

Runnymede Borough CouncilFull CouncilThursday, 9 February 2023 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Council present: Councillors M Harnden (Mayor), S Saise-Marshall (Deputy Mayor), A Balkan, A Berardi, J Broadhead, R Bromley, T Burton, D Coen, D Cotty, M Cressey, V Cunningham, M Darby, R Davies, E Gill, L Gillham, J Gracey, T Gracey, M Heath, C Howorth, J Hulley, S Jenkins, A King, N King, R King, S Lewis, C Mann, I Mullens, M Nuti, N Prescott, S Ringham, P Snow, S Walsh, D Whyte, S Whyte, S Williams, M Willingale and J Wilson.

490 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor provided an update on the events and engagements that she had attended since the last Council.

The Council observed a minute's silence in memory of former Councillor Peter Anderson, who had recently passed away.

491 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 8 December 2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

492 Apologies for Absence

Councillors D Clarke, S Dennett, J Furey and J Olorenshaw gave apologies for absence.

493 Declarations of InterestAgenda item 10 – Notices of Motion from Members of the Council under Standing Order 15

Councillors Heath and Nuti declared that they had a conflict of interest in proposed motion b) by virtue of them being county councillors. They withdrew from the meeting whilst this motion was discussed.

494 Speaking or Questions from Members of the Public under Standing Order 12

There were no public questions.

495 Petitions

There were no petitions.

496 Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order 13

a) Councillor Carl Mann asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

“Can the Leader of the Council please give us an update on Egham Orbit?”

The Leader responded in the following terms:

“I am very pleased to report that the Council has reached an agreement with Achieve

Lifestyle which maps out a way forward to April 2024.

The main points of the agreement are:

- i) Achieve Lifestyle was to pay the Council a significant sum towards the arrears owed. This sum has been received by the Council.
- ii) Achieve Lifestyle will pay the Council a revised total monthly rent through to April 2024. This sum will cover the Council's cost of finance on the Egham Orbit site and contribute to the reduction of the total arrears outstanding. I can confirm that Achieve Lifestyle's January rental payment has been received.
- iii) The Council will meet regularly with Achieve Lifestyle throughout 2023 to review ongoing progress and performance of the Egham Orbit. Through these meetings we will look to ensure performance standards are met, the finances of Achieve Lifestyle continue to develop and the social value we seek is being delivered.
- iv) In January 2024 we will conduct a joint review to discuss the way forward after April 2024. My hope is that Achieve Lifestyle is on a better financial footing and is meeting the performance standards we seek. If so and if our conditions are satisfied, we will give consideration fairly to any variation of the terms of the existing lease to ensure there is a mutually beneficial and sustainable relationship going forward. We will however retain the right to pursue alternative actions if this is not the case.

I hope you will appreciate that I have had to be discrete in respect of specific figures due to their commercially sensitive nature. Further details will be coming forward in a forthcoming exempt committee report."

Councillor Coen asked for details of the joint committee's membership and meeting arrangements. The Leader confirmed that the membership would include officers and members (including an opposition member) and representatives of Achieve Lifestyle, and that it would meet every other month.

Councillor Howorth asked whether the Leader felt that a favourable arrangement had been reached. The Leader said that the future of a first-class facility for the borough now looked more certain.

Question b)

Councillor Sylvia Whyte asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

"Last September I was pleased that Runnymede Borough Council supported the Great Big Green Week, be it at a very low level, promoting the event on social media and encouraging community groups and organisations to get involved.

I note that this year's event runs between 10th and 18th June. Is Runnymede supporting this event and are we able to raise the profile a bit higher than last year to get more people involved?"

The Leader responded in the following terms:

"As you will know, the Climate Change Strategy forms a core component of our Corporate Plan and events like the Great Big Green Week provide a great opportunity to raise awareness of actions to tackle climate change and encourage a range of everyday activities that can contribute to meeting our aspirations.

We will be bringing forward a report on the Great Big Green Week to Corporate Management Committee on 23 February 2023. This report will set out several options in terms of how the Council could get involved, however the approach that I will be recommending is that the Council takes a far greater role in participating this year by proactively running a series of events with the aims of:

- Bringing together and engaging with businesses and our residents of all ages on the important issue of climate change;
- Celebrating local climate change initiatives and encouraging more people and organisations to develop their own initiatives;
- Raising the profile of the Council's response to climate change; and,
- Providing useful information and signposting to other relevant organisations to give people the tools they need to help the borough transition to net zero.

Should Corporate Management Committee endorse the recommendation in the report, officers will start planning events in liaison with Councillors and local stakeholders.

Whilst there will be a requirement to carry out more detailed planning should the recommendation be endorsed, at a high level, we will look to deliver:

- i) A general event for local people
- ii) An event targeted at young people
- iii) And an event focussing on the borough's businesses.

I know this is something you have been supportive of and involved with previously. I hope all members of the Corporate Management Committee will support the recommendations and encourage all councillors to engage in planning suitable events for our local communities."

Councillor S Whyte asked whether local fairs could be suitable locations for Council operated stalls? The Leader said that officers were investigating this possibility.

Question c)

Councillor Robert King asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

"Does the Leader agree that NHS workers, from porters to doctors, from nurses to cleaners, are invaluable to the health of the nation and that we should show the best support we can from Runnymede Borough Council to them and particularly those who live and work in our Borough?"

The Leader responded in the following terms:

"You are right to highlight the important role NHS workers play but I do disagree with the narrow premise of your question.

I believe that in addition to workers across the NHS there are huge numbers of others who also contribute to the health of the nation, including teachers, members of the fire-service, athletes who set an inspirational example, and other medical professionals such as carers and General Practitioners, and, of course, parents.

As Councillors we are elected to represent all those who live and work in our borough and I would argue that this is best delivered by ensuring that our decisions are taken in the interest of the broadest possible number of residents.

It is to that purpose, that members and officers have worked diligently to deliver policies including many set out in our budget this evening to support our residents. These include:

- The Council Tax Support Scheme;
- Additional support funding through the HRA;
- The Step-Up Scheme, and, of course;
- Our efforts towards net zero.”

Councillor R King asked whether the Prime Minister was correct to clap the efforts of health workers in the context of budget cuts? The Leader acknowledged the hard work of these individuals, but noted that health services were outside the remit of district and borough councils.

Councillor Davies asked whether the Council could consider setting up a package of support for striking workers? The Leader said that the Council already had a broad range of measures in place, with the aim of supporting as many residents as possible.

Question d)

Councillor Abby King asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

“Will the Leader join the Labour Party and the Labour and Co-operative group on this Council, and lobby his Conservative friends presently in government to rule out any increases in the government’s energy price cap from April and force energy firms to pass on recent falls in gas prices to households.”

The Leader replied in the following terms:

“The Government has already acted in this regard. Given the overall state of public finances and the pressures put on them in recent years, difficult decisions have had to be made. The Government was clear that the support package put in place in October 2022 was temporary and to provide focussed support over the winter months, with the intention of ending on 31 March 2023. The revised Energy Bills Discount Scheme will provide further support, albeit at a reduced rate, for private customers and businesses over the next year to 31 March 2024.

However, against that we should also recognise that energy prices are beginning to come down. A significant, but not the sole, driver of their increase was the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Russia which highlighted the energy dependency Europe had built up on Russian fossil fuels. One of the biggest users of Russian gas was Germany and I have been taken by the pragmatic steps proposed by the liberal members of the governing coalition from the Free Democrats who have joined with the opposition CDU in calling for a halt in the shut down of Germany’s remaining nuclear power plants, and are suggesting a reversal on some fossil fuel policy as they seek to diversify their fuel supply.

I cannot help but wonder if we will see a similar Damascene shift in the approach by liberals in the UK who have in the recent past also shown a pragmatic willingness to re-think their policies when in government.”

Councillor A King asked whether members could receive demographic breakdown of those who had received support grants? The Leader said that he was happy to have this information compiled and shared via the Corporate Management Committee.

Councillor R King asked whether residents of larger properties should be asked to contribute more? The Leader invited Councillor R King to share a written proposal with him.

Question e)

Councillor Rhys Davies asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

“How many Improvement Notices have been issued by Runnymede’s private sector housing team in the last year, broken down by housing tenure (housing association or private rental) and Category 1 or 2 hazards and how many resulted in further action?”

The Leader responded in the following terms:

“I can confirm that in the year 2021/22, 11 Improvement notices were issued to the private rental sector and none to the housing association sector. In the 11 notices issued:

- 9 Category 1 hazards were highlighted
- 16 Category 2 hazards were highlighted

Where an improvement notice has not been actioned and improvements have not been made, further action would be required by the Council.

I can confirm that none of the improvement notices have resulted in further action which is a positive sign that the issues identified were remediated by the landlord or management company for the property.

It’s worth noting that 11 notices out of over 30,000 properties in the borough, or less than 1 thousandth of 1%, is an incredibly low rate.”

Councillor Davies asked whether the Council should be doing more to drive up standards in the borough’s private and public housing stock? The Leader said that a paper on this matter was to be considered by the Housing Committee in due course.

Councillor Hulley asked whether the figures provided by the Leader demonstrated that the vast majority of landlords were providing high quality Housing? The Leader agreed with Councillor Hulley.

Councillor Mullens asked how many environmental health inspections had been carried out on homes? The Leader said that he would ask for this information to be reported to the Environment and Sustainability Committee.

497 **Recommendations from Committees**

498 **Housing Revenue Account Estimates for 2022/23 - recommendation from Housing Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor J. Gracey) and seconded (by Councillor Hulley) that the recommendation of the Corporate Management Committee be agreed.

As part of the debate, the Chair of the Housing Committee said that she would arrange for information on the number of dwellings that had been empty for more than two years to be distributed to members.

A named vote was requested on the motion and the voting was as follows:

For the motion (34)

Councillors Harnden, Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Berardi, Broadhead, Bromley, Burton, Coen, Cotty, Cressy, Cunningham, Darby, Gill, Gillham, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, Jenkins, N. King, Lewis, Mann, Mullens, Nuti, Prescott, Ringham, Snow, Walsh, D. Whyte, S. Whyte, Williams, Willingale and Wilson.

Against the motion (3)

Councillors Davies, A. King and R. King.

Abstentions (0)

The motion was carried.

Resolved that the draft revenue estimates for 2023/24 be approved and that provision be made accordingly.

499 **Medium Term Financial Strategy - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor T. Gracey) and seconded (by Councillor Howorth) that the recommendation of the Corporate Management Committee be agreed.

Resolved that the Medium Term Financial Strategy be agreed.

500 **2023/24 Treasury Management Strategy - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor T. Gracey) and seconded (by Councillor Howorth) that the recommendation of the Corporate Management Committee be agreed.

Resolved that the following be approved:

- 1) The 2023/24 Treasury Management Strategy, encompassing the Annual Investment Strategy, as set out in the officer's report;
- 2) The Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators for 2023/24, as set out in the report;
- 3) The revised Treasury Management Policy Statement and Treasury Management Practices, as set out in the appendices to the officer's report;
- 4) The authorised limit for external borrowing by the Council in 2023/24 of £700,613,000 (this being the statutory limit determined under Section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003); and
- 5) The Council's MRP statement for 2023/24, as below:

"The Council will use the asset life method as its main method for calculating MRP. In normal circumstances, MRP will be set aside from the date of acquisition. However, in relation to capital expenditure on property purchases and/or development, we will start setting aside an MRP provision from the date that the asset becomes operational and/or revenue income is generated".

501 **Capital and Investment Strategy and Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2026/27 - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor T. Gracey) and seconded (by Councillor Howorth) that the recommendation of the Corporate Management Committee be agreed.

It was proposed (by Councillor R. King) and seconded (by Councillor D. Whyte) that the Capital Budget be amended in accordance with the published proposed amendments from the Labour and Co-operative, Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Alliance, and

Runnymede Independent Residents Groups.

A named vote was required on the proposed amendment and the voting was as follows:

For the amendment (13)

Councillors Berardi, Burton, Davies, Gill, Gillham, Jenkins, A. King, R. King, Mullens, Ringham, D. Whyte, S. Whyte and Williams.

Against the amendment (23)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Coen, Cotty, Cressy, Cunningham, Darby, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N. King, Lewis, Mann, Nuti, Prescott, Snow, Walsh, Willingale and Wilson.

Abstentions (1)

Councillor Harnden.

The proposed amendment fell.

A named vote was required on the proposed substantive motion and the voting was as follows:

For the motion (23)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Coen, Cotty, Cressy, Cunningham, Darby, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N. King, Lewis, Mann, Nuti, Prescott, Snow, Walsh, Willingale and Wilson.

Against the motion (13)

Councillors Berardi, Burton, Davies, Gill, Gillham, Jenkins, A. King, R. King, Mullens, Ringham, D. Whyte, S. Whyte and Williams.

Abstentions (1)

Councillor Harnden.

The motion was carried.

Resolved that the following be approved:

- 1) The Capital Strategy set out in the officer's report at Appendix 'A' and the Capital Programme at Exempt Appendix 'B';
- 2) That useable capital receipts be maintained at a level of £2 million.

502 **2023/24 Budget and Council Tax - recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor T. Gracey) and seconded (by Councillor Howorth) that the recommendation of the Corporate Management Committee be agreed.

It was proposed (by Councillor R. King) and seconded (by Councillor D. Whyte) that the Revenue Budget be amended in accordance with the published proposed amendments from the Labour and Co-operative, Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Alliance, and

Runnymede Independent Residents Groups.

A named vote was required on the proposed amendment and the voting was as follows:

For the amendment (13)

Councillors Berardi, Burton, Davies, Gill, Gillham, Jenkins, A. King, R. King, Mullens, Ringham, D. Whyte, S. Whyte and Williams.

Against the amendment (23)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Coen, Cotty, Cressy, Cunningham, Darby, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N. King, Lewis, Mann, Nuti, Prescott, Snow, Walsh, Willingale and Wilson.

Abstentions (1)

Councillor Harnden.

The proposed amendment fell.

It was proposed (by Councillor Mullens) and seconded (by Councillor Gillham) that the Revenue Budget be amended in accordance with the published proposed amendments from the Runnymede Independent Residents Groups.

A named vote was required on the proposed amendment and the voting was as follows:

For the amendment (15)

Councillors Harnden, Berardi, Burton, Davies, Gill, Gillham, Jenkins, A. King, R. King, Mann, Mullens, Ringham, D. Whyte, S. Whyte and Williams.

Against the amendment (21)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Coen, Cressy, Cunningham, Darby, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N. King, Lewis, Nuti, Prescott, Snow, Walsh, Willingale and Wilson.

Abstentions (1)

Councillor Cotty.

The proposed amendment fell.

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

Proposed motion a)

That the Revised Budget for 2022/23 and Budget Estimates for 2023/24, including growth items, as set out in the report and at Appendices B, C and E be approved.

For the motion (23)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Coen, Cotty, Cressy, Cunningham, Darby, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N. King, Lewis, Mann, Nuti, Prescott, Snow, Walsh, Willingale and Wilson.

Against the motion (14)

Councillors Harnden, Berardi, Burton, Davies, Gill, Gillham, Jenkins, A. King, R. King, Mullens, Ringham, D. Whyte, S. Whyte and Williams.

Abstentions (0)

The motion was carried.

Proposed motion b)

That an increase to the Band D Council Tax level of 2.99% (£5.37) from £179.55 to £184.92 be agreed.

For the motion (34)

Councillors Harnden, Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Berardi, Broadhead, Bromley, Burton, Coen, Cotty, Cressy, Cunningham, Darby, Gill, Gillham, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, Jenkins, N. King, Lewis, Mann, Mullens, Nuti, Prescott, Ringham, Snow, Walsh, D. Whyte, S. Whyte, Williams, Willingale and Wilson.

Against the motion (2)

Councillors Davies and R. King.

Abstentions (1)

Councillor A. King.

The motion was carried.

Proposed motion c)

That a revised minimum threshold of £5m for the General Fund Working Balance be agreed.

For the motion (37)

Councillors Harnden, Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Berardi, Broadhead, Bromley, Burton, Coen, Cotty, Cressy, Cunningham, Darby, Davies, Gill, Gillham, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, Jenkins, A. King, N. King, R. King, Lewis, Mann, Mullens, Nuti, Prescott, Ringham, Snow, Walsh, D. Whyte, S. Whyte, Williams, Willingale and Wilson.

Against the motion (0)**Abstentions (0)**

The motion was carried.

Proposed motion d)

That the transfers to and from Reserves as set out in the report be agreed.

For the motion (27)

Councillors Harnden, Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Coen, Cotty, Cressy, Cunningham, Darby, Gill, Gillham, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, Jenkins,

N. King, Lewis, Mann, Nuti, Prescott, Snow, Walsh, Willingale and Wilson.

Against the motion (10)

Councillors Berardi, Burton, Davies, A. King, R. King, Mullens, Ringham, D. Whyte, S. Whyte and Williams.

Abstentions (0)

The motion was carried.

[The agenda order was changed in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.3 to take item 9 (Council Tax Resolution and Council Tax Setting Committee) at this point.]

503 **Council Tax Resolution and Council Tax Setting Committee**

Resolved that the formation of a Council Tax Setting Committee, as detailed in the report and at Appendix B, delegating final approval of the Council Tax Resolution to that Committee, once all precept notifications been received, be approved.

504 **Englefield Green Committee - position of Chairman - recommendation from the Englefield Green Committee**

It was proposed (by Councillor Prescott) and seconded (by Councillor King) that Councillor Prescott's position as Chairman of the Englefield Green Committee be debated.

A named vote was requested on the resolution of the Englefield Green Committee, namely whether to accede to the request to remove Councillor Prescott as Chairman. The voting was as follows:

For the request of the Englefield Green Committee (10)

Councillors Berardi, Burton, Davies, Jenkins, A. King, R. King, Mullens, Ringham, D. Whyte, S. Whyte and Williams.

Against the request of the Englefield Green Committee (22)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Broadhead, Bromley, Coen, Cotty, Cressy, Cunningham, Darby, J. Gracey, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N. King, Lewis, Nuti, Prescott, Snow, Walsh, Willingale and Wilson.

Abstentions (5)

Councillors Harnden, Burton, Gill, Gillham and Mann.

Resolved that Councillor N Prescott remain as Chairman of the Englefield Green Committee.

[Councillors Broadhead and J. Gracey left the meeting at this point.]

505 **Notices of Motion from Members of the Council under Standing Order 15**

Motion a)

The motion, as set out in the summons, was moved by Councillor R. King, subject to a referral being made to the Corporate Management Committee.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Davies.

The motion was debated by the Council.

A named vote was requested on the motion and the voting was as follows:

For the motion (12)

Councillors Berardi, Burton, Davies, Gillham, Jenkins, A. King, R. King, Mullens, Ringham, D. Whyte, S. Whyte and Williams.

Against the motion (22)

Councillors Saise-Marshall, Balkan, Bromley, Coen, Cotty, Cressey, Cunningham, Darby, Gill, T. Gracey, Heath, Howorth, Hulley, N. King, Lewis, Mann, Nuti, Prescott, Snow, Walsh, Willingale and Wilson.

Abstentions (1)

Councillor Harnden.

The motion was lost.

[Councillors Heath and Nuti left the meeting at this point.]

Motion b)

The motion, as set out in the summons, was moved by Councillor Davies, subject to a referral being made to the Corporate Management Committee.

The motion was seconded by Councillor R King.

Councillor T. Gracey proposed that the fourth call in the proposed motion be amended as follows:

Original text:

“That Borough and District Councils in Surrey should be provided with a compensation fund from Surrey County Council, so funds can be distributed equally to all permit holders, given they have been receiving a worse service than they applied for because of the actions by Surrey County Council.”

Amended text:

"That Runnymede Borough Council encourages Surrey County Council to consider suitable compensation to those Runnymede residents who held a Residential Parking Permit, that the actions of the County have impaired the ability to enforce."

The proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor R. King.

The proposed amendment was put to the vote and **carried**.

A further amendment to include a sixth call requesting that Runnymede Borough Council review its own enforcement needs in light of Surrey County Council's decision was proposed by Councillor Coen.

The proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Balkan.

The proposed amendment was withdrawn in accordance with Standing Order 17.17, as it could be taken forward as part of the relevant committee's programme of work and not as part of a letter to the Leader of Surrey County Council.

The amended motion was debated by the Council.

The amended motion was **carried**.

506 **Minority Group Priority Business**

There was no minority group priority business.

507 **Press and Public to be Excluded by Resolution**

There was no exempt business.

(The meeting ended at 11.03 pm.)

Chairman