

INTRODUCTION

APPENDIX 'A'

1. The Overview and Scrutiny function in Runnymede is undertaken by the Review Board. The Board's Terms of Reference are set out in Article 6 of the Council's Constitution, which is attached at Appendix '1'.
2. The remainder of this report summarises the area of the Council's activity looked at by the Board from 1 April 2005 to 1 April 2006.
3. During the course of the year the Board has considered items within its work programme on further proposals for net revenue reductions in the Council's budget, rail and bus transport provision in the Borough, partnership arrangements with Surrey County Council, issues with Surrey County Council with regard to the Surrey Pension Fund and progress on the enforcement of planning control. The Board has also looked at the topic of the pilot collection of green garden waste, an issue affecting residents in the borough raised by one of the Board's Members. The Board has also assisted the Council in the development of its policy framework by analysing the annual review of the Runnymede State Report.

A. PILOT COLLECTION OF GREEN GARDEN WASTE

1. At its meeting in July 2005 the Board considered the progress of the pilot project for the collection of green garden waste. A Board Member had given written notice under Article 8 of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules that he wished the Board to consider the topic of the pilot collection of green garden waste. Based on queries, comments and complaints which he had received from residents, he was of the opinion that the Council should be seen to be taking a proactive approach to the implications of the scheme as perceived by residents and that the Board's discussion at this meeting would provide a platform for communicating the reasoning behind the scheme to the public. The Member had noted that a report on the pilot was to be submitted to the Leisure and Environment Committee in September, and believed that the preparation of this forthcoming report would be aided by the outcome of an earlier consideration of this issue by the Review Board. At their meeting, the Board also considered verbal representations from a local resident, regarding the scheme.
2. A pilot chargeable kerbside recycling scheme for the collection and composting of green waste had been introduced in April 2005, in two of the Borough's main refuse collections rounds. The pilot scheme was not time limited.
3. Residents within the pilot area had been advised by letter that the disposal of green garden waste in domestic bins was no longer acceptable and bins containing such waste would not be emptied. They had also been advised of the number and kind of receptacles in which green waste would be collected in the pilot area and that a charge of £30 per household per annum would be made to those residents wishing to use the green garden waste collection service using re-usable 3x120 litre polypropylene bags. Additional bags were available at £10 each. Collection was on a fortnightly basis. At that point, some 1,432 households (approximately 12%) within the pilot scheme areas had signed up to the scheme. This was still below the financial break-even figure of 2,750 households.
4. Ultimately, the collected green waste was taken to a high-technology plant in Basingstoke where it was turned into compost i.e. an organic peat-free soil conditioner. The product complied with the standards of the Soil Association's "Certified Product Certificate" and was successfully being sold under the name of "Pro-Grow". Plans were in hand to sell this product back to residents at a low cost.
5. The Board was informed that the UK Government was committed to the European Landfill Directive aimed at reducing the amount of biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill by 60% over a ten-year period. The Government had accordingly set weight limits on the amount of such waste for each County. If a particular Council then exceeded its allowance it would have to "purchase" additional landfill allowances from other Waste Disposal authorities under the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS). Present information suggested that

this could cost up to £150 per tonne. Currently, in Surrey there were no alternatives to landfill for waste disposal. Green waste biodegraded anaerobically in landfill sites producing methane, one of the worst "greenhouse" gases. Thus, removing green waste from the municipal waste stream had both economic and environmental significance. Furthermore, the introduction of a green waste collection scheme was one of the key aims for improving the local environment in the Council's Strategic Plan 2005-2010, building upon the Community Strategy in which the promotion of recycling was an environmental priority.

6. There had been criticism by some residents of the content and style of the letter sent to them, including the wording relating to the legal penalties for including green waste in household waste which some people had found somewhat threatening. Some also thought that the information pack should have also contained more guidance and advice for residents. There had also been a problem with the leaflet drop in some areas. Residents had also complained that the scheme had also been introduced too quickly with inadequate "lead time" thus allowing no prior consultation. From the inception of "wheelie-bins" residents had been encouraged to dispose of green waste in these receptacles. Officers, in response, commented that the European Landfill Directive imposed significant legal and future financial responsibilities on all Councils which had to be addressed now. The Council had acted quickly in order to meet the implementation timetable once it had been learned that grant funding of some £225,000 from central Government had been approved following the Council's grant funding application being moved forward from a reserved listing. It was a statutory requirement to include a formal notice, including legal penalties, in the letter to residents. In hindsight, however, it was agreed that the message could have been communicated more sensitively, as well as providing the opportunity of giving more general advice and guidance on the green waste issues to residents.
7. The major complaint from residents was having to pay for the service and the issue of different costs for this service in neighbouring Councils was raised by some Members. In answer, it had been explained to residents that the aim was to financially break even and also that it was entirely reasonable that users should pay for green waste disposal. The alternative was a general additional charge to Council Tax that would affect all households irrespective of whether they generated green waste. Residents sought more guidance from the Council on how the scheme would be enforced and operated, e.g. whether cut flowers were green waste, whether the bags should be tied, whether a lost/stolen bag would be replaced, as well as more information on the Assisted Collection Scheme. Assurance was given that the Council wished to encourage residents' voluntary participation in the scheme and guidance rather than censure would be paramount at this stage. The preference was for home-composting, thus removing the need for any transportation and, therefore, saving further on natural resources. It was also suggested by the Board that Officers might be able to persuade the County Council to increase the Recycling Credit given to Runnymede, currently standing at £44 per tonne, thus reflecting the significant savings it was making by not having to dispose of the waste itself.
8. Some Members had suggested that it might be possible for people in receipt of means tested benefits to pay less. The Officers commented that it would prove both difficult and time consuming to establish whether particular residents were in receipt of means tested benefit. Furthermore, as the charge could be paid in monthly instalments of £2.50, a lower charge should not be offered to some residents since this would make the scheme more bureaucratic to administer and other residents would have to pay more in order to make up for the shortfall in income if the scheme was to break even. Members suggested that the opportunity existed for several such households to combine thus spreading the cost.
9. With regard to the complaint that some residents, especially the elderly and those people with disabilities, were unable to manage the 120 litre bags it was noted that assisted collection was provided for residents who were physically unable to move their bags to the edge of their properties for collection. This could easily be arranged by contacting the Council's Technical Services Department. This information, too, could be further emphasised in the guidance/advice given to residents. It was not possible to differentiate and allow some households to continue to use their wheeled bins and, also, many householders did not have storage capacity for an extra bin. One Member commented on a type of sack trolley which could be used to move the bags. It was agreed that this should be investigated by Officers. Noting the size and volume of the bags Members also sought and received assurance that proper risk-assessment procedures were in place to protect refuse loaders.

10. The Board acknowledged that the pilot green waste collection was still in the early stages of implementation. Whilst no firm end-date had been set, Members agreed that its success, or otherwise, could not be fully judged until it had been running for a 12 month period. This period would provide a clearer idea about the likely overall number of users and their satisfaction with the service. However, a six month interim report would be given to the Leisure and Environment Committee in September.
11. It was hoped that this collection scheme would be viewed as a real service to residents saving them both time and money. Whilst no target had been set for the overall amount of waste produced in the Borough, Officers were optimistic that there would be a decrease not just because green garden waste was diverted from the household waste stream but because more residents would continue to be encouraged to carry out home-composting together with other waste minimisation exercises. Sales of home-composters, at the subsidised rate of £12, remained buoyant with sales of more than 400, during April and May, which was twice the figure sold in the previous twelve months. It was estimated that a home-composter could accept between 300 and 400Kg of garden waste per annum and was the preferred option as it made a significant contribution to waste minimisation whilst removing the need for transportation thus saving further on natural resources. It was suggested that the Government should consider this when it set future recycling targets for Councils.
12. It was noted that due to the take up of the scheme no further publicity material had been prepared but, in view of comments made, it was agreed to substantially revise the future information to be given to residents on this subject. Officers were accordingly asked to liaise with both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Leisure and Environment Committee when they had finalised proofs available. The Board resolved that the comments made at the meeting and Officer responses be included in the report that would be submitted to the Leisure and Environment Committee in September 2005.
13. At a subsequent meeting, in February 2006, when considering the Runnymede State Report, the Board noted that now approximately half of the households in the borough had the green garden waste collection facility. The problem with increasing the rollout of this measure was the cost involved. Negotiations were taking place with Surrey County Council to help fund the extension of the coverage as it was below target. Members of the Council had been receiving complaints that some residents were still able to use their wheeled bin for green waste, while others now had to pay for green waste collection from their house. Although the position was not as simple as this and those who had to pay for green waste collection from their house could alternatively compost it or take it to green waste sites, the Board noted that the question of green waste collection would remain a bone of contention until it had been implemented across the whole borough. The Board therefore hoped that this would happen as soon as was possible.

B. NET REVENUE REDUCTIONS - FURTHER PROPOSALS

1. As part of its work programme, the Board has considered the reports to the Corporate Management Committee on 8 September 2005 and on 1 December 2005 on proposals for net revenue reductions. The Council faces a challenging financial forecast. The Corporate Management Committee in September, having noted the views of UNISON, had decided that the Chief Executive Officer and Directors be authorised to implement proposals for net revenue savings, subject to third party agreement and to consideration of detail where necessary, with any such additional matters to be dealt with by appropriate Committees. The Corporate Management Committee had also agreed that the policy Committees and Review Board be asked to note the proposals and monitor progress via their Service Plan reporting mechanisms, where appropriate.
2. The Board has noted that the proposals put forward to the 8 September 2005 Corporate Management Committee had emerged after a challenging and rigorous exercise, and were consistent with the policy guidance on potential reductions agreed in March 2005 and had been formulated with regard for existing policy priorities, legislative obligations, the external efficiency targets set by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and an internally devised ranking mechanism developed for prioritisation purposes. The reductions arose from the rebasing of budgets, increases in discretionary fees and charges, the rescheduling of, and reductions in, special works, the restructuring, refocusing or reduction of service provision and re-engineering and efficiency savings. The reductions were planned for delivery in 2005/06 where possible, or otherwise during 2006/07 or 2007/08.

3. Staff redundancies and pension and superannuation costs would be minimised and, if possible, avoided. However, as some of the proposals involved potential redundancies, full consultation would take place with UNISON (which had already submitted a constructive response to initial discussions) and affected staff prior to any final decisions being implemented. All staff had been invited to a detailed briefing on the proposals, their implications and timing. Consultation was also being undertaken with users on various topics.
4. The Board noted the policy guidance for the revenue reduction exercise recommended at the Corporate Management Committee on 6 January 2005 and subsequently agreed at the Council meeting on 8 March 2005. The proposals agreed by Corporate Management Committee on 8 September had been the subject of detailed briefings for the party groups. The proposals had been drawn up so that they were consistent with the policy guidance agreed in March 2005 by the Council and also so that they were achievable. They had now been included in the Council's five year Financial Forecast. It was the intention that the implementation of the proposals should be completed as quickly and sensitively as possible.
5. The Board agreed that the process appeared to have been thorough and consistent with the previous policy guidance approved by Council on 8 March 2005 and that the arrangements for achieving the various measures, including consultation with staff and UNISON and, where applicable, service users, appeared satisfactory. In addition to receiving reports in future on progress in achieving the net revenue savings, the Board requested to be advised of any major variations in the financial targets for each of the proposals, of any new revenue reductions which were identified and of the details of any substitute proposals that might become necessary.
6. At its meeting on 1 December 2005, the Corporate Management Committee noted a schedule showing the timescale for achieving each saving assumed in the Forecast alongside that which had been achieved by November 2005. This schedule has also been noted by the Board.

C. RAIL AND BUS TRANSPORT PROVISION IN THE BOROUGH

1. The Board has been advised of progress on its longstanding initiative to enhance rail and bus travel in the Borough including promoting services that stop at stations in the borough. The Board seeks to improve the quality of life of residents through this project.
2. There had been some delay in the service operator, South West Trains (SWT), responding to some of the suggestions from Council Officers on how the service which SWT provided could be further promoted, but there had been some positive outcomes.
3. A closed circuit television (CCTV) link between the SWT Control Centre at Wimbledon and the Safer Runnymede Centre had been established. Cameras on the stations had effectively become integrated as a part of the town centre systems and the pictures could be relayed on to the Surrey Police Incident Handling Centre. This helped to reduce potential for incidents on station platforms and was intended to also enable monitoring of people boarding trains without paying. At the same time improvements had been made to the camera installations to provide evidential quality pictures (including at times when it was dark). The funding for the Runnymede contribution was derived from the Section 106 Agreement associated with the Aviator Park development in Addlestone together with Home Office funding. The total cost of the works was in the region of £50,000.
4. Security on the trains had also improved with highly visible travelling personnel now patrolling stations and trains. British Transport Police, Surrey Police and SWT had also delivered some joint operations where there had been a significant Police presence ensuring good and lawful behaviour. SWT had now fully replaced the old slam doors with new Desiro trains, improving greatly the quality of the local rolling stock. The installation of cycle shelters at Egham, Chertsey and Addlestone in association with more general station improvements (improved signage, disabled access and some recent refurbishment including an upgrade of waiting facilities at Addlestone and Virginia Water stations), had been well received. This had improved the station environment and encouraged people to cycle to local stations.

5. Following lengthy discussions with SWT on the timetabling of the services that operated on the Weybridge to Waterloo line (via Addlestone, Chertsey, Virginia Water, Egham and Staines), significant changes had taken place. The service from Addlestone and Chertsey to Waterloo previously required a change to be made at either Staines or Weybridge. This was a service that only operated hourly. Now a half hourly interval service had been introduced to run direct from Addlestone and Chertsey (via Staines) to Waterloo without the need to change.
6. There had been some successes promoting the improved local service to the local business community via the Runnymede Business Partnership. However, discussions with SWT had progressed extremely slowly. Officers were still in discussion on the development of a locally branded ticket for the Weybridge-Staines line offering reduced peak hour rates. These discussions with SWT were being hampered by the fact that re-franchising of the SWT Service would occur in 2007 and so a degree of uncertainty existed for SWT.
7. During discussions with SWT a number of issues mentioned by the Board had been raised. The need for better publicity of the train services (including engineering works) was highlighted, but there was no progress to report on this matter. Regarding later trains from London to local stations and station enhancement at Egham, the short timescale left on the current franchise (2007) had understandably given limited opportunity to achieve change under the current contract.
8. Progress was, however, being made on improving the signage at local stations, providing information about the local towns and linked bus services. Some of the next stage of work (better signage and integrating train and bus services) was being undertaken in consultation with Surrey County Council. Officers were attempting to co-ordinate bus and rail integration by speaking with both operators. Part of the rail-bus integration was being achieved by the Quality Bus Partnership. This was a partnership of two bus operators and the Local Authorities (including the Borough Council) to promote the 41 and 44 services through Englefield Green-Egham-Staines. These provided four buses per hour throughout the day. Bus stops had been upgraded, tickets were interchangeable between operators and a joint timetable had been produced. Attempts were being made to integrate bus and rail tickets. Officers had facilitated meetings between local large businesses in Egham and the bus operator (The Egham Cluster) to examine, inter alia, promotion of this local bus service.
9. The Board asked Officers to enquire whether there would be any real time information on arrival of buses rolled out in Runnymede, as it was understood that this had happened in the Guildford area. The latest position is that Surrey County Council is gradually extending the Scheme but based on the larger areas of population. Funding is generally limited, but is helped where bus operators have been proactive and where additional finance is available (such as contributions negotiated on the back of planning applications). The Board also agreed that Officers should continue to seek improved signalling from Network Rail to improve traffic flow at the six level crossings in the borough.
10. Over the long term, the proposed £425 million Airtrack Scheme provided a significant opportunity to enhance the rail service. In the local area, the Reading-Heathrow and Guildford-Heathrow (stopping at Chertsey) proposed service would provide a quality rail link into the Airport and beyond. There had been a considerable lobby against providing a stop in Runnymede as there was an argument that the business community would only want to stop in larger centres of population. However, following further negotiations, Chertsey was now the proposed stop within the Borough. If the station was built at Chertsey there would need to be extra parking, enhanced rail signalling, a longer station platform and changes to the road infrastructure to accommodate the increase in people passing through. The Council had supported the scheme and was part of the Airtrack Forum promoting the service. However, there were a number of issues to resolve and it was unlikely that the service would be operational before 2011. It might be later than this as issues relating to Staines Moor Site of Special Scientific Interest had still to be resolved. The scheme had now been included for consideration as part of the 're-franchising' of the SWT Train Service from 2007.
11. The Board resolved that the progress on enhancing the local rail and bus services be noted, that further discussion with stakeholders (South West Trains, Surrey County Council and Runnymede Business Partnership) and the local community be pursued to encourage greater use of the local rail and bus services and that the Council should continue to give its support to the Airtrack Scheme.

D. PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS WITH SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

1. The Board has noted the Corporate Management Committee deliberations on 3 November 2005 on Partnership Arrangements with Surrey County Council. This is an issue which the Board has included within its work programme and was referred to in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan resulting from the CPA inspection of the Council. The Corporate Management Committee gave consideration to the future of partnership arrangements with Surrey County Council in the light of the recent governance review of the Surrey County Council Local Committees undertaken by Surrey County Council. Runnymede was one of two district Councils within Surrey which did not currently nominate Councillors to its Local Committee.
2. The Corporate Management Committee noted, however, that a recent Surrey County Council review of the operation of the Local Committees had led to proposals for change, with the emphasis placed on a tighter, streamlined focus with fewer formal meetings concentrating on a small number of priority issues agreed with the Borough/District partners. There was a desire from the County Council for fewer and shorter reports and for performance reports to focus more on locally specific issues or major service items. There was a continued wish from the County Council for Borough/District Council participation, but no suggestion that their voting rights should be extended beyond transportation matters or of additional delegation to the Committees. In the light of these developments, it was appropriate for the Council to reconsider whether it now wished to participate in the Surrey County Council Local Committee.
3. The Corporate Management Committee had noted that there were a number of options open to the Council, ranging from continued reliance upon the existing formal Partnership arrangements in respect of specific service areas, Task Groups and the Local Strategic Partnership, combined with the regular Officer level liaison, to the co-option of County Councillors onto appropriate Runnymede committees. The Committee, however, concurred with the recommendation of the Local Government Act Member Working Group that, in the light of the new proposals, the Council should now agree in principle to participation in Local Committee arrangements. It was stressed that any such involvement should be dependent upon the negotiation of a different and more meaningful emphasis in the form and content of the Local Committee's deliberations. There was a strong desire that the new arrangements should focus on a small number of issues and clearly defined outcomes in order to make a real difference to service delivery and/or residents generally. It was considered important that the new Committee established some kind of structured linkage with County Council Executive Members. Suggested work areas included co-ordinating work on the two defined areas of some deprivation within the borough, provision for youth, asset rationalisation, use of surplus premises and Civic Office provision, local highways/transportation issues and community and social services. Resolution of this issue would settle one of the outstanding matters in Runnymede's Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan.
4. The Council on 15 December 2005 agreed the recommendations of the Corporate Management Committee which were that subject to settling satisfactory detailed arrangements and to agreement of the content of meetings, the Council should participate in the Local Committee of the County Council and that the Chairman of the Corporate Management Committee, in consultation with the other Party Leaders would seek to agree satisfactory arrangements for participation, including content, structure, topic emphasis, timing and opportunities for non-member participation. Provided those matters could be agreed, the Council also agreed that the political balance of the six Borough Council representatives should be 4 Conservative, 1 Runnymede Independent and 1 Labour, with nominations by the Party Groups.

E. SURREY PENSION FUND – ISSUES WITH SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

1. At its meeting in December 2005, the Board considered the response of Surrey County Council to the Surrey Pension Fund issues discussed at the meeting of the Board on 14 April 2005 and recommended further actions which might be taken. The Council was seeking a fairer calculation and apportionment of its share of Surrey Pension Fund assets. This matter had a considerable impact on the ability of the Council to finance its own local services. The imposition of Council Tax capping meant that the Council was constrained in its ability to increase tax revenues and therefore the extra cost of backfunding contributions resulted in less resources to spend on service

2. The Surrey Pension Fund was administered by Surrey County Council on behalf of all the Councils in Surrey and other public sector bodies (e.g. colleges, parish councils). The Actuary undertook a valuation of the Fund every three years and this established the basis for determining employing bodies' contributions to the Fund. The last valuation date was 31 March 2004, at which point the Actuary had calculated the position for the whole Surrey Fund and for his assessment of the Runnymede share of the fund.
3. Officers had been seeking further information on two issues arising from the valuation. One issue was whether the Council had received the full benefit for its lump sum deficit contribution made by the Council in three instalments between October and December 2002 when the stock market was reaching the end of its 'bear run' (i.e. when the market value of shares was low). As a consequence, the contributions were well timed and had therefore been expected to achieve a good return for Runnymede. At the time of the latest valuation, however, the Actuary's assessment of Runnymede's share of the asset funds, at £35.8m, using an analysis of experience technique was significantly lower than the £37.8m calculated by Officers, using a cashflow calculation. The second issue on which Officers were seeking further information was the fact that the Actuary had made no adjustments in the valuation for those staff transferred to Surrey County Council upon the termination of the Highways Agency agreement (on 1 April 2002). The Board noted the responses received from Surrey County Council on these matters.
4. The Actuary had adopted a standard approach to valuing the assets attributable to Runnymede and had confirmed that Runnymede had received the full benefit for the timing of the last lump sum payment. The Board agreed the possibility of taking formal steps to pursue this matter would give rise to the risk of incurring substantial actuarial and legal costs in challenging this accepted methodology and it was unlikely that eventually a change would be made.
5. The Board considered whether to challenge the methodology for highways agency staff changes noting that to achieve this, it would be necessary to require the Fund actuary to calculate the notional transfer of assets and liabilities. It was unlikely that Surrey County Council would agree to pay for this and budgetary provision would be needed to pay the Actuary's fees, which Officers estimated at £2,000. The Board considered that this was an administrative matter and should be resolved at Officer level without seeking an actuarial calculation.
6. The Corporate Management Committee on 5 January 2006 agreed with the Board's recommendation that no formal steps should be taken to pursue the past method utilised by Surrey County Council to value the Runnymede share of the fund. The Committee, however, considered that the Actuary's methodology lacked transparency, partly as a result of its extreme complexity. It was difficult to avoid the conclusion that by apportioning assets in this way, the rest of Surrey had benefited at the expense of Runnymede. Instead of asking the County Council whether it would change the methodology in the light of the information now available, as recommended by Review Board, the Committee considered that more specific representations should be made seeking greater transparency in the calculation of asset value, and the methodology used, and a change in the method of valuation so that it would more accurately reflect the cash flows relating to each contributing body.
7. The Committee agreed that an item should be placed on the Agenda of the Surrey Pension Fund Annual General Meeting (AGM) as the Board had recommended. The Committee considered that the Members of that AGM meeting should be asked to vote on adopting a more transparent method (i.e. cash flow based) of valuing contributing bodies share of the Fund in future (rather than a more up to date method as the Board had recommended).
8. The Board recommended that Officers continue to pursue an equitable settlement of the pension fund treatment of the highways agency transfer and seek support in that endeavour from the other Surrey districts affected. The Board also recommended that voluntary lump sum payments to the Pension Fund be not made unless the methodology adopted by the Actuary demonstrated that Runnymede would receive the full benefit (including those from market price movement) of the contributions. At its meeting on 5 January 2006, the Corporate Management Committee agreed both of those recommendations.

9. The Board has decided that it should await the outcome of the measures on which it has formulated recommendations, before deciding whether to embark upon a full scrutiny of this issue.
10. The Board has also noted the recent investment performance achieved by the Surrey Pension Fund. Poor investment performance had prompted the Investment Advisers' Group to restructure the portfolio in October 2004. Previously, 99% of the Fund's investments had been placed with three managers who were all required to outperform an identical benchmark. This had been replaced by an arrangement in which the investments had been allocated to thirteen managers, each with a different mandate. The over-riding objective was to outperform a customised benchmark by 1% per annum over a rolling three year period. This new strategy was designed to spread the risk in the investments. The Board was pleased to note that the returns being achieved were better than previously.

F. RUNNYMEDE STATE REPORT - ANNUAL REVIEW

1. The Board has received the Annual Review of the Runnymede State Report and approved the review and the use of it to measure future progress on quality of life indicators.
2. The Corporate Management Committee had resolved to approve the first Runnymede State Report (RSR) at its meeting on 4 November 2004. This Report provided a baseline position to measure quality of life and sustainability through social, economic and environmental indicators to inform service provision and policy initiatives. The Committee had also noted that an Annual Report would be submitted to the Corporate Management Committee for independent audit and monitoring on a corporate basis. One of the specific functions of the Review Board was to assist the Council in the development of its budget and policy framework by in – depth analysis of policy issues. (Article 6.03 of the Constitution Specific Functions (a) (i)). Therefore, rather than submit the Annual Review of the RSR to the Corporate Management Committee, Officers submitted the Annual Review report of the RSR to the Review Board to allow it to exercise the function above and make appropriate recommendations to policy Committees, if it saw fit to do so.
3. The Government required Local Authorities to monitor the quality of life within their areas for a range of indicators, the most significant of which were the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs). In the context of the RSR data was collated, inter alia, on air and noise pollution, levels of traffic congestion, the provision of housing, economic prosperity, flooding issues, climate change, relative deprivation, educational achievement, sustainable energy use and built development, waste generation and water resource management. Although the RSR formed a key input to the Local Development Framework (LDF) appraisal and had originated from LDF requirements, it also had close links with Service Plans, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Improvement Plan and future stages of CPA, and it provided monitoring for the Strategic Plan and the Community Strategy for Runnymede. The RSR was divided into a series of themes, such as transport or air quality, which were described using a number of indicators. Each indicator was assessed according to whether it was on target through arrows showing either good/up or neutral/no change or poor/down.
4. The items set out in the RSR also provided the context for developing and monitoring the "sustainable communities" concept in the Borough. The Government wished to encourage the concept of sustainable communities as a mechanism for measuring enhancements to the quality of life. It required Councils to identify key indicators of local social, economic and environmental trends to enable a baseline position for future progress in achieving sustainability to be established. Service provision and policy development would then be judged against the baseline to identify if positive improvements to the quality of life could be achieved for those who lived in, worked in, or visited the Borough.
5. Officers proposed that the RSR, the Annual Monitoring Report for the LDF and the monitoring requirements of the Community Strategy for Runnymede would be consolidated into one report to be completed during the course of 2006. This report would have a basedate for the relevant data of 31 March.

6. The RSR showed where positive improvements had been made over the year including lower crime levels, increased use of previously developed land (for new development), increased waste recycling, a higher proportion of decent homes, good health, good water quality, high employment and high average wage levels. However, the RSR also highlighted some challenges where sustainability had been less successful. Amongst the issues that would need to be addressed which emerged from the RSR were the level of fuel poverty, the impact of flooding, climate change/air pollution, traffic congestion levels and impact on wildlife sites. Collaboration with partners would be needed to attempt to alleviate some of these issues.
7. The RSR would be updated annually but individual issues would be examined throughout the year as data was assembled. The most recent data would appear in the on line version. The Board noted that the RSR would be published annually in July and queried whether it was really necessary to issue it so often in view of the resource implications needed to produce it. It was noted that an Annual quality of life Monitoring Report was required for the LDF so there was not really an opportunity to publish quality of life data less frequently. The adoption of the RSR enabled the Council to satisfy the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the EU Directive 2001/42/EC in respect of Sustainability Appraisals and Strategic Environmental Assessment.
8. The Board made a number of amendments to maps and sought clarification of some passages of text. The Board's comments on the green garden waste collection service are included in the section of this Report on the pilot collection of green garden waste (paragraph A13). The Board also highlighted the following issues.
9. The Board noted that under the heading of social inclusiveness, a recent survey conducted by Runnymede on energy use, sent to all residents in the borough, found that 24% of the respondents were in fuel poverty and would struggle financially to heat their homes. This was the cause of some concern.
10. The Board noted that the indicator for the number of affordable houses completed per year was down. This was because of the continued increases in house prices which were currently eight and a half times higher than the average local salary. Spatial constraints such as Green Belt and the level of demand elevated property prices. However, Runnymede's 83% performance on a challenging affordable homes target was very good - Runnymede had achieved 152 affordable homes between 2001 and 2004 compared to an average of 78 for Surrey. The other factor which would have an influence on the number of affordable homes which could be provided was the question of residential development within five kilometres of the boundary of Chobham Common, which was part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (known by the acronym SPA). Runnymede was affected by the SPA. Any additional residential development within the proximity of the SPA would potentially result in increased recreational activity (particularly walkers with dogs increasing the risk of harming nesting birdlife) and could not be allowed under European legislation unless measures were taken to mitigate the effects. If an area of open space for recreation and dog walking were to be provided, additional development might then be allowed to proceed, but details of the level of this mitigation would need to be agreed with English Nature and Officers were currently in discussion with them on the matter.
11. The Board was pleased that the indicators for crime, health and vibrant communities all showed positive results for the borough.
12. The Board agreed that more information was required in the section on air quality on what the Council was doing to mitigate and alleviate poor air quality. This should cover the whole of the borough and not just feature motorways and the Air Quality Management Areas. Pollution from the airport should be included in this revised version if it was possible to obtain such data.
13. In the section on climate change it was noted that Runnymede's domestic energy consumption carbon dioxide emissions had reduced by 2.17% but were still above average for Surrey and the UK. The figures for Surrey and the UK needed to be added as a comparison. 27% of properties within the borough were at risk from a flooding event once every hundred years. This represented a high proportion of households.

14. On Waste Management Indicators the borough had achieved an 18% recycling rate for domestic waste compared to 13.6% in Surrey and 11% in England. The Board agreed that this should be pointed out in the main text of the RSR. These indicators showed that Runnymede was using land filling less and recycling and composting more, which were encouraging developments.
15. The Board was content for its comments to be incorporated into the Report, and also to place its other observations and comments on record without making Recommendations on any issues to other Council Committees.

G. PROGRESS REPORT ON ENFORCEMENT OF PLANNING CONTROL

1. Throughout the year, the Board has continued to be advised and updated on the latest circumstances on sites where Committee authorisation to take planning enforcement action has been obtained and where there are matters still outstanding. Planning Enforcement action is an area of Council activity which is of interest to many residents in the borough. The Board has noted that Runnymede is regularly having to wait over a year for a Planning Inspector from the Planning Inspectorate to make site visits, thereby delaying resolution of cases.
2. The Board has noted that the items in the reports before them represent sites where enforcement action has been taken further to Committee resolutions and where there are still cases outstanding. There are many other complaints from the public about alleged breaches of planning controls which take up Officer time which are not registered in the reports.
3. The Board has noted that the Council's Planning Committee at its meeting in December 2005 had decided to reduce staffing levels in the Planning Enforcement Section. The Committee had taken into account that Planning Enforcement in Runnymede was a high profile public service where there were high expectations of investigation and action, set against a background of weak legislation and enforcement powers, and extensive rights of appeal. As a result of this profile, Runnymede had a higher staff contingent in this area than many comparably sized authorities. However, the number of complaints received and the amount of action taken was the highest in the County.
4. The Committee had considered the implications of a reduction of staffing levels in the Planning Enforcement Section and had noted that the ability to investigate complaints and instigate action would be reduced. Complaints of inaction would increase and priorities would have to be reviewed so that breaches impacting on fewer people would be given lower priority and take longer to investigate. The current out-of-hours (evenings and weekends) call-out service provided by Enforcement staff which dealt with issues such as felling of preserved trees or gypsy incursions would be discontinued. The Committee balanced those implications against the Council's challenging financial forecast and the need to realise savings identified in the 2005/06 budget, and with some reservations, approved the disestablishment of a post of Enforcement Officer at Scale D to realise the savings identified in the 2005/06 budget of £25,000. The Board noted that the Committee had also resolved that Officers submit a further report to the Committee on enforcement priorities to manage public expectations in the future.

ARTICLE 6 - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REVIEW BOARD)

6.01 Terms of Reference

The Council will appoint an overview and scrutiny Committee to discharge the functions conferred by regulations under Section 32 of the Local Government Act 2000. In Runnymede, the overview and scrutiny committee is titled the Review Board.

The Review Board will have nine Members, or as the Council may decide.

6.02 General Role

Within this Constitution, the Review Board may:

- (i) review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions;
- (ii) make reports and/or recommendations to the Full Council and/or any Committee in connection with the discharge of any functions;
- (iii) consider any matters affecting the area or its inhabitants; and
- (iv) exercise the right to call in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by any Committee.

6.03 Specific Functions

(a) **Policy development and review.** The Review Board may:

- (i) assist the Council in the development of its budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues;
- (ii) conduct research, community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues and possible options;
- (iii) consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options;
- (iv) question Members of policy Committees and Chief Officers about their views (in the case of Officers, professional views) on issues and proposals affecting the area; and
- (v) liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working.

(b) **Scrutiny.** The Review Board may:

- (i) review and scrutinise decisions made by, and performance of, policy Committees and Council Officers, both in relation to individual decisions and over time;
- (ii) review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
- (iii) question Members of policy Committees and Chief Officers about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects;
- (iv) make recommendations to the appropriate policy Committee and/or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process;

(v) review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the overview and scrutiny Committee and local people about their activities and performance; and

(vi) question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent).

(c) **Finance.** The Review Board may be allocated funding for its role by the Council, and will exercise overall responsibility for the finances made available to it.

(d) **Annual Report.** The Review Board must report annually to full Council on its workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

6.04 The Review Board may form sub-committees from amongst its membership, or advisory panels from any suitable persons whether its Members or not.

6.05 **Proceedings of Review Board**

The Review Board will conduct its proceedings in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.