

Runnymede Borough CouncilREVIEW BOARD12 October 2006 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Board present: Councillors P. B. Tuley (Chairman), H.A. Butterfield, J.B. Dean, R.J. Edis, J.M. Edwards, Ms. R.E.Haylor, Miss R.M. Nixey and C.J. Ruane.

Member of the Board absent: Councillor Mrs L.M. Gillham.

Councillor D.W. Parr also attended

289. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Conservative Group had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that the changes listed below be made to the membership of the Board. The changes were for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillors removed would be reappointed.

<u>Remove from Membership</u>	<u>Appoint Instead</u>
Councillor J. Broadhead	Councillor Ms R.E. Haylor
Councillor J.E. Haas	Councillor R.J. Edis
Councillor M.T. Kusneraitis	Councillor J.M. Edwards

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

290. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Review Board meeting held on 6 July 2006 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

291. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor P.B. Tuley declared a personal interest having been a Member of the Corporate Management Committee on 5 October 2006 which had made recommendations with regard to the Financial Forecast.

Councillor J.M. Edwards declared a personal interest having been Chairman of the Planning Committee which had authorised some of the enforcement action referred to in the item on Enforcement of Planning Control – Progress Report.

The interests recorded above were judged to be prejudicial only if the original decisions were debated. As the original decisions were not debated, the Councillors remained in the room.

292. AIR QUALITY

The Board was informed of the latest findings on air quality in the Borough.

At the Council Meeting in April 2006, a Member of the Council had considered that details were required on what action the Council was taking to mitigate and alleviate poor air quality in the Borough. A brief update had been provided to the meeting of the Board on 6 July 2006, and the Board had asked Officers to report on air quality in Runnymede in more detail to the following meeting.

Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 introduced a requirement for the Government to develop an Air Quality Strategy (AQS) for England and for local authorities to undertake Local Air Quality

Management (LAQM). LAQM required local authorities to periodically review and assess air quality across their areas. Two pollutants, ozone and polyaromatic hydrocarbons, were to be monitored by national Government. The seven pollutants to be monitored by local authorities under LAQM were benzene, 1,3 butadiene, carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, Particles (PM₁₀) and sulphur dioxide. The Government's Expert Panel on Air Quality Standards (EPAQS) recommended 'objectives' (or targets) for these pollutants. The objectives were all based on health-based standards using current scientific advice taking into account the likely costs and benefits, as well as the feasibility and practicality in meeting the objectives, which were mostly in line with limit values prescribed by European Union Directives.

Under LAQM Runnymede had to carry out reviews of air quality and send them to the Government for approval. Consultants were used to carry out this work. Many local authorities in London and Surrey, including Runnymede, used the Environmental Research Group of King's College, University of London. Reviews called Updating and Screening Assessments (USA), which examined the levels of the seven pollutants, had been carried out in 2003 and in 2006, and a progress report had been produced in 2005. Depending on the outcome of the reviews, further more detailed investigations of pollutants of concern might have to be carried out.

The Board accordingly welcomed Stephen Hedley of the Environmental Research Group of King's College, University of London, who presented the latest findings on air quality in Runnymede following the USA recently carried out on behalf of the Council and reported on the results of objectives for each of the seven pollutants monitored at local level. The Board noted that the objectives for the various pollutants ran from 2003 to 2010

Carbon monoxide was monitored at the roadside monitoring station just north of the borough on the M25. The air quality objectives for carbon monoxide had been met because cars were now fitted with catalytic converters which did not emit carbon monoxide.

Benzene was monitored in Woking. The main emission source was road transport but the benzene level in petrol had been reduced and the levels in the atmosphere had therefore also lessened. Objectives for benzene had been met. There was no safe limit for benzene because it was a carcinogen.

1,3 Butadiene and lead levels, which were both measured in London, were acceptable. The Board noted that a previous report prepared by Officers for the Leisure and Environment Committee had shown that there were no problems with lead pollution in the borough.

Sulphur dioxide (which was monitored at Teddington) resulted from heavy industry and was measured in terms of episodes of emissions. As Runnymede was non-industrial, sulphur dioxide was not a factor in the borough.

In line with most local authorities, pollution from nitrogen dioxide and Particles (PM₁₀) was significant in Runnymede, with the main sources being from motor vehicles, particularly from the M25 and M3 and other busy and congested areas within the borough. The work that Runnymede had undertaken in its role under LAQM had shown that the statutory objectives for nitrogen dioxide and Particles would only be exceeded close to the M25 within the Council's area and consequently the Council had in 2004 designated an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for an area close to the M25. Councils were required to designate an AQMA if predictions based on the best available evidence indicated that the air quality objectives were being exceeded.

The main source of nitrogen dioxide pollution was motor cars. There were more than 150 AQMAs for nitrogen dioxide for authorities which were situated outside urban areas. AQMA monitoring was undertaken using diffusion tubes placed on lamp posts close to the road at 10 different locations throughout the borough which were in position for approximately a month. Three sites in Runnymede in the AQMA did not meet the latest objectives including the area around the Egham Sports Centre. The air quality in the AQMA had not improved in the latest survey.

While levels of nitrogen dioxide were increasing, nitrogen oxide levels were decreasing. However, scientists were revising their opinion of the amount of nitrogen dioxide which resulted from nitrogen oxide. It used to be estimated that 5% of nitrogen oxide converted into nitrogen dioxide – now it was reckoned to be closer to 20%. Diesel engines created more nitrogen oxide and nitrogen dioxide than petrol engines. There was no clear evidence that bio-diesel engines improved the position

substantially. Ozone, which was monitored by national Government, also increased the amount of nitrogen oxide being oxidised to nitrogen dioxide. Therefore a number of factors were increasing the level of nitrogen dioxide in the atmosphere.

Nitrogen dioxide was a combustion product arising from the burning of fossil and other fuels. About 40% of total emissions came from road transport and levels close to busy roads often exceeded national objectives. At high concentrations nitrogen dioxide caused inflammation of the lung. Long-term exposure was also considered to affect lung function and exposure to nitrogen dioxide was particularly harmful for people with asthma and related diseases. Nitrogen oxide was also an important component in the formation of ozone and secondary particles.

Particles (PM₁₀) were gaseous and had adverse health effects on respiratory and cardiovascular systems, asthma and mortality. EPAQS had recommended a daily standard and an annual mean standard. Particles included pollutants which had been blown across from Europe, (which in turn received Particles blown from the UK). Scientists had not been able to find out which element or elements within Particles caused morbidity, although epidemiologists had suggested that those Particles that had an increased concentration of dust (i.e. coarse particles), led to increased morbidity rates. Research was continuing at King's College, London and other laboratories into the nature of Particles to further analyse their components.

Particles could be divided into three groups, primary, secondary and coarse. Primary particle emissions derived directly from combustion sources, including road traffic, power generation and industrial processes. Secondary particles were sulphates and nitrates formed by chemical reactions in the atmosphere. Coarse particles resulted from a wide range of sources, including re-suspended dusts from road traffic, construction works, mineral extraction processes, wind-blown dusts and soils, sea salt and biological particles.

The main Particle source of concern in Runnymede was the primary particle emissions from road traffic, with diesel vehicles emitting a greater mass per vehicle kilometre driven than other vehicles. The latest research on Particles indicated that the number of Particles and the size of them might be more significant than the weight (or mass) of them. The EPAQS report on this subject provided further detail on this latest finding.

There had been an increase locally and nationally in nitrogen dioxide levels over the year 2005/06 in terms of hourly mean and also in Particles levels over the year 2005/06 in terms of concentration levels. It appeared that the objectives for nitrogen dioxide over the period up until 2010 would be similar to those set at present. However, the provisional objectives for Particles up until 2010 would be more stringent, although the way that the objectives worked would be changed. There were various national and European Union initiatives to reduce air pollution from motor vehicles by requiring new less polluting engines and particle traps for all diesel engined vehicles (called EURO 4 standards). Over the next four years, European Standards for vehicle emissions were likely to be tightened and incentives would probably be introduced for people to operate low emission vehicles. Changes to brakes and tyres would also help to reduce the incidence of Particles in the atmosphere.

The Board noted Government strategies regarding Air Quality which included suggestions for a road pricing scheme. The Board was concerned that the Government appeared prepared to tackle the issue of pollution from ships and combustion plants, which caused a relatively small amount of pollution, but did not appear to be including anything in their strategies on the problem of air travel, which was a major polluter.

The USA had concluded that the Council needed to undertake a Detailed Assessment for nitrogen dioxide for parts of its area only, namely for Woburn Hill, A320 Chertsey Lane and the junctions of Eastworth Road/Guildford Street, High Street/Church Road and Woodham Lane/New Haw Road. The detailed assessment modelling predictions for these roads indicated that annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentrations did not exceed the air quality objective where there was relevant exposure apart from in Addlestone near the current Civic Offices site at High Street/Church Road and also in New Haw at Woodham Lane/New Haw Road. 'Relevant Exposure' in this context meant locations where houses were near to the road so that the public were likely to be exposed to the pollution on a regular basis.

Nitrogen dioxide emissions were higher where traffic was stationary and car engines were still running. Concerning the Woodham Lane/New Haw Road junction, the Board therefore suggested

that one of the contributory factors might be that traffic was often stationary or slow moving because it was the point at which the traffic from the Brooklands shopping area met the traffic proceeding from Woking. The Board noted that the final report on sites where the annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentrations exceeded the air quality objective was expected to be completed within the next month. The report would include recommendations for action. Woodham Lane/New Haw Road, New Haw, was not the only site affected. Church Road/High Street, Addlestone, was also in this category. Objectives had only been slightly exceeded up until now and this did not mean that air quality was particularly poor, but it was clearly not as good as it might have been. The final results might show that the diffusion tube monitoring needed to be increased or that real time monitoring might be needed. Any continuous monitoring would, however, have cost implications.

The Board noted that Heathrow Airport was situated within the neighbouring boroughs of Spelthorne and Hillingdon. As the Airport was more than 1 kilometre from the borough's boundary, Runnymede was not required to investigate air pollution from Heathrow Airport. There were two automatic sites in the Government's network monitoring Heathrow and a site operated by the British Airports Authority close to Heathrow. Additionally, the London Boroughs of Hillingdon, Hounslow and Ealing and Spelthorne in Surrey undertook monitoring. Average concentrations of pollutants were generally similar to, or slightly higher than those measured at other air pollution monitoring sites in London and national targets were generally exceeded or met in line with other urban sites in London, but they dispersed fairly quickly over a short distance so as to not affect air quality in Runnymede. Benzene was also measured at lower levels at the Marylebone Road site in London and was well below the current objectives. The national targets which were, however, exceeded at Heathrow were the current UK Air Quality Strategy objectives for annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentration and the daily mean for Particles. In connection with Heathrow Airport, a Board Member had noticed the odour of aviation fuel previously in the borough. Scientific advice was that aviation fuel dispersed fairly quickly and did not affect air quality. Officers agreed to contact the British Airports Authority on the matter to confirm the position and would circulate information on aviation fuel pollution to the Board.

The Board noted the Council's work in attempting to reduce air pollution in the borough. Runnymede spent approximately £3,000 per annum on consultancy work, plus Officer time totalling approximately one-fifth of a full time equivalent member of staff carrying out air quality work. The Council was promoting company travel plans (including its own) for journeys in the area. The Council also promoted yellow buses to reduce the effects of parents delivering their children to school by car, as well as 'walking buses' and a cycle strategy. Local Transport Plan policies were designed to improve air quality. Widening of the M25 should improve traffic flow and result in lower emissions and improve air quality in the AQMA. Variable speed limits had been put in place for several years which also increased traffic flow and resulted in reduced emissions. Nitrogen dioxide had been monitored for many years and enhanced monitoring was also being carried out at 25 sites in conjunction with the Highways Agency.

The Board agreed to receive a further report on Air Quality at its next meeting, in view of its implications for public health. The report would include an analysis of the final report on sites within the borough where annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentrations exceeded the air quality objective. The Board agreed that a copy of this final report should be circulated to all Members of the Council and also sent to Surrey County Council who should be asked if they had any proposals in terms of traffic management or other measures to alleviate these problems. It was also agreed that the matter should also be raised in Working Groups in which Officers of Runnymede and Surrey County Council were represented. It was agreed that the previous Officer findings on lead pollution should also be included as part of the report, as the Board considered that it would be helpful to include material showing that there was no problem with lead pollution in the borough.

293. PROGRESS REPORT ON OTHER ITEMS

The Board considered the progress of items contained within the Board's Work Programme or raised at the last meeting of the Board.

i) Fuel Poverty

At its last meeting on 6 July 2006, the Board considered information on Fuel Poverty, further to a suggestion from a Member of the Council that action was required to address one of the outcomes of a survey which had found that 24% of respondents were in fuel poverty and would struggle financially to heat their homes. Board Members had noted the Council's work

on fuel poverty and agreed that they should take every opportunity to make people aware of the various energy management and energy efficiency schemes which were available. Officers had agreed to check the Council's website to see whether it had links to other organisations that provided this kind of information. Officers had checked the Council's website and if the website user clicked on the A to Z, then E, and followed the links through energy conservation and advice on energy conservation they arrived at the Energy Site page which provided links to various organisations which had advice on energy efficiency.

ii) Enforcement Appeals

At its last meeting, the Board had considered a suggestion from a Member of the Council that representations needed to be made to the Planning Inspectorate over the length of time that enforcement appeals were taking to be processed. The Board noted that these delays were of concern to local residents and agreed that their voice needed to be added to those who were seeking a speedier appeals process. Officers had taken the opportunity to take up this matter directly with the Planning Inspectorate through the forum of the Surrey Planning Officers' Association, which represented the Chief Planners of all local authorities in Surrey. The Association had raised concerns about delays in processing planning appeals at a meeting which had been held on 21 July 2006 with the South East Inspection Manager for the Planning Inspectorate. The Planning Inspectorate had recently informed the Council that they had been experiencing a 31% increase in enforcement appeals, which meant that they were processing them more slowly. The Planning Inspectorate asked the Council to estimate how many enforcement appeals it was expecting to receive over the next six months. Officers advised that this was something which was very difficult to estimate and that they would be informing the Planning Inspectorate accordingly. It was not easy to predict how many breaches there would be or how many appeals would be received. Furthermore, certain sites were the subject of many notices which distorted the figures and gave a misleading picture.

iii) Surrey Pension Fund

Officers had continued to seek information from Surrey County Council in response to the Council's questions on the Surrey Pension Fund. A meeting would be taking place between Runnymede and Surrey County Council Officers on 6 November 2006 and the Surrey Pension Fund Annual General Meeting was being held on 1 December. Amongst the issues which would be discussed at the 6 November meeting was the movement of funds arising from the transfer of Council highways staff to Surrey County Council a number of years ago. The Board was concerned at the difficulty in obtaining information about the way that the Fund operated. Furthermore the Fund could place future obligations on the Council which were not able to be predicted. The Board understood that Runnymede's contributions to the Fund were ringfenced.

The Board agreed to receive a report at their next meeting on the outcome of the 6 November and 1 December meetings. The report should include the accounts presented at the Surrey Pension Fund AGM if they were available and also should have information on the performance of the scheme compared to other public sector pension fund schemes and on whether it would be possible to transfer to another scheme.

iv) Level Crossings

At its last meeting the Board agreed that Officers would seek detailed information from Network Rail on the amount of time for which barriers were down at level crossings in the borough. Network Rail had not provided this, but had indicated that they would be monitoring the Pooley Green level crossing. They had not explained why they would be looking at this crossing. The Board agreed to receive a report on this at their next meeting including the outcome of the monitoring of the Pooley Green crossing (if it was available) and any other information on barrier down times that could be obtained.

v) Partnerships

The development of partnership arrangements with Surrey County Council was an item within the Board's work programme which had been referred to in the previous

Comprehensive Performance Assessment of Runnymede. The Council had previously agreed that, subject to settling detailed arrangements and to agreement on the content of meetings, the Council would participate in the Local Committee of the County Council which covered the Runnymede area. Arrangements for participation in the Local Committee had now been agreed and the first meeting of the Local Committee with Borough Council representatives present had taken place on 22 September 2006. The Board agreed that this was a satisfactory outcome to this issue.

vi) Rail And Bus Transport

Regarding the Board's initiative to promote rail and bus transport in the borough, it was noted that on 22 September 2006, the Department for Transport had awarded Stagecoach Group the new South Western rail franchise. This franchise, which would run for 10 years from 4 February 2007, combined the existing South West Trains and Island Line franchises, both of which were currently operated by the Stagecoach Group. Stagecoach had announced a series of measures associated with the new franchise regarding fleet improvement and capacity, security, fares and ticketing, station enhancements, customer service and information and performance. Further details were available from the South West Trains web site. It was understood by the Board that ownership of some stations might be passing to private sector organisations. However, this should not affect dialogue between the Council and Network Rail. The Board noted that a CCTV link was in place at stations which should assist the safety of passengers waiting for trains. There had also been improvements made to the facilities at a number of stations in the borough and to the reliability of services. The Board asked Officers to advise them whether real time information at bus shelters would be rolled out in the borough.

vii) Revenue Reductions

The Council's progress in achieving net revenue reductions formed part of the Financial Forecast which had been considered by the Corporate Management Committee at its meeting on 5 October 2006. The Corporate Management Committee had agreed to recommend to the Council on 19 October that the Financial Forecast for the five year period to 2011/12 be approved, subject to reducing the provision for inflation to 1.25%, that a sum of £250,000 be transferred from the DSO Reserves to General Fund working balances, and that special repair and improvement works scheduled to be charged to the Housing Repairs Account in 2006/07 and 2007/08 (£3m) be capitalised and an equivalent sum be transferred from the Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund. The Committee had also recommended that the capital programme be reviewed and prioritised with a view to reducing funding from capital receipts by £2.1 million and that Officers report to the next Corporate Management Committee meeting with recommendations for such prioritisation under the system set out in the Capital Strategy, that revenue variations be reviewed and Officers report back to a future meeting with proposals for prioritising and reducing these sums and that the forecast should form the basis for drawing up detailed service budgets for 2007/08. The Board agreed to receive a report on progress on net revenue reductions at their next meeting, so that if they wished to make any comments, they could be included in the budgetary process.

294. PROGRESS REPORT ON ENFORCEMENT OF PLANNING CONTROL

The Board noted the progress report on enforcement of Planning Control as at 22 September 2006.

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

i) Greenacres, Hardwick Lane, Chertsey

A Committee report was to be prepared by January 2007 regarding mobile homes and caravans, following a further site visit and an assessment of the personal circumstances of the occupiers.

ii) Willow Farm, Chobham Road, Ottershaw

The Council was instructing Counsel to proceed to Committal Proceedings by November 2006, regarding a number of non-compliances.

iii) 11 Wilson Drive, Ottershaw

The breach here was a change of use from woodland to a residential garden. A site visit of other properties in Wilson Drive would also be undertaken to investigate other possible similar breaches in the area.

iv) Capital House, Woodham Park Road, Woodham

Further action was being discussed with Surrey County Council relating to the erection of a building and an application for a waste transfer station which had been refused by the County Council. A Public Inquiry date was awaited.

v) Amberwood And Lone Pine, Christchurch Road, Virginia Water

The contravention at this site was the erection of a fence. A Warrant for Arrest had been issued. There were complex issues pertaining to occupation. Monitoring of the site was continuing.

vi) Bourne Valley Garden Centre, Woodham Park Road

A Prosecution Statement was to be prepared in the event of non-compliance in respect of unauthorised storage uses and the construction of a hardstanding.

vii) 16 High Street, Egham

The Court had levied a £300 fine on the owner, in respect of a breach of a fast food opening hours condition, and the Council had been awarded its costs.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.35 p.m.)