

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

18 December 2008 at 7.48 pm

The Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor J Broadhead) in the Chair

Members of the
Council present:

Councillors A Alderson, Prof I O Angell, Mrs F M Angell, J R Ashmore, Mrs F J Barden, Mrs P I Broadhead, J Broadhead, M J Brown, H A Butterfield, D A Cotty, A J Davis, Mrs R M Denby, R J Edis, J M Edwards, P A Francis, J R Furey, Mrs C E Gant, Mrs E Gill, Mrs L M Gillham, D R Hamilton, Mrs M T Harnden, Miss M N Heath, R N Jones, C Knight, M T Kusneraitis, Mrs Y P Lay, H M V Meares, Prof A M Moore, C J Norman, D W Parr, L C Pouyanne, Mrs M Roberts, P I Roberts, N Stewert, A P Tollett, P B Tuley, P J Waddell, J J Wilson, and G B Woodger

Members of the
Council absent:

Councillors C Chapman, A Mills, and J W C Perschke.

394. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Mayor read out the Fire Procedure.

395. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 16 October 2008 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

396. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following announcements:-

- An Opera Soirée would be held at Royal Holloway College on 14 February 2009;
- The Mayor's Ball would be held at Runnymede Hotel on 4 April 2009;
- A Mayoral luncheon including a Fashion Show would be held early next year.

The Deputy Mayor had attended an event in Joinville le Pont on the Mayor's behalf, where representatives of all the Twin Towns were present. The Deputy Mayor presented the Mayor with various gifts from the visit.

397. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Chapman, Mills and Perschke.

398. QUESTIONS

The following Questions were asked by the Councillors specified under Standing Order No 13:-

Question in the name of Councillor Yvonna Lay

"If the *Airtrack* proposals, as currently envisaged, were to go ahead there would be considerable disruption to the journeys of local residents and, particularly, those of 3,000 local school children with there being a real risk of them missing the start of the school day.

Would the Leader agree that this is totally unacceptable?"

Response from Councillor Furey:

"Level crossing downtime in Runnymede is already a problem that leads to traffic delays affecting businesses, residents, visitors, school children, buses, taxis and emergency services. The implementation of the *Airtrack* scheme without any measures to alleviate this would lead to unacceptable conditions which would seriously affect the whole Borough."

Councillor Mrs Lay asked a supplementary question, commenting that the recent closure of one lane on St. Peters Way had caused major traffic congestion. Similar traffic congestion would become a regular occurrence as a result of increased level crossing downtime. She asked the Leader to agree that this was unacceptable.

Councillor Furey commented that the decision to close one lane at St Peters Way had been made by Surrey County Council.

Question in the name of Councillor Mary Angell

"Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that for *Airtrack* to be acceptable to local residents the following actions should be agreed with BAA?"

- That *Airtrack* funds a dedicated signaller/level crossing operator for the Egham crossings?
- That funding for the role should be contractually binding for the duration of *Airtrack*?
- That formal reports on crossing downtime be produced by *Airtrack* on a regular basis and reported to both relevant authorities?
- That *Airtrack* sign a binding agreement that if the downtime exceeds an agreed limit that it will revise the frequency of the service to remedy this?"

Response from Councillor Furey:

"I am delighted Surrey County Council has reversed its decision on *Airtrack*. It has to be remembered that there is already a problem with level crossing barrier downtimes that has nothing to do with *Airtrack*. The automated barriers were replaced with manually controlled barriers for safety reasons several years ago. Equally, if *Airtrack* starts operating, they would utilise track which is controlled by Network Rail. They are not in the driving position.

There is a need to look at this comprehensively. What can be done to the existing highway network to improve traffic flow? This might include improvements to carriageway widths to increase queue capacity; improvements to geometry of roundabouts and improvements or additions to signalling arrangements.

Network Rail and Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate have been urged to look at ways to improve signalling or possibly increase staff to reduce barrier downtimes.

The first two points raised in the question therefore, regarding funding of a dedicated signaller might be part of the answer, but the problem needs to be looked at more comprehensively.

As far as monitoring of barrier downtime is concerned and revision of frequency of service, this is an unreasonable demand to place on *Airtrack*, because they cannot influence this directly, when the fact is that the majority of services will be operated by South West Trains on Network Rail infrastructure.

I agree that monitoring should take place, but that should be by the relevant authority".

In a supplementary question, Mrs Angell asked the Leader to confirm that if the improvements to level crossings failed to materialise owing to lack of funds, would this Council join with Surrey County Council and Spelthorne Borough Council in withdrawing support for *Airtrack*.

Councillor Furey replied that Surrey County Council (SCC) funding could be directed towards Runnymede to facilitate improvements. The Leader was agreeable to meetings being held with SCC and Spelthorne to pursue solutions. The Council had been a supporter of *Airtrack* over the years. Pressure and discussions could lead to improvements. The Council would support *Airtrack* as long

as the Borough was not damaged in any way. The Leader drew attention to the resolution passed at the Corporate Management Meeting held on 27 November 2008, which clearly sets out the Council's conditional support for *Airtrack*.

Question in the name of Councillor Marisa Heath

"Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that if *Airtrack* is to be supported BAA and the Government have to demonstrate far more concern for the lives, quality of life and well-being of local people than they currently appear to be doing?

Causing or worsening traffic congestion is not in the interests of local people".

Response from Councillor Furey:

BAA *Airtrack* are under no illusions as to concerns related to level crossing barrier downtimes in Runnymede. Equally they are now aware that if these concerns lie unaddressed then they will be very forcibly raised at the public inquiry into the Transport Works Act application next year. I am aware that they are having a wide range of discussions with a number of local and national agencies with a view to solutions being found.

399. FINANCIAL FORECAST

RESOLVED that -

- i) Council Tax increases be restricted by 5%, subject to the outcome of (vii) below;**
- ii) the revenue developments for each service be approved, subject to (vi) below;**
- iii) the Council considers reducing the capital programme in order to limit the impact on the General Fund, and a further report be made to the Corporate Management Committee on this;**
- iv) the Financial Forecast for the five year period to 2013/14 be approved, subject to Recommendation (vi) below;**
- v) the Forecast forms the basis for drawing up detailed service budgets for 2009/10, subject to (vi) below;**
- vi) (ii), (iv) and (v) above be subject to achieving not less than £600,000 of annual savings, and**
- vii) the Leader of the Council be requested to make representations to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on the funding position of the Council in relation to the capping regime.**

400. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC PLAN AND COMMITTEE SERVICE PLANS

RESOLVED that -

subject to the amendments reported, and to final drafting amendments being approved by the Chief Executive Officer and the Chairman of the Committee, the form and content of the Sustainable Community Strategy/Strategic Plan be endorsed.

401. CONCESSIONARY BUS FARES**RESOLVED that -**

a supplementary estimate in the sum of £120,000 be approved to meet the full cost of reimbursing bus operators for concessionary travel in the 2008/09 financial year.

402. ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL, CHERTSEY - REPORT OF REVIEW BOARD ON PARKING**RESOLVED that -**

- i) the report of the Review Board be noted;**
- ii) the Board's report and conclusions be sent to the Ashford and St Peter's Hospital NHS Trust, with a request that the Trust makes a response;**
- iii) the Trust's response be submitted to the Board; and**
- iv) the Board's original report and its comments on the Trust's response be submitted to full Council meeting.**

403. REVISIONS TO RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME**RESOLVED that -**

- i) the November 2008 Changes to the Runnymede Borough Council Local Development Scheme be approved subject to substitution of Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Area Action Plan (AAP) for the proposed development on the DERA site; and**
- ii) the Director of Technical Services in consultation with Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee be authorised to approve any minor changes to the LDS following the receipt of advice from GOSE.**

404. REVENUE REDUCTIONS - PHASE 3

The Council considered a recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee which had met on 27 November 2008.

RESOLVED that -

- i) subject to satisfactorily concluding any consultation that may be necessary, the revenue reductions reported be approved;**
- ii) service Committees be advised accordingly;**
- iii) Officers be authorised to prepare future budgets based on these proposals;**
- iv) any variations to the staffing establishment, where appropriate, be reported in the Annual Pay And Workforce Plan; and**
- v) the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to approve amended fees for replies to enquiries and other local search services from time-to-time, either generally, or for specific users or classes of users, with the intention of optimising search income and use of the service.**

405. CAPITAL STRATEGY

The Council considered a recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee which had met on 27 November 2008.

RESOLVED that -

the Capital Strategy be approved.

406. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2009/2010

The Council considered a recommendation from the Corporate Management Committee which had met on 27 November 2008.

RESOLVED that -

the Calendar of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2009/2010 be approved, as reported, subject to the meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee scheduled for 8 September 2009 being rescheduled to take place on 30 September 2009.

407. ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL, CHERTSEY – PARKING - TRUST RESPONSE

The Council considered a recommendation from the Review Board which had met on 4 December 2008.

RESOLVED that -

i) the Council welcomes:-

- a) the recognition by the Trust that patient and visitor parking should be prioritised;**
- b) the fact that the Trust's car parking policy is being revised;**
- c) the fact that the Trust is pursuing a Masterplan; and**
- d) the fact that additional parking is being provided, albeit on a temporary basis;**

ii) the Council urges that:-

- a) the Masterplan be completed by the Trust as soon as possible, discussed with Runnymede Officers and be submitted formally as a planning application;**
- b) the Trust advise the Council's Review Board of progress on the Masterplan in six months time;**
- c) the Trust agree and implement the revised parking policy as soon as possible; and**
- d) the Trust investigate and implement increased parking provision as soon as possible, subject to the details provided in the Masterplan;**

iii) the Council advises the Trust that:-

- a) **both Borough and County Council Officers would be pleased to provide advice on experience elsewhere of formulating and implementing parking policies; and**
- b) **Runnymede Officers would welcome early consultation over the Masterplan and proposals for additional car parking.**

Mayor

(The meeting ended at 9.14 pm)