instead of capacity.

It was noted that there was potential for a delay in the process for agreeing the council tax level to be set by the Police and Crime Commissioner, which may necessitate adjustments to the budget approval process at Council on 9 February 2023.

Resolved that:

- 1. That the tax base (showing the estimated number of Band D equivalent dwellings within the Borough for the financial year 2023/24) be approved at 34,864.6.**
- 2. The estimated surplus on the Collection Fund for 2022/23 be declared at £2,663,804, to be split amongst precepting authorities as set out in the report, in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements.**

408 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

By resolution of the Committee, for the reasons set out in the agenda, 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.

409 **Procurement of Insurances**

The Council's insurance broker was assisting with a review of the Council's insurance provision and advising on the procurement route, either by open tender or a framework route. The insurance service provided by the London Borough of Sutton was also being considered. The services offered by each would be compared, to ensure that good value and an appropriate level of insurance cover was procured. Some types of insurance cover, such as cyber security, was now largely unaffordable and tended to include impractical conditions of cover.

It was resolved that a procurement exercise for the Council's insurances through either an open tender, a framework further competition or an Inter Authority Agreement with the London Borough of Sutton for the provision of insurance services - whichever is deemed the most suitable – be commenced, in accordance with the estimated contract value and terms set out in the report.

(The meeting ended at 8.56 pm.)

Chairman