

Runnymede Borough Council

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

29 November 2007 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the
Committee present: Councillors J.R. Furey (Chairman), A.J. Davis (Vice-Chairman), A. Alderson,
Mrs R.M. Denby, J.M. Edwards, Mrs. L.M. Gillham, C.J. Norman,
Ms C.M. Simmons, P.J. Waddell and G.B. Woodger.

Members of the
Committee absent: None

Councillor D.R. Hamilton also attended.

407. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 November 2007 were approved and signed as a correct record.

408. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs. L.M. Gillham declared a personal interest in the item – Reference From Other Committees – Leisure and Environment Committee – 15 November 2007 – Frank Muir Memorial Field Facilities for Young People, as she had been engaged in seeking grant funding.

409. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Leisure and Environment Committee - 15 November 2007

Frank Muir Memorial Field Facilities For Young People

At its meeting on 15 November 2007, the Leisure and Environment Committee had resolved that approval be sought from the Corporate Management Committee for a capital estimate for the provision of a skate park at a cost of £49,000 at the Frank Muir Memorial Field in Thorpe. The Friends of Frank Muir Memorial Field and the Thorpe Ward Residents' Association were promoting and managing this scheme with the support of Leisure Services and had selected a design to be supplied by Urban Ramps, following a public consultation exercise.

Funding was being sought from the Landfill Communities Fund, via AIR, the Surrey Youth Opportunities Fund and the Youth Capital Fund. A landfill Community Fund grant would require a 10% third party contribution. County Councillor Mrs Lay had offered £2,000 from her Member allocation and the remainder would come from the Parks revenue budget, from which future maintenance costs could be met.

It was unlikely that planning permission would be required for this scheme, but advice had been sought from Planning Officers and if necessary an application would be made. Concerns had been raised by the Environmental Protection Section relating to the potential for increased noise levels in the vicinity resulting from the skate park, and the possible disturbance of local residents. Officers in Leisure Section did not consider that any noise would result in additional disturbance, but the Leisure and Environment Committee had noted that these issues would have to be resolved satisfactorily, before the project could go ahead.

The Leisure and Environment Committee agreed that the scheme should be implemented, subject to all capital costs being funded from external sources, and to the issues raised by Environmental Protection being resolved. That Committee had also agreed to seek approval for a capital estimate.

RESOLVED that -

a capital estimate in the sum of £49,000 be approved for the provision of a skate park at the Frank Muir Memorial Field in Thorpe, subject to all capital costs being funded from external sources, and to the issues raised by Environmental Protection being resolved.

410. SERVICE PLAN 2007/08 – HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE

The Committee noted performance to date on the Service Plan which incorporated all of the Committee's performance indicators. Best Value targets had been set by the Government and the current regime of Best Value service reviews and Continuous Improvement Plans were being phased out by them. Performance indicators were being reduced from approximately 1,200 to about 200. A Local Area Agreement was also being introduced which would have targets and indicators. The Council had achieved the highest possible score in the Audit Commission's use of resources assessment, and was one of only five district Councils rated at that level in 2006, and one of only seven district Councils achieving that level of performance in 2007. Suitable call forwarding arrangements or voicemail were activated for telephone calls in the event of Officers being out of the office. The Committee was advised that the average number of Officer working days lost because of sickness had reduced by about one day over the last six months and was pleased to note this improvement. In the early part of 2008, Officers would revise the Service Plan to reflect the streamlined performance indicators. Officers would also include in the Plan targets arising from the Local Area Agreement, which it was anticipated would come into operation during the new financial year.

411. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2007/08 -SECOND QUARTER PROGRESS

The Committee considered progress against Best Value Performance Indicators for the period July to September 2007.

The general picture was positive and there had been some good performance in a number of areas. The average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households that were unintentionally homeless and in priority need, (BV 183 b), had reduced to 16 weeks compared to 28 weeks for the second quarter of 2006/07. On BV212, the average time taken to re-let local authority housing, there had been an improvement of 5 days compared to the second quarter of 2006/07, and performance was two days ahead of target. On BV178a, the average processing time taken for decisions on all new Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims continued to improve, and at 19.3 days exceeded the target of 30 days.

On BV109b, the percentage of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks (87%), had improved by over 5% compared to the second quarter of 2006/07, and had exceeded the target by 20%. It was noted that changes had been made to the Local Development Scheme to reflect recent Government requirements. (BV 200 a and b). Performance on numbers of planning decisions allowed on appeal was on target (BV204). Regarding BV218a, the target percentage of new reports of abandoned vehicles investigated within 24 hours of notification had been exceeded by over 10%, and had also improved since the second quarter of 2006/07.

On BV2b, performance in relation to the Race Equality Scheme had been assessed as substantially higher, once the Audit Commission guidance had been clarified. On BV8, on payment of invoices, an improvement of about 5% was needed to achieve best practice, but it was envisaged that performance would improve because of the introduction of new systems. Runnymede was achieving its target percentage of employees from ethnic minority communities (BV17a).

On BV82, measures of percentage and tonnage of waste sent for recycling and on BV84a, on the amount of household waste collected per head of the population, a short term appointment of a monitoring officer had been approved, to assist in driving up performance on these indicators. End of year outturn would be the main performance measure. An extra vehicle was likely to be needed to pick up receptacles at "bring" sites and methods of financing were currently being explored.

412. PRIORITY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE 2007/08 - SECOND QUARTER PROGRESS

The Committee considered the second quarter progress for 2007/08 in the priority indicators of service delivery performance and noted comparisons with past performance.

The Council was required to ensure that all of its homes met the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. The number which did not reach the standard had reduced to 161 in 2006/07. Amongst those remaining homes that failed the standard were the units at Wapshott Road and there were 59 of those. It was noted that demolition work on the estate had started in July 2007, and phase one should be completed by next year. Residents living in phase two would then transfer to the newly built homes, leaving no non-decent homes occupied on the estate by the end of 2008.

It was agreed that if it was still possible, detail about facilities for tetrapak cartons should be included in material being distributed to residents about Christmas refuse collections.

RESOLVED that -

it be recorded that the Committee is content with progress and where appropriate, the proposed corrective action.

413. RUNNYMEDE TOWN TWINNING ASSOCIATION - CORE REVENUE FUNDING

(Ref: Minutes of Housing & Community Services Committee – January 2003, page 934, para. 543)

The Committee considered an application from the Runnymede Town Twinning Association for the renewal of on-going core revenue funding.

The Council made annual core revenue funding available to a number of local voluntary organisations because they were considered worthy of support as a matter of policy in view of their community or public service role. The Runnymede Town Twinning Association sought to foster cultural, social, educational, community, commercial and official links with the Borough's twin towns in France, Germany and the United States. The Association promoted understanding between the respective communities through initiatives such as visits, exchanges and jointly sponsored events.

The Association currently had 43 members, 35 of which were residents of the Borough. The Association presently received £1,400 from the Council in the form of core revenue funding. The present level of grant aid had been fixed for a 5-year period, with the benefit of inflationary increases, by the Housing and Community Services Committee in 2003. This arrangement expired at the end of the current financial year and the Association had now requested that its grant support be renewed for a further 5-year period in the sum of £1,400, with the benefit of inflationary increases each year in accordance with the Retail Price Index. While Officers had delegated authority to determine grant applications of up to £10,000, the matter was being reported to the Committee in view of the long-term nature of the commitment sought by the Association. Applicants for annual core revenue funding were currently expected to be able to demonstrate that they fulfilled a community or public service role sufficient to justify on-going revenue support. Any funding award would therefore be contingent upon the Association submitting a clear set of objectives and priorities for the 5-year period, with a particular emphasis on the way in which it intended to promote exchanges between young people.

The Committee agreed that a grant was merited subject to the Council's policy of cash limiting the grant, i.e. making no increase for inflation year on year.

RESOLVED that –

subject to submission of a statement of its objectives and priorities over the next five years to the satisfaction of the Director of Administration and Leisure, the Runnymede Town Twinning Association be awarded a grant of £1,400 in 2008/09 and further grants for the same amount annually, for the period up to and including 2012/13.

414. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2008/2009

The Committee considered the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the Municipal Year May 2008 – May 2009. For ease of reference, a diary schedule of the Committee dates was also submitted. A training day for Councillors elected in May 2008 would be arranged after the Elections taking place that month. The Committee agreed the Calendar, subject to the meeting of the Englefield Green Committee scheduled for 5 November 2008 being rescheduled to take place on 4 November 2008.

RECOMMEND that –

the Calendar of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2008/2009 be approved, as attached at Appendix 'A' and as set out in diary form at Appendix 'B', subject to the meeting of the Englefield Green Committee scheduled for 5 November 2008, being rescheduled to take place on 4 November 2008.

415. FINANCIAL MONITORING STATEMENT

The Committee noted the latest financial projections for the 2007/08 financial year for corporate and business services.

416. COMMUNICATIONS MEMBER WORKING GROUP - MINUTES

The Minutes of the Communications Member Working Group Meeting held on 14 November 2007 were noted. The Committee considered a series of possible designs for a new Council logo which had been produced by various companies. The design brief had been specified narrowly by the Working Group, as Members felt a radical departure from the main constituents of the existing logo was neither desirable or justifiable from the point of view of cost.

This matter had been raised because of the need to revisit the current style of lettering and corporate stationery alongside the Council's move to the new offices early in the New Year. The logo would also need to be appropriate for transfer to buildings and vehicles, as well as use in paper form. It was confirmed that introducing the new logo would not entail significant expenditure. The Working Group contained Members who had experience of commissioning logos, and it had been agreed by that Group that the Council's full name and crest were essential elements of the logo. The Committee also noted that different typefaces conveyed different messages to the reader.

As there was no consensus amongst Members of the Committee as to which logo to adopt, the Committee agreed to delegate the decision to the Communications Officer, in accordance with resolution ii) below, with a view to a final decision being taken early in the New Year.

The Chairman thanked the Chairman and Members of the Working Group and the Communications Officer for the work which they had done on the logo.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the Minutes of the Communications Member Working Group held on 14 November 2007 be noted; and**
- ii) a decision on which new Council logo to adopt be delegated to the Communications Officer in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Management Committee, Councillor Mrs E. Gill, and the Chairman of the Communications Working Group, following consultation with Members of the Council via the political groups.**

417. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter 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.

(a) Housing and Community Services Committee – 14 November 2007(i) Comprehensive Housing Market Assessment

The Committee considered a reference from the Housing and Community Services Committee, seeking approval to adjust the timing of provisions in the Revenue Forecast, to allow housing surveys to be commissioned together.

At its meeting on 14 November 2007, the Housing and Community Services Committee noted the Government's requirements for the assessment by local authorities of housing conditions in their areas and a proposal for research to establish the information needed to develop the Local Development Framework and other strategic documents.

Since 2003 the Council had been required to compile a Housing Strategy for the Borough. This Strategy was based on an assessment of the current housing conditions in the area, together with the level of need for affordable housing. In the past this assessment had entailed commissioning a Housing Needs Survey and a Stock Condition Survey. These surveys were still required but, additionally, the Council now had to undertake an assessment of wider housing supply issues and to publish a Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy supported by information on local stock condition.

Runnymede had last commissioned a Private Sector Stock Condition Survey in 2003. Changes had taken place to the stock over the last four years and the Committee agreed that consideration should now be given to undertaking a further study as well as reviewing the Strategy. The last survey had taken place prior to the introduction of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and an assessment of the stock against this standard was now prudent, in order to respond to Government returns and to plan future strategies and funding for the private stock.

The last Housing Needs Survey had been undertaken in June 2005 and was not due for review until 2010. However, it needed to be brought up to date for the new version of the Local Development Framework which was being developed.

Rather than producing separate Housing Needs and Stock Condition Surveys, there were clear economies of scale as well as several other advantages in undertaking a comprehensive joint assessment to include all three aspects of the research i.e. the new Housing Market Assessment, the Housing Needs Survey and a Stock Condition Survey.

However, in order to satisfy Government guidance, the Housing Market Assessment would have to be undertaken across a larger area than Runnymede. Several other Boroughs in Surrey had commissioned consultants to undertake this work and were already at an advanced stage of their assessments. However, if Runnymede were to use one of the consultants used by these other authorities then, subject to agreement of the other authorities, it should be possible to use the research obtained from these other assessments in order to consider the broader market assessment within this Borough. The Housing and Community Services Committee had therefore agreed that one comprehensive assessment should be undertaken, and that the consultants who had tendered for this work in the other Surrey Boroughs should be asked to submit proposals for the work within Runnymede. The final appointment of consultants would depend on the robustness of the proposed approach and the cost of the work.

A provision had been made within the Revenue Forecast for a Stock Condition Survey 2008/09 and for a Housing Needs Survey in 2009/10. No provision had been made for a Housing Market Assessment. The Committee noted the estimated total cost of undertaking each of these surveys individually. It was certainly possible that one comprehensive assessment to include all three aspects of the research could be

undertaken within the current overall financial forecast provision. The work would take place in 2008 and it would therefore be necessary to reprofile the provisions made in the Revenue Forecast accordingly. These research documents would play an important part in the formulation of future Council policy.

RESOLVED that –

the benefits of commissioning housing surveys together be noted, and the timing of provisions in the Revenue Forecast be adjusted accordingly.

(b) Leisure and Environment Committee - 15 November 2007

i) Chertsey Museum – Store Refurbishment

At its meeting on 15 November 2007, the Leisure and Environment Committee resolved that approval be sought for a capital estimate of up to a maximum amount as reported, for a scheme to upgrade the storage facilities at Chertsey Museum. The estimated costs of the scheme were noted by the Corporate Management Committee. This refurbishment included redecoration of the room and the installation of new racking to be provided by a company identified in the report. This would enable objects held by the Museum to be stored more effectively and securely. The only unknown cost would be any works required to be carried out resulting from the weight of the new storage racking. A structural engineer would be consulted to provide advice and guidance on any impact this may have on the overall cost of the scheme. This cost would be taken from within the contingency budget.

RESOLVED that –

a capital estimate for a sum no greater than the maximum figure as reported, be approved.

ii) Chertsey and Thorpe Village Halls – Purchase of Chairs

At its meeting on 15 November 2007, the Leisure and Environment Committee had resolved that approval be sought from the Corporate Management Committee for a capital estimate to purchase new chairs for Chertsey and Thorpe Village Halls. A suitable company to undertake the work had been identified by the Leisure and Environment Committee. There was provision in the Capital Programme for this scheme, approved as part of the Financial Forecast by the Corporate Management Committee on 1 November. The new chairs would enable the halls to provide better facilities for events.

The Leisure and Environment Committee had asked Officers to give consideration to making a bid for external funding for the project. If such a bid were to be successful, it might mean that some or all of the capital resources set aside within the Capital Programme might not be required.

In approving the capital estimate, the Corporate Management Committee agreed that Officers should look at the possibility of offering the old chairs to RAVS or other community groups and should also examine whether it was possible to improve the awareness and ease of setting up racked seating in Chertsey Hall.

RESOLVED that -

a capital estimate, in the sum reported, be approved for the purchase of the chairs from the company identified in the report.

418. CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU OFFICES - RELOCATION

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter 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.

The Committee considered arrangements for the relocation of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to the existing library premises in Church Road, Addlestone.

The CAB currently occupied circa 600 sq ft of offices in the front portion of the existing Council Offices. A number of attempts had been made over the years to relocate the CAB who had always preferred a location away from the Civic Offices, as many of their clients had referrals which related to the activities of the Council and physical separation was therefore desirable. In view of this, with the re-provision of the existing Civic Offices on the adjacent former Addlestone Community Association site, moving the existing library premises in Church Road, Addlestone to the new offices and the CAB to the Church Road location had been identified as a desirable outcome. Dialogue had continued with the CAB, who had been kept apprised of the negotiations with Surrey County Council with regard to their relocation to the new Civic Offices from the existing Library premises, which was the subject of a separate report on the Agenda.

The Committee noted the area of the current library building which it was proposed to offer the CAB. This would leave space at the existing library site either for the Council's own needs (e.g. for off site storage for the new offices), or for another voluntary organisation or organisations. Negotiations were taking place with compatible voluntary or charitable organisations that might be able to occupy the remaining clearly defined space.

The Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to offer the CAB a lease for the Church Road location for the period reported, at a peppercorn rental, with the CAB assuming full repairing and insuring liability for the premises. Dependent upon the usage/occupancy of the remaining space, the Council would either offer a lease to the CAB for the whole premises, (subject to an obligation to sub-let the balance of the space) or prepare separate lease agreements to each of the occupiers. The CAB had sufficient resources to assist in the various adaptations which might be required. The Council was not proposing to meet any costs associated with those adaptations, but would be able to make available screens and furniture from the existing offices at nil cost.

There were no additional financial implications for the Council in concluding the lease terms. This course of action also avoided the potential additional costs which could have arisen in securing new premises, should the Library not have become available. Providing a long term and cost effective solution to the needs of the CAB, whilst also enhancing the space available to them, had been a long term aim of the Council. The peppercorn rent was consistent with the Council's policy of assisting voluntary and charitable organisations.

It was noted that the CAB was able to provide a service to all borough residents, including those in the north of the borough, because most of its advice was given on the telephone and, in exceptional circumstances, visits to homes could be arranged.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to conclude lease terms for the period reported at a peppercorn rent, including such other terms as considered reasonable, to the Citizens Advice Bureau for their occupancy of that area of the existing library premises in Church Road, Addlestone, as reported, and conclude terms accordingly; and**
- ii) Officers report back further on the utilisation of the remaining space at the library premises.**

419. ADDLESTONE LIBRARY, CHURCH ROAD, ADDLESTONE - RELOCATION

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter 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.

The Committee considered the terms provisionally negotiated with Surrey County Council (SCC) for the relocation of library provision to the new Civic Offices, which were currently under construction.

In order to further improve the services offered to the public by providing a wider range of services under one roof in the new Civic Offices, terms for co-location by Surrey Police had previously been agreed, and there was also a wish to relocate the present Library premises in Church Road, (which Surrey County Council had occupied following the Local Government reorganisation in 1974), to the new Civic Offices. Negotiations had proved to be protracted and uncertain, and had required extensive dialogue at senior political and managerial level within both organisations. The Committee commended the work of the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive Officer in achieving the desired outcome. The provisional terms had been recommended in principle by Surrey County Council's Executive on 17 July 2007 and had been approved by Surrey County Council on 16 October 2007.

The Committee noted the area of the new Civic Offices which it was proposed would be occupied by SCC's Library Service. The Committee agreed that the terms as set out in the report were appropriate. The Committee was pleased to note that amongst the terms was the upgrading of the Library Service to a "Category B" facility, with enhanced book stock and additional opening hours.

The Committee noted the approximate total of the annual rental from 2011/12 and the capitalised value of the rental. A fair and reasonable proportion of the various building running costs would be levied by way of a service charge. Whilst no provision had been made for the contribution to the County Council's fit out costs at this stage in the Civic Offices project, it was hoped to contain this expenditure within the overall scheme costs. Should this not be possible, then additional capital estimate provision would be required.

The initial terms offered to SCC were less than for comparable office space in the town centre location. However, there were considered to be social and service related benefits from co-location. In addition, securing vacant possession of the existing Church Road Library premises enabled the Borough Council to relocate the Citizens' Advice Bureau facility from the existing Civic Offices and to offer them long term occupancy of part of the present Library.

Now that the arrangements for including the Library in the new Civic Offices had been agreed, the Committee asked that the issue of security in the new offices be considered at the Civic Offices Re-provision Sub-Committee meeting on 4 December 2007.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to conclude a lease with Surrey County Council for their Library Service for the space in the new Civic Offices as reported and on the terms outlined in the report; and**
- ii) the provisional method of financing be noted.**

420. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROVISION

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter 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.

The Committee considered arrangements for Occupational Health provision from April 2008.

The Council had utilised the services of an external medical advisor for a considerable period of time, and, for the past 12 years, the Occupational Health Unit at St. Peter's Hospital.

The service provided included pre-employment health screening of all new staff, specialist checks for drivers and food handlers, ad hoc referrals for repeated short term or extended long term sickness

absences including advice on reducing future absences or phased rehabilitation, assessments for ill health retirements, vaccination programmes and confidential staff counselling.

From 2000, the Local Government Pension Regulations had required that Local Authority Occupational Health Advisors held a formal approved qualification in Occupational Health (Diploma in Occupational Health or equivalent). This requirement further reduced an already limited supply of suitable medical practitioners who were willing and available to undertake this type of work.

The current contract with St. Peter's Hospital expired on 31 March 2008. The three year contract for the provision of all Occupational Health services represented good value for money for a high quality service when compared with costs being charged elsewhere. St. Peter's Hospital had indicated that the current level of charges to Runnymede could not be sustained and had quoted a substantial increase for the period from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2011. Alternative suitable providers of Occupational Health services in the local area were few in number. However, interest had been expressed by two other potential providers. Quotes had been obtained from them and the sums involved and the service which they would be able to provide were noted by the Committee. Both of these quotes were for amounts in excess of that advised by St. Peter's Hospital. The Committee therefore agreed that the contract for Occupational Health services for the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2011 be awarded to the Occupational Health Unit at Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust.

Occupational Health had become an increasingly important service in recent years in supporting absence management procedures and providing the necessary level of expertise in dealing with health and safety issues and matters concerning the Pension Scheme. Unfortunately, none of the quotations fell within anticipated budgetary provision for 2008/09.

RESOLVED that –

the contract for Occupational Health services for the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2011 be awarded to the Occupational Health Unit at Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust, at the cost reported, and that appropriate budgetary provision be made.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.50 p.m.)