

Runnymede Borough Council

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

2 April 2009 at 7.30pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors J R Furey (Chairman), D R Hamilton (Vice-Chairman), A Alderson, Mrs L M Gillham, H W V Meares, C J Norman, P I Roberts, P B Tuley, P J Waddell, and G B Woodger

Members of the Committee absent: None

586. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Chairman read out the Fire Precautions.

587. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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

Group	Remove from Membership	Appoint Instead
Conservative	Councillor J M Edwards	Councillor P B Tuley

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

588. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 March 2009 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

589. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor P J Waddell declared a prejudicial interest under the Runnymede Code of Conduct for Members in Item 18, Tenant Request for Financial Assistance, as he had business dealings with the tenant in question. He withdrew from the room for consideration of this item.

590. ANNUAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2007/08 AND ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2007/08

The Committee considered the Annual External Audit Report for 2007/08 submitted by KPMG (the first produced for the Council by KPMG) and the Audit Commission's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2007/08. The reports were introduced by Mr Neil Thomas, a Director of KPMG, and Mr Paul Chambers, the Council's Relationship Manager at the Audit Commission, who both answered questions on the reports from Members of the Committee. It was agreed that before KPMG audit reports were finalised in future, it would be appropriate for a draft to be considered by Members so that feedback could be submitted to KPMG. Both reports would be placed in full on the Council's website.

KPMG's Report was divided into three sections on Statement of Accounts, Use of Resources and Data Quality. The Statement of Accounts summarised the findings of the audit of accounts and the Authority's Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) submissions and described some of the forthcoming challenges as International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) were introduced into local government. KPMG had issued an unqualified opinion and certificate on the Authority's 2007/08 accounts and had reviewed the Authority's WGA submission and concluded that it was consistent with the statutory accounts.

The Use of Resources section of the KPMG report assessed whether the Authority had adequate arrangements in place to ensure effective use of its resources and a scored judgement which gave a more detailed view of performance against criteria in 11 areas determined by the Audit Commission. KPMG had assessed the authority against the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) as specified by the Audit Commission, resulting in a score on a scale between 1 (below minimum requirements) and 4 (performing strongly). The overall score awarded to Runnymede for 2008 was Level Four. This score was the same as for the previous year and indicated that the Authority had strong arrangements to ensure that its resources were used in an effective, efficient and economic manner. It also reflected the continued effort of the organisation to demonstrate the robustness of the arrangements that it had in place.

The Data Quality section outlined the arrangements which Runnymede had in place to ensure that data was of high quality on a continuous basis. KPMG had assessed these arrangements as scoring at Level Three, which meant they were effective and working well with some scope for enhancement and development. Corporate commitment to data quality was actively promoted throughout the organisation and a comprehensive data quality policy had been produced and implemented by senior management.

KPMG had produced eight recommendations which set out where, in their view, some improvement could be made. Five of these had been raised during the Use of Resources assessment. The other three had been raised during the Data Quality audit. Half of these recommendations had been assessed as Priority Two. This meant issues that had an important effect on internal controls but did not need immediate action. The other half had been assessed as Priority Three. This meant issues that would, if corrected, improve internal control in general, but were not vital to the overall system. None of the recommendations were at Priority One (which meant issues that were fundamental and material to the organisation's system of internal control). For the future, KPMG had drawn Runnymede's attention to the challenges of implementing new accounting requirements including the 2008 and 2009 Statements of Recommended Practice and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

KPMG had compared Runnymede's Value for Money performance against its 15 nearest neighbours. They had found that Runnymede's total expenditure on services was high and within the top quartile of this comparator group. The Council had the second highest spend per head on services. This had led KPMG to award a score of three rather than four for the value for money KLOE. The Committee considered that if the Council were to spend less on services than it currently did, this would affect the satisfaction of residents with services and that a high level of expenditure on services which residents wished to have provided should not be seen as detrimental. The Committee considered that KPMG's cost of delivering services measure was not meaningful because it just recorded total cost and did not look at the means of Council service delivery which was achieved in an economical manner.

Apart from the way in which Runnymede managed its asset base, in which the Authority's score reduced from 4 to 3 owing to a change in the criteria, Runnymede had sustained the score achieved in the prior year for all individual KLOEs. This represented a considerable achievement given the changes made to the KLOEs in advance of this assessment. To improve performance against the management of the asset base, Runnymede would have needed to ensure that performance measures and benchmarking were used regularly and consistently to calculate how the Authority's asset base contributed to the achievement of corporate services and objectives. In order to have achieved a Level Four score on management of assets (having been assessed at Level Three), greater benchmarking and evidence of consistent sustainability would have been required. Matters of internal control had all been given a Level Three score by KPMG. Greater evidence of consistency, embeddedness and engagement of partners would have resulted in a Level Four score.

KPMG had reported that the 2009 Use of Resources (UOR) assessment would be the first to be performed under the Audit Commission's new methodology. This approach contributed to the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) regime which would replace Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Under the CAA UOR approach, there would be three criteria, which would be managing money, the business and other resources. These were then drawn together to form an overall judgement, which was unscored. The new assessment would be based on a "best fit" against descriptors, rather than complying with arrangements on a set list. This meant that demonstrating innovation, as well as accepted best practice, would be increasingly important to achieve the higher scores under the new regime. Achieving a Level Four score in the new system would be more open

to judgement. The Audit Commission had not defined the new criteria for Level Four. This increased the importance of authorities demonstrating that they followed best practice and were leaders in best practice. KPMG would hold initial discussions with Officers to plan areas of focus and subsequent work. Runnymede would receive its own CAA score, using CAA criteria. Currently assessment was, to a large extent, process based. CAA would take more account of outcomes and the way in which they were achieved and would put greater emphasis on partnership.

The Annual Audit and Inspection letter 2007/08 provided an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council, drawing on the most recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council for 2007/08 and from inspections undertaken since the last Annual Audit and Inspection letter. The letter summarised the direction of travel of the Council, the Council's progress against its priorities and the Council's performance when compared to other Councils across the country. The key messages showed that overwhelmingly the Council had performed very well. Performance continued to improve at a significantly faster rate than other Councils. Between 2006/07 and 2007/08, 70% of key indicators had improved against an average of between 56.9% and 59.1% for all District Councils. The Council was the 178th (out of 388) most improved Council over the last year. Over the longer term, the Council's level of improvement was above average for District Councils. During the last three years the Council had improved 65% of its key indicators against the average of between 57% and 58.9%. This ranked the Council as the 133rd most improved out of the 388 Councils over this period. The Council continued to deliver good value for money overall and generally above average service outcomes. It had good arrangements in place to ensure value for money was achieved and was working in partnership to deliver services where appropriate.

The Audit Commission report stated that the Crime and Disorder Partnership (CDRP), in which the Council had a partnership role, had achieved the best crime reduction figures in Surrey but there remained scope for improvement, especially in relation to theft from motor vehicles. The Audit Commission report had assessed the Council's performance against its priorities in terms of access to affordable and decent housing, community safety, access to services and transport, sustainability, economic prosperity, promoting leisure and culture and a healthy and vibrant community. The report also referred to the Council's plans for the future Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) being introduced which would be the first holistic independent assessment of the prospects for local areas and the quality of life for people living there. The Audit Commission's first results of their work on CAA would be published in the autumn of 2009, including the performance data from 2008/09, the first year of the new National Indicator set and key aspects of each area's Local Area Agreement. The Commission had commended the work which the Council was doing to promote economic prosperity and to improve recycling performance. Times to process new housing benefit and Council Tax claims had improved and although time taken to process a change in circumstances in respect of these claims had increased to eight days from six days this was still within the Department for Work and Pensions' target.

The Audit Commission had found that the Council was performing poorly in some areas of corporate efficiency. Performance on the number of days lost through sickness had improved slightly but in 2007/08 remained amongst the worst 25% of Councils. Performance on paying invoices had declined to place Runnymede amongst the worst performing Councils. The Committee was concerned at this result and Officers would be endeavouring to improve performance on payment of invoices. The percentage of National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) collected remained amongst the best performing Councils. On sickness it had to be taken into account that there had been some substantial long term sickness which had skewed the figures. The Council had succeeded in retaining a substantial in-house manual workforce, unlike many other Councils and manual workers had a higher level of sickness than office workers. There was evidence that new procedures including referral to Occupational Health were having a beneficial effect. The Audit Commission had not analysed whether there was a correlation between good audit results and fourth option (i.e. service committee rather than executive based) authorities, but the auditors referred to some executive arrangements authorities that had achieved high scores.

The Committee was pleased to note that the Council's overall performance was good and it was recognised that there may be additional cost implications in order to achieve Level Four scores across the board, which might not lead to tangible benefits. The Committee expressed its appreciation to Officers for continuing to achieve above average performance results and thanked Mr Thomas and Mr Chambers for attending and providing further information on their reports.

Standing Orders for Contracts (C9.6), required that where the most favourable tender received was for a value of more than £100,000, the tenders had to be reported to Committee. Tenders for the servicing of gas appliances in Council properties had recently been returned, and the value of the contract was in excess of the £100,000 threshold. The Committee accordingly noted the value of all of the tenders which had been received.

The majority of Council owned properties now had gas central heating, and as a landlord the Council was required to service each appliance annually. In order to undertake this duty, the Council employed a contractor who operated a 'three star' type arrangement whereby for a fixed fee the contractor serviced each boiler annually, and was on stand by to undertake emergency repairs. The existing contract had come to an end, and suitably qualified contractors had been invited to tender for the contract for the next four years. As required by Contract Standing Order C3.3, the shortlist of contractors invited to tender had been considered and approved by the Housing and Community Services Committee at their meeting on 11 June 2008. The successful contractor was Robert Heath Heating (RHH), the existing contractor. As RHH's bid was the most financially favourable, Officers had accepted it, and the new arrangements would come into force from April 2009. Normally such a report would go to the Housing and Community Services Committee, but as the Housing and Community Services Committee did not meet again until June and RHH would be starting the contract in April, the matter had been reported to the Corporate Management Committee.

RHH were required to respond within specified timescales, these being shorter in periods of cold weather and where residents were deemed to be vulnerable. Officers had been satisfied with RHH's performance to date. The customer satisfaction rate was also high, at 98.6% on the basis of feedback received by Officers. 70% of RHH visits to clients had been successful on the first visit. Over 90% had their servicing, repairs or replacement completed satisfactorily on their second visit. The average response time was 2½ days. RHH retained the most frequently required boiler parts but sometimes there could be a delay while parts which were required less often were obtained. RHH performance would be closely monitored to ensure that no complacency was occurring, as RHH had also been the previous contractor.

The lifespan of boilers was now estimated to be 10 to 12 years, whereas previously it had been in the region of 15 years. The reason for this was that, following national requirements, the Council had changed to using condensing boilers which were more efficient and environmentally friendly, but had a shorter life expectancy. It was noted that KPMG's external audit report on the Council for 2007/08 had included a recommendation that the Authority need to obtain assurance, on a risk basis, of the viability of all its significant contractors or partners' business continuity plans and to ensure that the assurance framework was fully embedded in Runnymede's processes. There was no reason to suppose that RHH's plans for business continuity were not satisfactory, but it was agreed that arrangements should be made for RHH to make a presentation to a future meeting of the Housing and Community Services Committee about their performance and future plans. It was also suggested that manufacturers of boilers might carry out gas appliance servicing and it was agreed that the Corporate Management Committee should be advised of the scope for this.

592. CARELINE – VOICE RECORDER REPLACEMENT - REFERENCE FROM LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

At its meeting on 19 March 2009 the Leisure and Environment Committee had agreed to ask the Committee to approve the capital estimate required for the replacement of the voice recorder which formed part of the Careline Call Answering system operated by Safer Runnymede in partnership with Community Services. The existing voice recorder, supplied and maintained by Jontek Limited, was over ten years old and provision for its replacement had originally been envisaged as part of the move to the new Civic Centre with the introduction of a recording facility for all Council calls. This option had, however, not been pursued as it was too costly. Purchasing a new voice recorder had to be done in order for the system to be accredited, as this status would allow Safer Runnymede to generate additional income by taking on new purchasers of their services. It was anticipated that this might result in the region of £17,000 of new business. It was noted that Safer Runnymede had already provided services to Royal Holloway College and Thorpe Park. As a result, vehicle crime (which had been identified by the Audit Commission in its Annual Audit and Inspection letter as a problem in Runnymede), had reduced substantially at Thorpe Park. An up to date recorder which was capable of immediate replay allowed Safer Runnymede operators to ensure that the correct, and often emergency, action was taken, protected the operators and improved the service to clients.

It was agreed that Standing Order C2 relating to the seeking of estimates be waived as the recorder had to be purchased from the supplier of the other components of the Careline system (Jontek Limited), which included all the linking cabling. The current recorder was covered under the annual maintenance budget and the new machine would simply be a replacement.

The new system would cost £11,500 to purchase and install. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for this expenditure to be met from the budget for upgrades to systems and new initiatives within the capital programme. On-going revenue annual maintenance costs would be approximately £2,000, which was £900 more than the current charge. This additional expenditure would be met from the additional income which was expected to result from the upgrade to the system. If this additional income did not materialise to the extent that was envisaged, the remaining costs would be met from elsewhere in the Safer Runnymede budget.

It was suggested that Careline might be too expensive for some older people. Results of a free Careline trial had, however, indicated that the price of the service was not deterring people from using it. It was agreed that the Housing and Community Services Committee should be advised of the full trial results when known. (Note: The outcome of the trial has already been reported to Housing and Community Services Committee).

RESOLVED that –

- i) a capital estimate be approved for the purchase of a voice recording machine at a sum not exceeding £11,500;**
- ii) this expenditure be met from the upgrades and new initiatives budget held in the capital programme;**
- iii) the revenue consequences be noted; and**
- iv) as the recorder must be purchased from the supplier of the other components of the Careline system, Standing Order C2 relating to the seeking of estimates be waived, and Jontek Ltd supply the equipment, which shall be covered by their existing maintenance agreement within the existing contract.**

593. CIVIC OFFICES REPROVISION – FINANCIAL SUMMARY – SAFER RUNNYMEDE EQUIPMENT BUDGET COSTS - RECOMMENDATION FROM CIVIC OFFICES SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee received a recommendation from the Civic Offices Reprovision Sub-Committee which at its meeting on 18 March 2009, had considered a financial summary of the new Civic Offices project and had been pleased to note that the total expenditure for the new Civic Offices was forecast to be within the approved budget. As part of this summary, the Sub-Committee had considered the costs of the project which were associated with Safer Runnymede. The costs of fitting out the Safer Runnymede control room and installing fibre-optic cabling into the control room had been included within the construction costs of the Civic Offices Reprovision main scheme. The remaining costs of equipping the control room had been met from a separate capital budget which had been estimated to total £553,000 (including a supplementary capital estimate of £86,800 and a virement of £6,200). In addition, as had always been anticipated, contributions had been received from the Runnymede Crime and Disorder Partnership (£10,000) and from the Safer Surrey Community Fund (£29,800). The Sub-Committee had noted the full position on the Safer Runnymede equipment capital budget.

The total expenditure on the Safer Runnymede equipment budget was expected to be £613,478, which was £60,478 more than the approved capital budget of £553,000. The Sub-Committee had agreed to recommend that this be accommodated by a virement from the underspent budget for the new Civic Offices. £39,800 would be financed from the relevant contributions that had been received and the balance of £20,678 could be financed from capital receipts. The Corporate Management Committee concurred with this course of action.

On an incidental point, it was noted that the services of Mr T. N. Williams, the former Chief Executive Officer and leader of the Civic Offices reprovision project, had been retained on a temporary basis to liaise with the contractors and others and to advise on the settlement of the final contractor's account.

RECOMMEND that –

a virement of £60,500 from the new Civic Offices budget to the Safer Runnymede equipment budget to cover the additional cost of Safer Runnymede equipment be approved, to be financed from contributions received of £39,800 and capital receipts of £20,700.

594. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

The Committee reviewed the Council's Procurement Strategy and noted progress in implementing procurement targets.

The updated Procurement Strategy followed the format of the current strategy and included a section detailing the progress on the targets included in the last e-Procurement Strategy. The Council's revenue reductions target agreed in 2005 included £50,000 per annum relating to procurement. This had been achieved. In addition, one-off savings continued to be made (estimated at £40,000 in 2008/09).

On the last occasion on which the Procurement Strategy had been reviewed, the national emphasis had been on the roll out of electronic methods or "eprocurement". The national focus was now more on sustainability. One of the procurement objectives in the Strategy was to make it easy for other organisations to do business with the Council (paragraph 2.3). The Strategy also stated that the Council aimed to set an example in dealing with suppliers (paragraph 4.1). The Committee expressed the view that the Council's poor performance on payment of invoices was not furthering these aims. The TASK purchasing module had been implemented and invoices were now being scanned into the Document Management System. Officers hoped that a business case would be made for the full integration of purchase-to-pay arrangements in the TASK Financials System which would reduce delays in payments and proposals would be submitted to the IT Member Working Group and the Committee. It was acknowledged that the speedier processing of invoices was an issue which needed to be addressed by all departments of the Council.

RESOLVED that –

the revised Procurement Strategy at Appendix 'A' be approved.

595. EQUALITY POLICY AND ACTION PLAN

(Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, 31 January 2008, page 714, para. 512)

The Committee considered a revised Equality Policy for the Council (attached at Appendix 'A' to the Council Minutes of 23 April 2009 and including Appendices '1' and '2' of that Appendix) and noted progress in respect of the Council's existing Equality Policy and Action Plan (shown in Appendix '3' of Appendix 'A' to the Council Minutes of 23 April 2009). The Equality Policy had been updated to ensure compliance with Level 3 of the Equality Standard and to revise the schedule for service reviews. Appendix '2' of the policy which listed local groups that were in regular contact with various sections of the authority or could be contacted by service managers for input into developing services or equality impact assessments would be updated. It was also agreed that the Action Plan at Appendix '3' should be amended to include age equality as one of the Council's functions and policies which needed to be reviewed. (However, this is in fact the outturn on the old Policy before age equality was a requirement).

The Council's Equality Policy incorporated the statutory requirements to promote equality as defined by the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended in 2005) and the Equality Act 2006. The equality duties also required public authorities to screen all functions, policies and practice for likely impact on equality. Where these were considered to have a different impact on different groups of people, Equality Impact Assessments (EIA), had to be conducted in order to assess that impact on minority groups. The Council had to monitor recruitment, training, promotion, disciplinary hearings and grievances in relation to different groups of staff and report on whether minority groups were fairly represented at each stage, to monitor service provision to ensure that all elements of the community were able to access services equally and, where this was not the case, to take action to find out why and improve access whenever possible, to train staff and Members adequately in equalities, to consult relevant community groups to establish the likely outcome of the changes to service provision and to allow for challenge of the impact

assessments, to publish the results of impact assessments and consultation annually and to review the policy and function list on a three-yearly basis.

The Equality Standard brought together the requirements of various pieces of legislation which were noted by the Committee. The Council had received external accreditation to Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in June 2006. Level 2 acknowledged that the Council had an equality scheme and had begun to engage in impact assessment and consultation. The standard contained five levels of achievement. The Council had made a commitment to achieve Level 3 of the Equality Standard by March 2009. The external document assessment had been completed and the peer challenge (which would have Member involvement) was the next stage. The cost of the peer challenge would be approximately £3,000 which could be met from existing budgets. Level 3 of the standard placed a greater weight on the development of a participation and consultation strategy (which had been incorporated in the policy) and ensured that equalities targets and objectives were reflected in service plans. The Committee agreed that Level 3 was worth pursuing so that the Council could demonstrate its commitment to equalities in its provision of services to avoid allegations of discrimination, to assist in meeting the requirements of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment targets, and so that a positive outcome would result from the resources which had been expended to reach this stage. The equalities standard was being changed in April 2009 and would be reduced to three levels. The current standard was valid until the end of September 2009. As a Level 3 authority, the Council would be classed in Level 2 of the new standard.

The Council monitored statistics relating to gender, disability and ethnicity in terms of staff recruitment, training, grievance, discipline and promotion. These were reported in the Annual Pay and Workforce Plan and a summary was being posted on the internet. The Council was required to collect and analyse statistics to give a picture of the numbers of people from different backgrounds using its services, but this was not yet achieved consistently across the authority. The data was essential for undertaking meaningful impact assessments, but required resources for analysis. Officers hoped to develop a survey that could be sent to all service users corporately and, once analysed, individual departments could then build on that data when conducting service-specific surveys. The Council monitored ethnicity in relation to people requesting housing allocations and those on the housing waiting list as was required by the statutory code of practice for housing. Ethnicity data had also been collected on a 3- yearly basis under the former Best Value regime in relation to the benefits, Development Control and housing services. The Council had a racial incident reporting form available for Officers. Harassment and hate crime were categories on the anti-social behaviour form, which was available on the internet. Any such instances were passed to the police, who had a separate unit dealing with hate crime. Annual figures were also reported in the Council's performance indicators. Membership of the Council's residents' panel was being reviewed as a number of original panel members no longer wished to participate. As the panel did not reflect the current demographic profile of the Borough, positive action would be taken to encourage residents from black and minority ethnic (BME) populations and those with a disability to participate. This might assist in identifying improvements in perceptions of service provision by different ethnic groups or people with disabilities.

Twenty six Council functions had been the subject of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's) since 2006. These had been reviewed by the Council's Equality Working Group and were published on the Council's website. Departmental targets, developed from the requirements of the legislation, the Equality Standard and the EIA's completed to date, had been incorporated into new departmental Equality Action Plans. Progress against these Equality Action Plans would be reported along with the service plans that were reviewed at service committees.

There were also some corporate targets which were repeated in each departmental action plan and reflected the employment and data collection requirements of equality legislation, including improved data collection and monitoring, identifying the best forum for consulting minority groups where there appeared to be gaps in the take-up of Council services, ensuring that decisions about changes to policy or new policy were made with reference to a completed Equality Impact Assessment, and identifying the extent to which the Council's workforce reflected the demographic profile of the Borough.

The Council was committed to equality training at every level of the organisation and the Equality Standard emphasised the importance of political and managerial leadership in ensuring that equality issues were taken into consideration. All staff were receiving equality awareness training and there was a plan to implement additional training for those staff involved in implementing departmental action plans. Two training sessions for Members had been held on 17 March, also attended by Officers involved in policy development. The Equality Policy and Action Plan was given to every member of staff during staff training and was being passed on as new staff were recruited. It was

also available on the internet, along with guidelines for undertaking impact assessments and services for translation and interpretation that were available locally. The policy had been reviewed with each departmental management team and Directors received regular updates about progress. Section heads were invited to workshops to undertake Equality Impact Assessments in line with the timetable set out in the policy.

Membership of the Council's Equality Working Group had been extended to members from the local Disability Board, religious groups, black and minority ethnic groups, Surrey County Council, St Peters Hospital, the PCT and Royal Holloway University. This enabled objective challenge to the impact assessments presented by services. The Council had taken out a subscription to Woking Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) so that people who did not understand written or spoken English had access to translation services.

The implementation of the impact assessment process continued to require section heads' time to review existing policies and practice and gain information about whether their delivery had an adverse effect on any minority group. In the longer term, the process of equality impact assessment should be integrated into the normal process of policy development and reported on under the equality section of the standard Committee report format. However, the initial review of policies was time-intensive, as it required a new way of working and often additional research. The Council's equality impact assessment tool had been slightly refined as the Council's external accreditation report for Level 2 noted that more needed to be done to identify adverse impact.

UNISON considered the revised Equality Policy to be balanced and achievable, provided that sufficient resources were given to the process and commitment to the policy was demonstrated at all levels of the authority. The Committee appreciated UNISON'S positive comments and their contribution through participation in the Equality Working Group.

RECOMMEND that –

- i) the amended Equality Policy, as attached at Appendix 'A' to the Council Minutes of 23 April 2009, be approved, subject to Appendix '2' of the policy being updated;**
- ii) progress against the action plan at Appendix '3' be noted; and**
- iii) Appendix '3' be amended to include age equality as one of the Council's functions and policies which need to be reviewed.**

596. PERFORMANCE REWARD GRANT ALLOCATION

The Committee received an update on the total of performance reward grant likely to be received and the conditions attached to the grant, the spending commitments already approved and based on using the performance reward grant, and considered further spending initiatives based on use of the performance reward grant.

In November 2005 the Government and Surrey County Council (on behalf of its partners - the Surrey District Councils) had signed a Second Generation Local Partnership Services Agreement (LPSA) for Surrey. This agreement contained 12 "stretch" targets, the achievement of which would generate income through a grant from the Government known as the Performance Reward Grant (PRG). Runnymede had agreed to meet 5 of the 12 stretch targets agreed by the Surrey Partnership. The targets had various reporting periods, with most covering the financial years 2006/07 and 2007/08, and some running on the calendar year up to 31 December 2008. The PRG was paid upon the successful achievement of the stretch targets. Once 60% attainment was reached by the partners as a whole (not just Runnymede), 60% of that particular target's PRG allocation would be paid and pro rata thereafter up to 100% attainment. The Government expected a range of performance information and reporting and verification work to support the claims. The reward grants would be paid in two instalments, the first of which would be in March 2009 and the second of which would be in March 2010.

Achievement of the targets by all of the contributing partners would have generated a share of PRG for Runnymede of £404,692 at 60% attainment, rising to a maximum of £674,487 at 100% attainment. The total PRG expected was now £484,947. The grant had a 50/50 capital/revenue split, and this applied to each portion. Therefore, the total revenue grant was £242,474, and the

grant that could only be used for capital purposes was £242,473. The total PRG payable to the Surrey LPSA partners was £14.171 million. The Committee noted the amounts payable to each partner. There were no restrictions on the use of PRG other than the capital/revenue split. Therefore, PRG could be used for any purpose, or simply added to reserves. The Committee noted the targets that had generated the PRG award for Runnymede.

On the advice of the Audit Commission, in 2006/07, £69,672 and in 2007/08, £110,398 (£180,070 in total) had been included in the Council's accounts as a prudent estimate of the amount of PRG due. This had been recognised as revenue income as the capital/revenue split had only been introduced recently. Appropriate adjusting accounting entries would be made in the 2008/09 accounts to recognise the correct capital/revenue split. £180,070 had already been recognised as revenue in the Council's accounts. If this was subtracted from the total grant of £484,947, this left an extra £304,877 of PRG to be recognised in the Council's 2008/09 accounts. A further £62,404 would be included as revenue in the 2008/09 accounts to bring the total treated as revenue grant up to £242,474.

Approval had been given to a number of projects based on the use of PRG. A contribution of £39,000 had been made towards the Surrey joint waste strategy and partnership projects (agreed by the Committee on 26 June 2008). It was noted that the Council was spending less on this area than other Surrey authorities, apart from Surrey Heath. At its meeting on 5 February 2009, the Committee had agreed a grant of £67,052 to Runnymede Association of Voluntary Services (RAVS), representing 80% of the award relating to LPSA Target 12 and a part contribution of £16,764 (the remaining 20%) to finance additional grant to Runnymede CAB for taking on the rent start programme. The total expenditure approved based on the use of PRG was therefore £122,816. The actual payment of the first two items was tied to the receipt of cash grant. These spending commitments were all revenue expenditure. Therefore, there was £119,658 of revenue PRG remaining (i.e. £242,474 less £122,816) that could back additional revenue expenditure.

The PRG award provided an opportunity to bolster revenue and capital reserves in line with the Council's financial strategy. Given the financial challenges that faced the Council, it was important to increase reserves where the opportunity existed to allow time to implement revenue reductions in a controlled way. However, Members and Officers were coming under increasing pressure from partners to spend the remaining PRG. It would clearly come as a disappointment to partners should the PRG award not be used to finance some new projects. There was increasing public concern about clean streets and about the appearance of the Borough's town centres. It was therefore agreed that some of this PRG funding could be reasonably applied as one-off expenditure to provide improvements in these areas.

The Committee accordingly agreed that a transit type vehicle be purchased to replace the 11 year old vehicle previously used by the Community Squad (at a cost of £17,000), a specialist contractor be employed to remove chewing gum from town centres (at a cost of £5,000), replacement street orderly barrows with Runnymede logos be obtained (at a cost of £4,500), 50 replacement bins with cigarette stub plates (at a cost of £9,000) be purchased and that the recycling "bring" site in the Chertsey Library car park in Heriot Road be relocated from the front to the rear of the car park, along with more signs. This would make more parking spaces available and reduce the visual impact of the "bring" site (at a cost of £5,000). These items would require maintenance and, eventually, replacement. This would bring further demands on existing budgets and could possibly require difficult decisions in the future on whether to fund replacements. In agreeing this package of measures, the Committee also requested Officers to look at ways of encouraging the public not to drop cigarette stubs on pavements and at ways of preventing them from doing so.

The Surrey Voluntary organisations that contributed to the LPSA targets would obtain reward grant totalling £1,466,786. It had now been confirmed that RAVS would receive £133,011 from this total grant provision. In view of this, RAVS had agreed that £50,000 of the £67,052 (80% of the award relating to LPSA Target 12 as referred to above) should be used to establish a Community Fund to assist voluntary sector organisations who might encounter difficulties. The Fund would be administered by the Surrey Community Foundation. The Committee expressed its appreciation of the work done by RAVS, and its Chief Officer, Rosie Hatton, in particular, in achieving funding.

RESOLVED that –

- i) a capital estimate in the sum of £17,000 be approved for the purchase of a Transit type vehicle to replace the 11 year old vehicle previously**

used by the Community Squad, to be financed from the capital element of the LPSA Performance Reward Grant; and

- ii) a supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £23,500 be approved for a specialist contractor to remove chewing gum from town centres (£5,000), replacement street orderly barrows with Runnymede logos (£4,500), replacement bins with cigarette stub plates (£9,000) and improved signs for and relocation of the recycling “bring” site in the Chertsey Library car park (£5,000).**

597. FREEDOM OF ENTRY TO THE BOROUGH – 94 SIGNAL SQUADRON

The Committee noted discussions with the 94 Signal Squadron regarding the ceremony to mark the conferring of Freedom of Entry, and discussed the arrangements.

At a Special Meeting on 18 December 2008, the Council had resolved to mark the centenary year of the Territorial Army, recognising the long and distinguished association between the local volunteer unit and the town of Chertsey, by conferring Freedom of Entry to the Borough on 94 (Berkshire Yeomanry) Signal Squadron, of which 886 Troop, the Chertsey unit, formed part. Since then Officers had discussed the arrangements to mark the honour with the Squadron and with the Mayor, Group Leaders and local Members.

There had been suggestions that the ceremony be combined with a local event such as Black Cherry Fair which would guarantee a substantial number of people to watch any parade. However, apart from the logistical problems of combining a parade and ceremony with such an event, the Squadron was not available to participate, being on deployment in Gibraltar. The Squadron had requested 25 July for the ceremony. This was its most suitable date after the Gibraltar deployment and before various training exercises. The date was at the beginning of the state school summer holidays when a number of people might be on holiday. However, it was the most feasible day for the Squadron. Following consultation with appropriate Members, Officers had therefore agreed 25 July as the date of the ceremony.

A suitable form for a Freedom of Entry ceremony might include a parade by the unit being honoured, exercising their newly conferred right to march through the borough, in which they would be preceded by a military band. The Squadron and band would need to form up at some appropriate gathering point, march along a pre-determined route, parade for inspection by the Mayor, and attend a reception. A scroll confirming the honour would be handed over, with appropriate speeches, either at the inspection of the troops or during the reception. Officers would draw up proposals for the time of the ceremony and suitable venues for initial assembly, inspection, and reception, together with a route for the march. It would also be necessary to confer with the Police, emergency services, and other agencies to cover matters such as road closures, public safety and security and to make appropriate arrangements for publicity.

The Committee considered the location for the parade and ceremony. Various venues were discussed, including a parade from Victory Park Road to Station Road followed by a ceremony in the Civic Centre in Addlestone, or a parade in the Chertsey area, possibly in the area of the Compass buildings, followed by a ceremony in Chertsey Hall. No decision was made on a suitable location, but it was agreed that all of the three main town centres in the borough (Addlestone, Chertsey and Egham) should be considered. It was also agreed that it would be appropriate for the group of Councillors set out at Resolution i) below to agree on the most appropriate location and other arrangements for the Freedom of Entry ceremony and that Officers should ensure that the final decision on the location had the support of the Squadron. The Committee considered that it was desirable for the group to include a former serving member of the armed services and Councillor Mrs Broadhead had previously served in the Women's Royal Air Force. The prospective Mayor for 2009/10, Councillor P B Tuley, would be kept informed of progress.

RESOLVED that –

- i) Councillors Mrs P I Broadhead, D A Cotty, Mrs E Gill, D R Hamilton and P J Waddell be consulted on arrangements for the Freedom Parade and ceremony and Councillor P B Tuley be kept informed of progress;**

- ii) **the group of Councillors at i) above come to a view on the most appropriate location for the ceremony in either Addlestone, Chertsey or Egham and so advise Officers;**
- iii) **Officers ensure that the arrangements at ii) above have the support of the Squadron; and**
- iv) **the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to arrange for any necessary road closures or other action to facilitate the event after the usual consultations, and under any appropriate legislation.**

598. IT MEMBER WORKING GROUP - NOTES

The notes of the IT Member Working Group meeting of 24 February 2009 were noted.

599. URGENT ACTION - STANDING ORDER 42

The following action taken after consultation with the Chairman of the Committee under Standing Order 42 was noted.

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Central Index No.</u>
Director of Technical Services	Extending the hours of the DEFRA funded, temporary part-time Environmental Health Technician (Air Quality)	685

600. WRITE-OFFS

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100(A)(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.

RESOLVED that –

the Sundry Debt arrears of £25,059.25, the Housing Rent arrears of £9,365.81 and the Non-Domestic Rates arrears of £12,682.25, be written off as irrecoverable.

601. TENANT REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100(A)(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 Chairman of the Committee and of the Economic Development Committee had agreed that this item be admitted to the Agenda as urgent business so that this request for financial assistance could be determined before the next meeting of the Committee and of the Economic Development Committee.

The request for rent relief would normally be considered by the Economic Development Committee, but as a response was urgently needed by the tenant and the next meeting of the Economic Development Committee was not until June, the Chairman of that Committee had agreed that this matter be considered by the Corporate Management Committee.

The Committee considered a request from a commercial tenant for a rent reduction or a rent free period and for relief from business rates on grounds of hardship. The Committee considered the circumstances pertaining to this request, the criteria for the award of discretionary rate relief and the guidelines to be applied to requests for rent assistance from commercial tenants that had been agreed by the Economic Development Committee at its meeting on 15 January 2009. Having noted the circumstances of the case, it was

RESOLVED that -

no discretionary rate relief or rent relief be awarded.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 10.10 pm)