

Runnymede Borough CouncilREVIEW BOARD6 December 2007 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Board present: Councillors P.B. Tuley (Chairman), H.A. Butterfield, D.A. Cotty, D.R. Hamilton, Ms R.E. Haylor, R.N. Jones, A.M. Moore, B.J. Relph and A.P. Tollett.

Members of the Board absent: None.

421. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive Officer of their wish that the change listed be made to the membership of the Board. The change was for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillor removed would be re-appointed to the Board.

Group Requesting Change	Remove from Membership	Appoint Instead
Conservative	Councillor J. Broadhead	Councillor Ms R.E. Haylor

The Chief Executive Officer had given effect to this wish in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

422. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Review Board meeting held on 11 October 2007 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

423. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

In respect of the item on Provision of Out of Hours Noise Service – Outcome of Leisure and Environment Committee's Reappraisal, Councillors A.M. Moore and B.J. Relph declared personal interests, having been Members of the Leisure and Environment Committee which had considered this issue on 15 November 2007. They remained in the meeting, as the Board noted this item for information and did not discuss the matter.

424. AIR QUALITY

The Board was informed of the outcome of a detailed assessment of air quality in the Borough.

At its Meeting on 12 October 2006, the Board had agreed to receive a further report on air quality including an analysis of the final report on sites within the Borough where annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentrations had exceeded the air quality "objective" (target). The Board had been notified in February 2007 that DEFRA had accepted this final report subject to a detailed assessment being carried out by Runnymede's consultants, and that the outcome of this assessment would be reported to the Board. This detailed assessment from the Environmental Research Group (ERG), King's College, University of London, had taken longer to complete than anticipated, and had been received on 30 October 2007. The Executive Summary of the detailed assessment was noted by the Board and the full report was available on the Council's internet site. The detailed assessment had been submitted to DEFRA for approval.

Runnymede had statutory duties under the Environment Act 1995. The detailed assessment which had been carried out was part of the process of discharging those duties. Where areas within the borough were identified as not achieving, or not likely to achieve, the necessary air quality standards, then those areas had to be designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA)s. The assessment

indicated that the Station Road /High Street area of Addlestone should be so designated and that further assessment was required for the New Haw area.

The Board asked about the effect of the M25 motorway on air quality in Addlestone and New Haw. It was noted that the main problem was local traffic, in particular stationary vehicles with engines running which caused substantially more pollution than vehicles being driven at high speeds. An Air Quality Consultant had been appointed to provide assistance to Officers with regard to implementing the requirements of the report. Officers were not yet in a position to give a detailed report on the implications for public health and it was agreed that a further report be presented to the meeting of the Review Board on 16 April 2008, once the work of the consultant had been completed. The Board agreed that the report in April should also outline the involvement of local groups in the further assessments as outlined below and provide a general summary report on air quality across the borough.

The consultant would be liaising with officers from Surrey County Council and other interested parties, and planning for monitoring of nitrogen dioxide (the primary pollutant of concern) in Addlestone and also in New Haw, as this area also had potential to exceed the national air quality standards. The findings had not been that the air quality had worsened in these areas but rather that it had not improved by a sufficient amount to meet the "objective" or target. New vehicle technology with engines that emitted less noxious substances should improve the position over the next few years. This would apply to both cars and planes. More sustainable buildings would also have a beneficial long term effect. Large buildings could have a "canyon effect" of trapping pollution. It was noted from the full detailed assessment report that some areas in the north of the borough (e.g. in the vicinity of Egham Sports Centre) had worse air quality results than the south of the borough. It was noted that an AQMA had already been declared for an area in Egham in the north of the borough near the M25 and enhanced monitoring had already been undertaken as part of this AQMA. The Board considered that further monitoring should also be undertaken in Egham and Officers agreed to add this to the work that would be done in Addlestone and New Haw.

Levels of nitrogen dioxide were already monitored by "diffusion tubes" at various sites in the borough, as part of a Surrey wide monitoring network in which costs were shared amongst the Surrey districts, and this would be expanded to include more intensive monitoring. It was agreed that Officers should liaise with local community groups and Ward Members on arrangements for further monitoring, in order to raise public awareness of the issue.

It was suggested by a Board Member that, as Addlestone was predominantly downwind of the M25, that there should be a detrimental effect arising from the motorway, and that as parts of New Haw were in very close proximity to the M25, this should also have a worsening effect on air quality. Levels of pollution decreased considerably even a short distance away from the location being monitored. It was suggested that the consultant might be able to differentiate between M25 and non-M25 pollution. It was also noted from an analysis of the full detailed assessment report, that air quality results for the borough had improved for a period during 2004 and 2005. A Board Member suggested that M25 widening roadworks might have been a contributory factor to this. It was agreed that Officers would advise Board Members on the reasons why experts considered that this temporary improvement had occurred.

In view of the problem with stationary traffic, it was possible that the additional pedestrian crossings installed in Addlestone which had improved facilities for pedestrians had exacerbated the air quality problem by slowing traffic down. It was therefore agreed that Officers should investigate with Surrey County Council Highways Officers whether there was scope to alter the phasing of traffic lights in Station Road, Addlestone.

Runnymede spent approximately £3,000 per annum on consultancy work plus Officer time totalling approximately 0.2 full time equivalent member of staff carrying out air quality work. The cost would be somewhat higher in this financial year because of the additional work that would be carried out. The work that arose from the further monitoring might require additional resources in future years. Unlike real time analysers, diffusion tubes were not expensive.

M25 enhanced monitoring had been paid for by the Highways Agency, with the Council providing the staff resources. The Council would meet the cost of the extra monitoring now required as a result of the Detailed Assessment. Costs could be met from existing provision, including from a vacant post

which was also funding the air quality consultant. The monitoring would begin as soon as possible for a time period of at least a year.

While the Board agreed to recommend to the Leisure and Environment Committee that further monitoring should take place, it asked about steps that could be taken to improve air quality. It was noted that some local authorities in urban areas had taken on powers to prevent the public from lighting bonfires and that some local authorities had taken action to require motorists to switch off car engines when they were in traffic and their car was not moving. Any action on bonfires or fireworks might lead to a negative reaction from the public unless explained carefully. The Board agreed that Runnymede Officers should liaise with Pollution Study Group Officers at neighbouring Councils on the possibility of action being taken against bonfires and the failure to switch off car engines.

RESOLVED that -

a further report be submitted to the Board's April 2008 meeting outlining the findings of the Air Quality Consultant.

RECOMMEND TO THE LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE that -

- i) an Air Quality Management Area be designated in Addlestone; and**
- ii) further monitoring be undertaken for the New Haw and Egham areas.**

425. OUT OF HOURS NOISE SERVICE – OUTCOME OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE'S REAPPRAISAL

At its last meeting on 11 October 2007, the Board had requested the Leisure and Environment Committee to reappraise the loss of the Council's Out of Hours Noise Service and, if the Leisure and Environment Committee wished the service to be reinstated, to identify where compensatory savings could be made from within that Committee's budget. The Board received a report on the outcome of the Committee's reappraisal, as requested at its last meeting.

The Board noted that at its meeting on 15 November 2007, the Leisure and Environment Committee had resolved in principle to support the reinstatement of the Out of Hours Noise Service, with the intention for it to be introduced from April 2008. The Committee had also resolved that Officers determine the cost of reinstatement and report back to the Committee, so that compensatory savings could be found within the Leisure and Environment Committee budget. It was agreed that Officers would work with the Chairman of the Committee in identifying the potential savings which were required. It was noted that the Leisure and Environment Committee had also agreed that Officers would report back to the Committee on investigations of the potential revenue stream of issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for reported incidents of noise nuisance and the possibility of offering an enhanced service utilising Safer Runnymede to a greater extent.

426. PROGRESS REPORT ON ENFORCEMENT OF PLANNING CONTROL

The Board received the progress report on enforcement of planning control as at 16 November 2007.

The Board noted that resources were stretched in this area as the enforcement section now only consisted of two part time Officers, despite attempts to recruit further. Minor breaches therefore could not always be processed unless on a long timescale. Consideration would have to be given to not processing more minor breaches, e.g. fences of too great a height. Legal resources were also limited. Almost all recipients of Enforcement Notices appealed and there was no fee to be paid to do this. Many asked for Public Inquiries, meaning that more Council resources had to be expended on preparation and appropriate representation.

On particular cases within the report, the Board noted the following:-

- i) 35 Liberty Rise, Addlestone

An application from the owner for release from imprisonment had been granted by the High Court. Recent inspections by legal staff looked to find evidence of continued unauthorised trading and further investigations were being undertaken.

- ii) Edenvale, Dockett Eddy, Chertsey
Discussions with the new owner would take place to establish whether caravans were being used for residential purposes.
- iii) Thorpe Waterski, Thorpe Road, Chertsey
Green Belt policy did not allow buildings for social use, only those required in connection with sporting activity. The Board expressed the view that sporting organisations such as Thorpe Waterski often relied on social activity to remain viable. Temporary structures such as tents were permissible and could accommodate large numbers of people without contravening planning requirements.
- iv) Willow Farm, Chobham Road, Ottershaw
The Planning Inspectorate were often prepared to grant temporary residential permissions for gypsy/traveller sites such as this one. The Council's Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment/Survey was used by these groups as a reason not to take planning action against them.
- v) Land adjacent to Stroude Road and Clockhouse Lane West, Egham
Further visits would be made regarding various breaches.
- vi) Padd Farm, Hurst Lane, Egham
No less than 56 Enforcement Notices were being drafted.
- vii) Capital House, Woodham Park Road, Woodham
The results of the High Court appeal were not expected in the near future, as there was a large backlog of cases.
- viii) The Farm Shop, Hardwick Lane, Lyne
Enforcement Notices were to be issued in respect of various unauthorised uses.
- ix) 7 Fairway, Chertsey
A Magistrates Court hearing would be taking place in January 2008 in respect of an unauthorised rear dormer.
- x) Tasis School, Coldharbour Lane, Thorpe
Discussions were ongoing with the school in relation to compliance regarding sheds and the use of a playing field.
- xi) Wickham Lane, Showmans Site, Clockhouse Lane West, Egham
An Enforcement Notice was being prepared requiring the removal of an unauthorised advertisement.
- xii) Adas Farm, Almnors Road, Lyne
The Inspector's decision from the adjourned Public Inquiry of 4 December 2007 was awaited. All of the evidence had been heard.
- xiii) The Cypress Donkey, Windsor Road, Englefield Green
An Enforcement Notice had been issued in respect of an unauthorised structure.

xiv) 79 Waverley Drive, Chertsey

An Enforcement Notice was being drafted for business use of residential premises. Deliveries were causing problems to neighbours.

At the October meeting of the Board, it had been noted that Officers had been diverted to two sites because of pressure for action from the public. One of these at Aymer Drive off Chertsey Lane was the subject of minor breaches, but this did not really justify the significant amount of Officer time which had had to be expended, because of public demands. In some cases, it had proved necessary to inform some members of the public that no further responses could be made to their emails because of the frequency and detail of their complaints, which could only be dealt with at the expense of other work, given the resources available.

427. LEVEL CROSSINGS - DELAYS

The Board was advised of the latest position regarding level crossing delays in the Borough.

There had been concern for several years about the increasing period of time that level crossing barriers were closed (barrier down time) across Runnymede and the difficulties that this caused for the communities where the level crossings were situated.

Officers had submitted a series of reports on this issue to the Board and the most recent one on 11 October 2007 informed the Board of Surrey County Council's (SCC)'s response to a request by the Board to introduce intelligent traffic lights at the Egham Station junction (Station Road/Church Road), as the Board considered that this more sophisticated equipment might reduce delays at that location. SCC's traffic signals team had looked at whether the signalling equipment at the Station Road/Church Road junction could be altered to relieve traffic congestion caused by the frequent and lengthy periods when the level crossing barriers were down. It was reported to the Review Board at its meeting in October that although it was technically possible to link the traffic signals at the Station Road/Church Road junction with the level crossing signals with a radio link, the cost would be in the region of £15,000 and SCC doubted that there would be any significant benefit for road traffic.

The Board still considered that the radio link might have benefits and felt that the cost was relatively inexpensive. Officers had therefore been asked to pursue this further with SCC. Having considered the possibility of a radio link between the Church Road and level crossing signals again, SCC engineers still considered that this would not achieve any significant benefit and did not intend to promote this proposal to County Members. This would also mean that the rephrasing of traffic lights to be "intelligent" (i.e. to recognise when there was no traffic proceeding from a particular direction), would also not be possible, because this also depended upon the installation of the radio link.

The report in October also informed the Board that Network Rail was forming a Rail Road Partnership (RRP) to discuss road and rail issues of common interest. Network Rail (NR) was responsible for about 1600 level crossings on public road throughout the country and was concerned about the continued risk of collisions and other accidents on the crossings and of the ongoing cost of maintaining the crossings.

NR was forming RRP's with local authorities in several areas. The primary purpose for NR was to identify opportunities to close level crossings where this could be justified with a sound business case. Rural areas would have a less strong case for closure because of less traffic. The business case would consider whether the crossing could be (i) closed without diversion or bridging, (ii) diverted with funding either from NR, the highway authority, an outside party or shared funding (iii) retained with additional road controls such as red light enforcement cameras, traffic calming or better signage, or (iv) retained unchanged. NR also recognised that the RRP's could provide an opportunity to address local road and rail related issues between NR and local authorities. NR had now effectively recognised the problem of road traffic being held up by level crossings.

NR had held the first meeting of the Surrey RRP on 17 October 2007. At the meeting the RRP had studied twenty level crossings in the western part of the county, including all of those in Runnymede. The RRP noted the issues for concern at the five Runnymede level crossings and particularly the problems associated with the lengthy barrier down times. The meeting Chairman circulated a Rail Safety and Standards Board Research Brief on the "Modelling of the economics of level crossing closures and conversions". The Brief specifically mentioned level crossings with busy rail lines and

high volumes of road traffic that had the effect of “cutting off” communities and damaging trade and commerce. The Brief explained the development of the AXIAT model (Assessment of Crossing Alternatives) that was to be, or had been, trialled in Lincolnshire, West Sussex, Dorset and North Yorkshire. NR would be demonstrating the AXIAT model at a future meeting and Officers would report the outcome of this demonstration in a future report to the Review Board.

The Board discussed the issue of improved signalling which should take place if the Airtrack proposals came to fruition and it was noted that there was a motion on Airtrack at the December Council Meeting. Signalling would alleviate the problems. Bridges and tunnels would remove the delays but would require major resource investment.

428. NET REVENUE REDUCTIONS - PROGRESS

As part of its work programme, the Board monitored progress against the Council’s net revenue reduction targets.

The report to the Corporate Management Committee on 1 November 2007 on the Financial Forecast of the Council’s revenue and capital spending covering the period up to the 2012/13 financial year, included a schedule showing the progress in achieving the revenue reductions approved in 2005, which was noted by the Board. The Committee’s Recommendations on the Financial Forecast would be submitted to the Council Meeting on 13 December 2007.

At its meeting on 1 November, the Committee noted that in 2005 the Corporate Management Committee had approved a range of measures to reduce the net budget by £2.6 million and the latest forecast assumed that £2.3 million of this target would be achieved. This included £0.3 million which was programmed to be achieved from 2008/09. A further exercise to rebase budgets in line with the 2006/07 outturn had identified reductions totalling £106,000. On top of this, additional savings of £368,000 had been included in order to reduce the budget deficit. These could potentially increase to £513,000 by 2012/13 as a result of further increases in charges.

Even allowing for these three measures, further reductions in the revenue budget would be required to avoid working balances falling below the Council’s approved minimum level. Additional annual savings of £600,000 would be sufficient to achieve this within the period of the five year forecast, but would not create a sustainable budget because it would still require a withdrawal from balances approaching £1.4million in 2012/13. It would do no more than defer the problem for one year. The reductions would need to be much greater to produce a budget that did not rely on withdrawals from balances. However, in view of the uncertainties in this year’s forecast, the Committee agreed that there was a strong case for restricting the savings target to £600,000 at this stage, until the cost implications of key developments became clearer over the next few months. If the forecast projections could not be revised downwards by the time that the 2008/09 budget was considered in February 2008, this target would need to be increased.

The achievement of the £600,000 target would require a close examination of areas of discretionary spend and of alternative service delivery mechanisms. The £600,000 target would be difficult to manage but £2.3 million of savings had already been achieved. The Council had delivered the savings so far, while maintaining the integrity of most services. The Committee had agreed to recommend to the Council that the additional savings of £368,000 be approved and that a new annual savings target be approved, initially amounting to £600,000, with the amount to be reviewed by February 2008.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.50 p.m.)