

DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTION – 2008/09**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 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'.
- 1.2 This report summarises the areas of the Board's activities for the Municipal Year 2008/09.
- 1.3 During the course of the year, the Board has continued to pursue various items within its Work Programme.
- 1.4 The Board considers items 5, 7, 8 and 11 reported below to have been concluded. The other items reported on below remain ongoing.

2. REVIEW OF CAR PARKING PROVISION AT ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL, CHERTSEY AND PLANNING MASTERPLAN FOR THE SITE

- 2.1 At its October meeting, the Board reviewed car parking provision at St Peter's Hospital, Chertsey. The Chairman had asked for the review because of public concerns about the adequacy of the provision and the ability of patients, visitors and staff to adequately access the site and its services.
- 2.2 The Board welcomed three representatives of the Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust to the meeting. These were the Finance Director, the Capital Projects Manager, and the Acting Facilities Manager, who advised the Board on the Trust's policies.
- 2.3 The Trust representatives were asked to advise on what policies the Trust had for parking at St Peter's Hospital in the future, whether the Trust intended to produce a comprehensive plan of proposed parking provision either as a separate document or as part of a planning masterplan, and whether the Trust had plans to implement previously approved decked car parking. They were also requested to provide an update on progress regarding the implementation of the St Peter's Travel Plan and its impact, as well as current and future plans for parking management at the site and measures to promote alternative means of transport to and from the site.
- 2.4 In 2006 there were 476 pay and display parking spaces at St Peter's Hospital for patients and visitors, in six different locations (309 in the main out patient car park) and 19 spaces which provided for 20 minutes free parking. Staff parking comprised a total of 675 spaces in 18 different locations.
- 2.5 Planning permission had been granted for a decked car park at the Hospital site in February 2007 (RU 06/1220) which gave a net increase of 164 patient spaces and 38 spaces for staff. A revised scheme was later approved (RU 07/1244), which would reconfigure the car park and reduce the number of spaces by 10. In granting permission for this development, the Council had balanced the need to provide for sustainable transport with the operational needs of a 24 hour health facility serving a wide area. Although the County Highways Authority had objected to the proposal, the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) had decided not to 'call-in' the application, allowing it to be determined locally. Whilst it was understood that the staff provision had been implemented, the decked car park itself remained undeveloped. The Planning Committee had expressed concerns about the number of recent ad hoc planning applications and the lack of an updated masterplan for the site. In particular, details of car parking had been difficult to ascertain as individual planning applications both removed and replaced car parking provision. A comprehensive parking plan had been requested, but not received. The Trust had recently submitted a planning application for additional car parking but this had not been validated by Runnymede and more information had been requested on traffic counts and a car parking study had also been required. The Trust would be resubmitting the planning application.
- 2.6 There was a long history of parking problems at the hospital with capacity problems for both visitors and staff. Parking on access roads and around the entrances to the main car park had been common and at times of peak visitor demand (weekdays between around 11.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m.) the main patient/visitor car park near the departmental block could lock up as visitors searched for a space. Problems were often particularly acute at around 2.00.p.m. A

comprehensive parking study had been commissioned in March 2006 to accompany the decked car parking planning application. This looked at staff parking, visitor/patient parking, on-street parking and parking in additional areas. The Board noted the results of the study.

- 2.7 In terms of hospital parking standards, the Surrey Parking Strategy stated that the maximum standard should equate to 1 space per 5 staff plus 1 space per 10 visitors. In 2006, the hospital indicated that staff requiring access to car parking at the site was approximately 2,800. In addition, the hospital had approximately 1,200 visitors per day, generated by 160 inpatients and 637 outpatient's appointments. Based on the Surrey Parking Strategy standards outlined above, the maximum provision was 680 spaces. Runnymede Borough Local Plan standards for hospitals reflected those of Surrey County Council. This compared to the actual number of marked spaces (in 2006) of 1,145. Clearly, the current operational reality at the hospital was widely different to the aspirational aims of the Surrey Parking Strategy. The Board took the view that the Surrey Parking Strategy standard was unrealistic and that given the circumstances as outlined below, there was an urgent need for more parking spaces at St Peter's Hospital. The Board noted the Government guidance on transportation and parking issues
- 2.8 The Board noted that St Peter's Hospital had previously produced a Travel Plan whose aims were to reduce the impact of travel generated by staff. This was to be achieved by providing greater information to staff about different travel options, car park management including parking restraint, and providing other forms of access. The Plan also included promotion of a car sharing scheme. Cycling was to be promoted by providing cycle racks and showers for cyclists. Improved transport was proposed by providing an inter-site bus. One of the 'Peterbuses' was to be rerouted to optimise use and the 'Peterbuses' were to be phased with rail services. In terms of public transport, a transport co-ordination centre was to develop electronic booking and there was to be continued communication with Surrey County Council to focus provision on social inclusion for those in need of access to healthcare. Consideration was to be given to a revised staff parking policy that would introduce charging for staff parking, limiting the provision of parking permits to staff living over a certain distance from the hospital, and zoning staff parking charge rates and access to permits based on the level of public transport available between their home and the hospital.
- 2.9 It was the role of Surrey County Council, as Highway Authority to provide a view as statutory consultee on matters relating to highways capacity, safety and car parking in relation to proposed development in the Borough. A representative of Surrey County Council had been invited to attend the Review Board but had been unable to do so. They had sent comments to inform the Review Board of their approach, which were noted by the Board. As a statutory consultee, the County Council had two main areas of consideration on any application for additional parking - the policy/justification of the increased parking provision and the ability of the local road network, junctions and accesses to accommodate increased traffic which may result from additional parking. The County Council in their written submission had also referred to Draft PPS4 which stated that hospitals could have particular parking needs. The issues surrounding difficulties in recruiting medical staff and other shift staff, and patients missing appointments due to parking difficulties had to be taken into account.
- 2.10 The Trust representatives at the meeting advised that various initiatives had been undertaken to encourage people to access St. Peter's Hospital by a non-car option. These included the Peterbus which had four routes and ran for five days a week and inter site buses for staff travelling between Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals. Cycling schemes for staff had also been promoted. Showers and lockable cycle sheds had been produced. Non-emergency patient transport was provided by the GSL company for those people who were in particular need and who met the Trust's criteria. Despite all these initiatives, most patients and staff accessed the hospital by car as the most practical and feasible alternative, particularly for those with limited time available. Taxis were not readily available and bus services were not frequent. Local bus companies were not prepared to provide more bus services as they believed that they would run at a loss and Surrey County Council were not prepared to provide any more subsidy.
- 2.11 Throughout 2006/07 and 2007/08 the Trust had been looking at merging with Frimley Hospital and this proposal had finally been abandoned in April 2008. The Trust had also been seeking to achieve Foundation status and had produced a five year strategic plan which it had submitted to the Strategic Health Authority. The advantage of obtaining Foundation Hospital status was that any surplus which the Hospital made could be spent rather than having to be retained and the

Hospital would be free from monitoring by the strategic health authority. The application for Foundation Trust status was a 12 month process and a new Trust Chief Executive would be appointed in January 2009.

- 2.12 In addition to producing a master plan, the Trust was examining what it called a parameters plan which it was hoped would provide the flexibility needed for the fast moving world of health care. In the parameters plan, the Trust was looking at reorientating all of the buildings at St. Peter's Hospital, demolishing the buildings in the ramp areas, moving medical records onto the central site and introducing temporary parking. This should assist in moving staff parking away from areas reserved for patient parking. The length of time for which this temporary parking would be in place had not yet been established. Decked car parking had not been implemented because the previous planning permission for this had not been in a suitable location for the reorientating which the Trust wished to undertake and thus conflicted with the proposals in the parameters plan.
- 2.13 From the Council's point of view, in determining planning applications, no masterplan or parameters plan had been produced by the Hospital in recent years. It was recognised that as the NHS was the subject of one internal review after another this might make it difficult to produce a master plan as the position was perpetually fluid. However, a draft plan, which it was accepted would change, would have been preferable to the piecemeal approach which had been adopted.
- 2.14 The Trust was aiming to expand the range of health care services which it provided. The Trust was hoping to have more clinical work on the site and was trying to obtain a renal service. The Primary Care Trust would be tendering for that work shortly. The Trust was looking at specialising in cardiovascular emergency services. The Board observed that the more health care functions which St Peter's Hospital took on, the more likely it was that the parking problems would be exacerbated, because a greater number of people would be attempting to gain access to the facility.
- 2.15 The Board noted that there were 9 bus routes passing through the Hospital. All of them, apart from the 701 service finished early in the evening. The Peterbus finished at 6.00pm and did not run on Saturdays or Sundays. People were reliant on cars because of the lack of frequency of the bus service and the fact that it did not run at all in the evenings or at weekends. It had to be questioned whether the County Council was getting enough value for its Council Tax payers from those bus services which it did provide.
- 2.16 The Trust was well aware of the serious inadequacy of parking at the Hospital and received regular complaints from the public. The Board emphasised that parking at the Hospital required urgent attention because of the stress caused to everyone visiting the Hospital, particularly to patients with long term illnesses (and relatives and friends of those patients who might be driving them to the Hospital), who needed to visit the Hospital regularly and were frequently unable to find anywhere to leave their vehicle. The Trust representatives advised that efforts were being made to delineate patient and staff parking more clearly. Priority was given to patients. It was suggested that improved signage might assist. It was agreed that the top priority should be to provide sufficient parking for the accident and emergency (A & E) service.
- 2.17 The combined annual gross income obtained from parking from Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals was £700,000. This money was not ring fenced. The cost of the original decked parking proposal which had now been abandoned was £2.8m plus fees. There was a barrier on the accident and emergency car park, to stop staff car parking and to make it easier for patients. It was agreed that the barrier system was the most effective method of control which was available. Tickets had to be bought for 3 to 4 hours, with a 20 minute drop off facility for A & E patients. There was a weekly pass for £10, which was available for patients but not staff, but this would not be of interest to people who visited the Hospital, for example, twice a month. Timings of outpatient appointments were staggered but there was overrun in the times which added to the parking problems. The Trust did not rigorously enforce the parking restrictions on the site and was reluctant to consistently control staff parking as it had had difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff and it believed that enforcing regularly against staff would adversely affect its ability to obtain and keep staff.

- 2.18 The main planning issues relating to the provision of further parking spaces were twofold. The first problem was that increasing the number of spaces meant that GOSE might intervene on the basis that this would be contrary to Government policy which was to restrain the amount of car parking. This would apply whether the spaces were provided underground or overground. Building spaces underground (rather than overground) would not, however, conflict with the openness of the Green Belt, which was the other criterion on which increased parking might be refused.
- 2.19 The footpath to the Hospital from Homewood Park car park was not being widely used. At one point the Council had been negotiating with the Trust for payment of spaces by the Trust for Trust staff in the Homewood Park car park but suitable terms had not been able to be agreed by the two organisations. It had been suggested by members of the public, and by one of the Council's Ward Members for Foxhills, that hospital staff were parking in the Murray Road, Ottershaw free car park in the early morning and were being transported to the Hospital which meant that the car park was full and local commuters had to park in the Harvester car park. Council Officers had carried out spot checks, but when this had been done there had always been spare capacity in the Murray Road, Ottershaw car park.
- 2.20 The Board suggested that the Trust should do more to try and control staff parking to improve the position in the short term. This would have to be done as sensitively as possible in order to not act as too much of a deterrent to staff to work at St Peter's. Runnymede had introduced a policy whereby staff could only park on the site of the new Civic Offices for 3 days a week. On the other days employees had to car share, cycle or use public transport. The Trust should look at whether this type of control was possible at St Peter's. The Board took the view that the Trust should examine in some depth whether a suitable park and ride scheme could be adopted for St Peter's Hospital. It would also be helpful to the Council to have the details of the Trust's parameters plan, which would assist when considering planning applications. The Board emphasised that a reduction in staff parking would lead to more parking being available for patients and visitors.
- 2.21 In summary, the Board's main conclusions were that the Trust should achieve greater control of staff parking to free up space for patients, the Trust should review the possibility of introducing a park and ride scheme, and expedite a masterplan/parameters plan.
- 2.22 The Board agreed that their findings should be reported to the Corporate Management Committee with a recommendation that the Committee add any comments of its own and make a further recommendation to the full Council meeting. At its meeting on 30 October 2008, the Corporate Management Committee had noted the Board's report on this matter and the conclusions which the Board had reached and agreed that before the issue was considered by the Council, it would be helpful to seek to obtain the Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust's response to the findings of the Board.
- 2.23 At its December meeting, the Board accordingly considered the response of the Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust to the Board's report and conclusions arising from the review of car parking provision at St Peter's Hospital, Chertsey.
- 2.24 The Trust reported that they were actively targeting the patient car parks to ensure that staff did not park in visitor/patient designated areas. Car park attendants were stopping staff entering these car parks during morning peak times and applying restriction notices throughout the day. In addition, one of the designated staff car parks had been allocated to patient use providing an additional 26 spaces. A section of staff parking to the rear of the hospital had also been designated as shared between staff and visitors after 2.30pm. Signage of the car parks was also under review.
- 2.25 The Trust also reported that a car parking policy had been revised and would be presented shortly to the Trust board for approval. The Trust was looking at the possibility of a park and ride scheme and had had meetings with Council Planning Officers in which the need for a master plan had been reinforced. The Trust was not the only landowner on the site and discussions were under way with the Surrey and Borders Partnership Foundation to develop a plan for a whole health campus.

- 2.26 The Trust confirmed its wish to continue to demolish the existing ramp buildings, which they considered would be a key principle in any master plan. The Trust was seeking to clarify if an application for planning permission for temporary car parking in the area of the existing ramp buildings could be resubmitted, as a means of temporarily increasing car parking provision on the site, while the master plan was developed. The Trust stated that, if this proposal were approved, they would be able to reallocate car parks closer to buildings for patient/visitor use.
- 2.27 The Board was pleased to note that the Trust was now actively targeting the patient car parks to prevent staff from parking in the Visitor/Patient designated areas. Although it was helpful that one of the designated car parks had been given over to patient use, this only provided an additional 26 spaces. Staff parking to the rear of the hospital being designated as shared between staff and visitors after 2.30pm, and the Trust's signage review, were welcomed. The Board wished, however, to see more measures to restrict staff parking, particularly during the peak period of congestion in the afternoon, at the time of outpatient appointments. The Board had been surprised to hear from Trust representatives at its October meeting that car parking income which the Trust obtained was not ring fenced in any way or prioritised towards improving parking before being treated as general resources for the hospital.
- 2.28 The Council had not registered as valid a planning application which the Trust had submitted for temporary parking, as the Trust had not supplied up to date information and the Council wished to see a more comprehensive approach provided by a master plan.
- 2.29 The Board could see no evidence of a real commitment to a Park-and-Ride scheme from the Trust's response and although the Trust's car parking policy was being revised they had provided no details of its contents. There did appear to be a recognition by the Trust that they had to formulate a master plan – St Peter's Hospital was the only major site in the Green Belt within the borough that had not produced one. The Trust seemed to be only seeking a temporary solution to their parking difficulties. They had decided that their original application for decked car parking had been sited in the wrong place, despite having spent large sums in bringing the proposal forward. If the Trust could make progress on a master plan, that would provide a more long term solution to parking on the site. An indicative plan was all that was required and a high level of detail would not be expected. The Board considered that a timescale should be put on the production of a master plan and recommended accordingly that the Trust should advise them of progress in six months time. The Board made a series of recommendations to the Council meeting.
- 2.30 At its meeting in December 2008, the Council concurred with the Board's recommendations. The Council welcomed the recognition by the Trust that patient and visitor parking should be prioritised, the fact that the Trust's car parking policy was being revised, the fact that the Trust was pursuing a masterplan, and the fact that additional parking was being provided, albeit on a temporary basis.
- 2.31 The Council urged the Trust to complete the masterplan as soon as possible, to discuss it with Runnymede Officers and submit it formally as a planning application. The Council also agreed that the Trust should advise the Council's Review Board of progress on the masterplan in six months time, agree and implement the revised parking policy as soon as possible, and investigate and implement increased parking provision as soon as possible, subject to the details provided in the masterplan.
- 2.32 The Council agreed that the Trust should be advised that both Borough and County Council Officers would be pleased to provide advice on experience elsewhere of formulating and implementing parking policies, and that Runnymede Officers would welcome early consultation over the masterplan and proposals for additional car parking.
- 2.33 Discussions have taken place over the last six months between Council Planning Officers and the Trust regarding a masterplan. Feedback has been given by Officers to the Trust and to the Trust's planning consultants on the preliminary schemes which have been produced by the Trust. This feedback has set out what the Council would wish to see in a masterplan application. It appears that the Trust is moving closer to the requirements of a masterplan application. Officers consider that the Trust must develop a masterplan application, in which details of parking are included, rather than purely apply for temporary measures to improve parking. Recent dialogue between the Council and the Trust, its planning consultants and with the Trust's new Chief

Executive, has indicated that the Trust is committed to a parking policy which places the needs of patients and visitors first. The Council also hopes that if the Trust achieves NHS Foundation Trust status, as referred to in the paragraphs below, a master plan will be an integral part of realising that ambition.

- 2.34 At its meeting on 25 June 2009, the Council's Corporate Management Committee considered the proposals by Ashford & St Peter's Hospitals to become an NHS Foundation Trust.
- 2.35 On 1 June Ashford & St Peter's Hospitals launched a Consultation on their proposals to become an NHS Foundation Trust. The Consultation Period runs until 23 August 2009. NHS Foundation Trusts are a type of NHS organisation, established as independent, not for profit public benefit corporations, with accountability to their local communities rather than Central Government control. The Secretary of State has no powers of direction over them. NHS Foundation Trusts remain part of the NHS and exist to provide and develop healthcare services for patients based on free care. Clinical activity for private patients is strictly limited. Foundation Trusts have greater freedoms and flexibility than NHS Trusts in the way they manage their affairs.
- 2.36 The Committee noted the benefits of a Foundation Trust. They would be more accountable to local people. Both local people and staff would be Members or Governors and could influence decision making at a local level. Members had to be consulted about major changes and decisions. Whilst at present any budgetary surpluses were returned to the Department of Health, a Foundation Trust had greater financial freedom and was able to keep and reinvest any surpluses as it saw fit in terms of developing new services, or requiring equipment and buildings. Local decision making would be more speedy, enabling reactions to local issues and greater innovation. Foundation Trust status would enable the hospital to look at new commercial initiatives and partnerships to support and develop patient care.
- 2.37 Foundation Trusts had been criticised as a move away from the public sector, towards a more competitive commercial market. The concerns were that Trusts and private hospitals would compete against each other for patients. There had been questions raised as to whether Foundation Trusts would lead to instability for other Trusts, undermining their ability to continue provision of services. There had also been suggestions that Trusts may use their financial freedoms to attract patients from other Trusts, that the membership Trust profile was unrepresentative and able to exert undue influence over the running and development of services, and that the governance structure was costly and difficult to understand.
- 2.38 The Government currently required all NHS Trusts to apply for Foundation Trust status by 2010. To apply earlier (as Ashford & St Peter's intended to do), a Trust had to demonstrate that it was providing high standards of care and managing budgets effectively. If all NHS Trusts were to become Foundation Trusts within the next 18 months, then this removed the argument that Foundation Trust Hospitals had some form of commercial advantage over others. Devolution of responsibility for setting priorities, overall management and budgetary control to the local level was generally something to be welcomed. The proposed governance arrangements seemed to embrace a wide range of both partner organisations and local members of the public. It remained to be seen just how influential the Governors would be over the future direction and priorities of the hospitals in the future. Following on from a range of ad hoc planning applications over a number of years, Officers had been urging the Trust to provide an overall master plan setting out their vision for the future of the St Peter's Hospital and progress on this is set out at paragraph 2.33 above. It appeared to be a fundamental part of Foundation Trust status that there was a clear vision for the future of the site, in terms of its basic provisions, specialist provisions and adequate car parking for patients and visitors alike, so this status should provide further impetus towards a masterplan.
- 2.39 Overall the Corporate Management Committee considered that an early move for Ashford & St Peter's Hospitals to become a Foundation Trust would be both to its and the local community's advantage. It offered the opportunity for a vision to be developed and it was hoped that this would lead to a Centre of Excellence serving a wide number of local residents. It would also be an advantage to local residents if the new renal centre was available at St Peter's Hospital. The Committee accordingly supported the Trust's application for Foundation Trust status and resolved that the Council continue to work with the Trust to develop a masterplan for the future development of the site to deliver first class medical care into the future.

3. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT 2007

- 3.1 At its December meeting, the Board considered a report on the content and implications of the Sustainable Communities Act 2007, and considered further action which might be taken.
- 3.2 The Sustainable Communities Act 2007 had originated as a private Members' Bill but had achieved a broad measure of support. Its broad intention was to allow local communities, through their local authorities, to promote changes in legislation for the benefit of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of their area.
- 3.3 Under Section 2 of the Act, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had to invite local authorities to make proposals which they considered would contribute to promoting the 'sustainability' of local communities, which was defined as encouraging the improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the local authority's area, or part of it. Before inviting proposals, the Secretary of State had to appoint a 'Selector' to consider proposals and assist her in drawing up a short list. The Secretary of State had appointed the Local Government Association (LGA) for this purpose.
- 3.4 The Board noted the schedule to the Act, which listed the matters to which local authorities had to have regard in putting forward proposals. These included the provision of local services, the use of local goods and materials, the local jobs market, local sustainable energy measures, traffic, and various other matters of relevance to the local economy, jobs, housing and recycling. The Act also required the Secretary of State to make arrangements for the production of 'local spending reports'. These were reports on expenditure by defined public bodies, in a particular area over a specific period.
- 3.5 The procedure for making proposals was governed by the Sustainable Communities Regulations 2008, which had come into force on 3 November 2008. In addition to having regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State, the authority had to establish a panel adequately representing local persons, consult that panel about a proposal, and try to reach agreement with it. However, if the authority took reasonable steps to do this, but no representatives of the panel became involved, that did not invalidate proposals put forward by the local authority. This was a significant provision, as it meant that proposals which had merit would not necessarily be discarded because of a lack of panel input. After the closing date for receipt of proposals, the Selector had to prepare a written report listing proposals recommended for inclusion on the short list, and giving its reasons for selecting those proposals and for rejecting others. The Secretary of State would then decide which of the short list of proposals were to be implemented, after final consultation with the Selector, then publish the decision and the reasons for it, together with an action plan setting out what was intended to be done in order to implement the proposals. The Secretary of State had to report to Parliament on progress within a year of the publication of the action plan, and at least yearly thereafter, until it was fully implemented. The Secretary of State had published the first invitation to local authorities to submit proposals under the Act on 14 October 2008, eight days before the deadline. Proposals were to be submitted to the Local Government Association (the Selector) by 31 July 2009.
- 3.6 The Government had issued some indication of its likely approach to decisions on short listed proposals. Proposals were more likely to succeed if they were specific about the action required to central Government and also were not already within the powers of local authorities (including powers for the promotion of wellbeing in Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000). The Government did not regard the Act as a route for agreeing additional public expenditure, either at national or local level, and so a particularly strong case would need to be made in support of any proposals that required this. As with all public policies, the Government would assess proposals taking into account their broad cost benefit, including in relation to areas or groups. Proposals of an area or group nature were more likely to succeed and the Government would also take into account its existing policy positions for which it was publicly accountable.
- 3.7 The Act specifically made it clear that proposals might include a request for transfer of functions from one person or body to another, provided that the authority had consulted both the person or body currently exercising the functions, and the person or body to whom it was proposed that the functions be transferred.

- 3.8 If the Council was interested in putting forward proposals, adequate staff time would be required to develop the ideas, consider their justification and workability, and to put a case forward to the Selector. In addition to such specialist work and advice, the advisory panels would need recruitment, administration, and liaison. Both Members and Officers would be involved as well as the members of the panels. Accordingly, a serious bid for powers would be a significant undertaking that might divert work from other activities, at a time when the Council was having to reduce its expenditure.
- 3.9 A number of bodies interested in community engagement (eg CAMRA), had warmly welcomed the Act on the basis that it provided a real opportunity for local authorities to put forward area specific proposals based on genuine dialogue with representatives of the local community. There had also been some comment from other organisations to the effect that the Act added little that was useful to existing powers, that the Government had provided no funding for it, and that local authorities were discouraged from using it in order to increase public spending. The Council did not need to 'opt in' to the Act if it did not wish to do so, and was free to submit a proposal to the Selector (i.e. the LGA) at any time until the deadline of 31 July 2009.
- 3.10 The Board considered that there may be some potential for the Act to be used to further the aims of the Runnymede community and a number of local authorities acting collectively. Further work was, however, needed to identify topics which might be progressed.
- 3.11 The Board resolved that Officers should report on whether the Act could be used either to promote objectives related to reducing level crossing downtime, and/or to promote an issue on which a number of local authorities had a common aim or purpose. Officers would also report on actions which had already been undertaken under the Act by other local authorities. The Board resolved that a Member Working Group meet to discuss proposals which might be promoted through the Act, with Officer support, as necessary, and the Working Group would report to a future Board meeting.
- 3.12 At its meeting in February 2008, the Board considered action being taken by other local authorities relating to the Sustainable Communities Act. Various local authorities had asked their Officers, Executives or specially appointed working groups to look into ways in which the Act might be used. There were no firm proposals for action at this stage as it was still early in the process, the deadline being 31 July 2009. The Board considered which topics might be put forward as proposals for further consideration by the Working Group and whether there were any issues which might be the subject of a joint proposal from a number of local authorities, including Runnymede, for further consideration by the Working Group. The Board identified some subject areas for possible proposals for the Working Group to examine. One of these was ways of alleviating flooding including looking at transferring certain flooding functions from central to local control. Another subject area for the Working Group to assess was railways, including the condition and accessibility of railway stations.
- 3.15 At its meeting on 28 May 2009, the Corporate Management Committee noted the consideration which had already been given to the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 (SCA) and considered further action.
- 3.16 The Review Board, at its meetings in December 2008 and February 2009, had considered the contents and implications of the SCA and subsequently a briefing presentation had been given for all Members in the Council Chamber on 23 April 2009. The Members who attended the meetings recognised the potential for the SCA to benefit the Runnymede community but also recognised that, without any form of central funding, it would be difficult to achieve significant benefits. Some of the bodies originally promoting the Act hoped that they could make a case for control of existing public money for some services to be devolved from central Government to local Government.
- 3.17 However, the first public spending report promulgated by the Government, as required by the Act, provided no information on most categories of central Government expenditure. This made it very difficult to identify the basic facts for transferring responsibility locally. Furthermore, Government guidance published soon after the Act had been passed made it clear that only in the most exceptional cases would proposals be accepted if they involved additional public expenditure. As a result, the proposals accepted for action in the first tranche were likely to be largely limited to adjustments of local powers and responsibilities.

3.18 Concern had also been expressed by some Members regarding the amount of Officer and Member time which might be expended without the certainty of any beneficial outcome. The Review Board had also requested Officers to investigate whether there was any Surrey-wide interest in jointly pursuing matters which might be of common interest, such as flooding, level crossing down time and the poor condition of railway stations. Having raised these issues, it appeared that there was no common cause and Officers in the other Surrey authorities, whilst recognising the potential of the SCA, felt that it added little to the existing "well being" powers in Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000.

3.19 It would become clearer after the deadline for submission of the first tranche of proposals (31 July 2009), what type of proposals might find favour with the Local Government Association and the Secretary of State. The Corporate Management Committee resolved that no further action be taken until the Government released figures for all central Government expenditure and that Officers submit a report for information to the Committee when the outcome of the first tranche of proposals was known.

4. CHERTSEY HEALTH CENTRE - BUILDINGS

4.1 At its December 2008 meeting, the Board noted the Surrey Primary Care Trust (PCT)s plans with regard to repairs to, or replacement of, the Chertsey Health Centre buildings in Stepgates, Chertsey and considered any further action which might be taken. The PCT was responsible for the upkeep of buildings in which doctors' surgeries were located in the borough.

4.2 The present health centre was located on a narrow site fronting Stepgates, with Stepgates County Middle School immediately to the west and residential properties in Meadhurst Road abutting the site to the east. Outline planning permission (RU. 00/1250) had been granted on 21 December 2000 for the erection of a new two-storey health centre to replace the existing building, which had a floor area of 925 square metres. The new building was to be 1,645 square metres in area. At that time, the Council's Planning Committee had noted that the proposal was to build the new facility on the car park to the rear of the existing building and continue to provide health care facilities from the existing centre. When the new centre was operational, the old centre was to be demolished to provide 84 car parking spaces. This was recognised to be a compromise proposal. The construction of the new building on the existing car park meant that the health centre would have no parking facilities for the duration of building works. Similarly, from a planning viewpoint, a building at the rear of the site and car parking at the front was not the best arrangement in townscape terms, which would favour the reverse. It was, however, accepted that there were no alternative sites in the immediate neighbourhood where either the health centre could be temporarily sited during construction or moved to, on a permanent basis. Other sites had been considered, but none were in a position so central to the community served by the health centre. It was therefore determined at that time that the community need for the facility outweighed the townscape issues in this case and, on that basis, planning permission had been granted. However, this planning permission had now expired and a fresh application to build a new health centre would be required.

4.3 The Chairman of the Board was of the view that the Chertsey Health Centre buildings in Stepgates should either be replaced, or that essential repairs to the buildings needed to be carried out as soon as possible, in order for the Centre to function effectively. Officers had accordingly asked the Surrey Primary Care Trust (PCT) to inform them of any plans the PCT might have to undertake repairs to the buildings or to replace them in the future and any constraints that the PCT might be under, in considering such action. The Board considered that the buildings definitely needed to be improved, as did the premises of a number of doctors' surgeries throughout the borough.

4.4 Surrey PCT had responded by stating that they recognised that the Chertsey Health Centre buildings at Stepgates required significant investment. However, it would be a long process to achieve this as a number of governance processes needed to be completed and the PCT had begun this process by instructing an audit of condition. The property audit would inform the plans for the health centre and work could begin on a business case accordingly. The PCT had also recently approved some internal modification to support service improvements.

- 4.5 The Board resolved that the progress of the audit of condition of the buildings at Chertsey Health Centre be monitored and a further report be submitted to the Board and a member of Surrey PCT be invited to attend a Board meeting to advise on the latest position on replacement and/or refurbishment of the Chertsey Health Centre building, when further information was available.

5. STRATEGIC PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

- 5.1 At the Housing and Community Services Committee on 14 January 2009, concerns had been raised by Members about variations in budgets relating to maintenance of Council-owned property. The Committee had requested that a report be submitted to the Review Board on this matter and at its meeting in February 2009, the Board accordingly noted information provided by Officers relating to property maintenance.
- 5.2 The Council had a varied property portfolio held for different purposes. Prior to 2002, there had been various managerial and maintenance regimes operated by various Council sections. It had been decided to simplify this by bringing the main portfolio under a single maintenance and improvement contract supervised by Building Services, which had sought to achieve economies of scale, objective and technically based priority and expenditure and more cohesive management control. The Council housing stock had not been included because its needs were different and experience had shown that a range of smaller, local contractors gave a timely and cost-effective service for this area of the Council's operation. Many of the Council's leased properties had requirements for tenants to maintain them.
- 5.3 The intention of strategic property maintenance was to have a five-year rolling programme which dealt with both planned and reactive maintenance (urgent or unexpected works). All properties had been surveyed to ascertain their condition and works had been identified as Category 1 (urgent), Category 2 (medium term) and Category 3 (longer term). It had always been envisaged that this programme could vary by projects being delayed or brought forward, depending on the rate of expenditure in other areas, including reactive maintenance. Following a tendering process, the contract had been let in March 2003. However, over the following five years, retaining contractors had proved very difficult. Combining the works for a number of properties in a single contract had been intended to achieve economies of scale and to attract larger contractors. This approach had, however, achieved limited success as only medium sized contractors had submitted bids, the contract being too small to attract the largest contractors. Contractors had also underestimated the difficulty of recruiting and retaining local trades-people with the necessary expertise. They had found that there were considerable skills shortages in the Runnymede area and hence those with the requisite skills were only available at a substantial premium. Perhaps surprisingly, contractors had also raised concerns about the level and detail of checking that Runnymede staff undertook in terms of materials and prices for individual jobs. This had continued because of concerns about overcharging, but when contractors had improved their administrative and professional support, the need for this had reduced.
- 5.4 The five years of the contract had therefore seen disruption caused by contractors giving notice and negotiations to find replacement contractors for both short and long term periods. This had added to annual variations in expenditure. Not only had the expected variations occurred with urgent works being brought forward and planned maintenance being deferred to compensate, but there had also been periods of time which had elapsed between contractors, or before they were fully operational, where works had been limited. There had therefore been a low level of expenditure on those occasions.
- 5.5 The budget and expenditure over the five years of the contract was noted by the Board. The 2008/09 outturn was an estimated total which was expected to be £60,400 above the estimate, with anticipated expenditure of £511,000 compared to an estimate of £450,600.
- 5.6 It was noted that the estimates included the carry forward of underspends from preceding years, and therefore it would be misleading to total the figures. However, the total estimate for the first five years of the contract was approximately £2,900,000 and this compared to actual expenditure of £2,800,000, representing a saving of around £100,000. This more than offset the likely additional expenditure in the current financial year.

- 5.7 During 2008, consideration had been given to the best way of continuing the strategic maintenance programme to achieve quality workmanship, timeliness of response and value for money as well as the ability to retain a contractor for the full term of the contract. As this work was continuing, for the 2008/09 financial year the property maintenance budget had been simply based on expenditure carried out in the previous financial year rather than a more detailed assessment of likely expenditure, and had been allocated on a nominal basis across the various Council properties. The intention had always been that additional expenditure in some areas would be vired from underspends in other nominal allocations. A report had been submitted to the November 2008 meeting of the Economic Development Committee which stated that agreement had been reached in principle to partner property maintenance with Spelthorne Borough Council. The intention was that a larger contract could be offered which would not only attract a wider range of contractors, but also a keener price. It was also hoped that, if the current economic downturn continued, this would contribute to driving down tender prices. There would also be mutual economies in terms of supervision and managerial costs for both authorities.
- 5.8 The intention was that Runnymede's existing contractor would take over reactive maintenance in Spelthorne as well as Runnymede for 2009/10. During this year, Building Services staff from Runnymede would survey the property portfolio for both Boroughs and assess the need for prioritised planned maintenance. Additional resources would be engaged to undertake the Spelthorne surveys and they would meet the costs. This would then form the basis of a new four year tender for a revised contractual arrangement for planned and reactive maintenance for both Boroughs from 2010/11 onwards. This meant that in 2009/10, staff undertaking the survey work would be unable to progress planned maintenance in Runnymede which would lead to an expected reduction in expenditure in planned maintenance of £137,800. Reactive maintenance and safety checks would continue to be undertaken. All of the urgent category 1 works had been completed. All other work could be postponed for another year. The increase in expenditure in 2008/09 (£60,400 above base budget), would be offset by the expected reduction in expenditure in 2009/10 of £137,800, which was likely to result in an overall saving of £77,400.
- 5.9 At its meeting on 14 January 2009, the Housing and Community Services Committee had asked for further details on expenditure during this financial year at The Orchard Day Centre in Chertsey to be provided to the Board, because of the large variation between the revised and the original budget. This budget had changed in the year as follows:

	<u>Original</u>	<u>Revised</u>
Planned works	10,500	54,500
Reactive Maintenance	3,400	4,400

- 5.10 This was mainly due to three major items of expenditure: the replacement of the lift (£27,613) and fire alarm (£8,642) and chemical cleaning to combat legionella (£1,100). Monies had been vired from other budgets to meet these costs. The need for the new lift had arisen from problems which had been reported by staff at the Centre in moving disabled people in large wheelchairs.
- 5.11 The Board was satisfied with the explanations of the operation of the strategic property maintenance contract and the variations in budgets.

6. AIR QUALITY

- 6.1 At its meeting in July 2008, the Board was updated on work carried out by an air quality consultant on air quality in the Borough.
- 6.2 Where annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentrations were likely to exceed the air quality "objective" (target) an AQMA had to be declared. This had occurred in Addlestone, following a Detailed Assessment of air quality being carried out by the Environmental Research Group (ERG), King's College, University of London, which highlighted the exceedence for nitrogen dioxide. An AQMA had already been designated for a narrow band along the M25 near Egham. This was because objectives had been exceeded for both nitrogen dioxide and particles. Elsewhere in Runnymede, the Government's air quality objectives were being met.
- 6.3 The Review Board on 6 December 2007 had recommended to the Leisure and Environment Committee that an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) be designated for Addlestone and that

further air quality monitoring be carried out in New Haw and Egham. It was also resolved that a further report be submitted to the Board on the outcome of work carried out on behalf of the Council by an Air Quality Consultant. At its meeting on 17 January 2008, the Leisure and Environment Committee had resolved that an AQMA be designated for Addlestone and that further monitoring be undertaken for the New Haw and Egham areas. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) had approved Runnymede's Detailed Assessment on nitrogen dioxide for Addlestone and New Haw on 9 June 2008.

- 6.4 Further monitoring of nitrogen dioxide in New Haw and Egham had not commenced. Officers had agreed to include monitoring in the vicinity of level crossings in Egham. Levels of nitrogen dioxide were already monitored by "diffusion tubes" at various sites in the borough, as part of a Surrey wide monitoring network and this would be expanded to include more intensive monitoring in these localities.
- 6.5 As a further AQMA had been designated, with the additional work involved, a bid had been made for funding from Defra. The application had been completed by the Air Quality Consultant. The Air Quality Consultant had been involved in similar applications for funding at other local authorities. At £202,500 the application was somewhat ambitious. However, Officers were optimistic that it would result in some funding from Defra. It was hoped that the outcome of the bid would be known later in July 2008. The funding bid included both the costs of monitoring and public consultation and therefore Officers had delayed carrying out this work pending the outcome of the application. If the application was unsuccessful then a more limited public consultation exercise would be carried out, with less monitoring. A successful outcome would enable more detailed monitoring to be undertaken.
- 6.6 The Council's draft Air Quality Action Plan had been updated and the draft Plan was considered by the Board. This Plan was also available on the Council's website. The next stage was public consultation, including Ward Members and local residents, and inclusion of the new AQMA in the Action Plan. The Board suggested that monitoring should be undertaken at traffic lights as well as level crossings. These processes would be both time consuming and expensive.
- 6.7 The next stage of annual progress reporting to Defra was also presently under way and as in previous years ERG was carrying out this work on behalf of the Council. This involved reporting on the air quality monitoring work carried out during 2007/08. It was anticipated that this progress report would be available at the end of July 2008. It was noted that ERG worked closely with the Meteorological Office which was now able to determine the area from which pollutants emanated very precisely.
- 6.8 Article 8 of the Local Authorities' Plans and Strategies (Disapplication) (England) Order 2005 disappplied the duty of local authorities such as Runnymede that had an excellent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), to prepare action plans in relation to air quality. There was, however, still a requirement to ensure that Air Quality Management Areas were followed up and reported on to satisfy Defra. The framework established by the Action Plan was helpful for the reporting process and therefore it was being followed.
- 6.9 Officers had asked Surrey County Council to consider funding of signs at level crossings advising motorists that they should switch off their engines while waiting for the barriers to be lifted up. No reply had been received from Surrey County Council as yet.
- 6.10 The requirement to monitor air quality derived initially from European Community Directives, but it was a Government decision to place the responsibility for carrying it out on district Councils. The scope of action available to Runnymede to improve air quality was limited. All it could do was lobby other agencies who had a more direct influence. The agencies who could directly further the objective of better air quality were the highway authority (Surrey County Council) who had responsibility for roads other than motorways and the Highways Agency who were responsible for motorways. The Council did work effectively with these organisations. The Highways Agency had produced a draft report on motorway pollution about 9 months ago which had not been published because it was awaiting verification. Officers would ask the Agency when it was likely to be published.
- 6.11 The fact that diesel engines were becoming less popular would improve air quality. It was noted that traffic calming schemes had not had a beneficial effect on air quality, as engine pollutants

could become more noxious at slower or stationary vehicle speeds. The Board suggested that there should be a restriction on lorries travelling through Egham as they considered that the road network in the town was unsuitable for larger vehicles.

6.12 The Council had a statutory duty to monitor air quality and to report to Defra on the follow up action arising. The establishment of AQMAs and Action Plans would satisfy the Government and were beneficial for the purposes of CPA assessments. Officers did incur as little expenditure as possible on air quality and only fulfilled minimum requirements, in view of resource constraints. The burden on Officer time and the opportunity cost of this work was, however, noted by the Board.

6.13 The Board requested Officers to make a series of revisions to the draft Air Quality Action Plan 2008.

7. RESPONSE FROM THE GOVERNMENT REGARDING THE COUNCIL'S REPRESENTATIONS ON POST OFFICE CLOSURES IN CHERTSEY

7.1 At its meeting in July 2008, the Board noted a response from the Government to the Council's representations on Post Office closures in Chertsey and the outcome of the Board's requests to Council Committees arising from the Board's meeting on 16 April 2008.

7.2 At its meeting on 16 April 2008, the Board had received a report prepared at the request of the Chairman regarding a consultation from Post Office Ltd on the closure of Post Office branches in Surrey, Berkshire and West Sussex. The Board had noted the responses of the Council, Surrey County Council, the Surrey Local Committee for Runnymede, and Postwatch to that consultation, and the details of decisions taken by Post Office Ltd in respect of proposed branch closures. At the meeting, the Board had been informed by Surrey County Council's Head of Policy and Public Affairs of the County Council's proposals with regard to Post Offices, and had also heard verbal representations from four local residents, a representative of Chertsey Chamber of Commerce, and the Sub Postmaster of Little Green Lane Sub Post Office. The Board's views had also been sought on potential future options to safeguard other local Post Offices.

7.3 On the Board's recommendation, the Council had resolved on the following evening to write to the Minister asking the Government to recognise the grave hardship which the closures of Little Green Lane and Stepgates Sub Post Offices in Chertsey would cause to the community, suggesting that the Government amend the minimum access criteria for Post Offices, and also suggesting that Post Office Ltd be requested to revisit the decision to close these branches. The Leader of the Council had accordingly written to the Minister and to Post Office Ltd.

7.4 A reply had been received on behalf of the Government from Pat McFadden, MP, Minister for Employment Relations and Postal Affairs at the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. The response stated that the Government recognised the social and economic role of Post Offices and had invested substantial sums in the network. However, the Government did not have a role in proposals or decisions for individual Post Offices and Postwatch, the consumer watchdog, did not consider that there were grounds for referring the two Chertsey Post Offices for consideration under the review process.

7.5 At its meeting on 16 April 2008, the Board had also requested the Planning Committee to include policies aimed at retaining local post offices and other important local facilities as part of the public consultation on the Local Development Framework and to give consideration to the need for Post Office facilities as part of any residential development of the former DERA site at Longcross. At its meeting on 14 May 2008, the Planning Committee had agreed to the Board's requests and noted that the Retail Issues and Options Paper and Retail Impact Assessment had identified the role of Post Offices as a point on which public comment was to be specifically invited.

7.6 The Board had also commended the Housing and Community Services Committee for its provision of discretionary transport, which helped people to access Post Offices, and had requested it to continue to provide this. At its meeting on 11 June 2008, the Housing and Community Services Committee had agreed to continue the provision of discretionary transport for the elderly in the borough and to review the capacity to increase the number of passengers using the transport, if this subsequently became an issue.

8. ENGLEFIELD GREEN COMMITTEE

- 8.1 At its meeting on 15 May 2008, the Council appointed Mr Panter and Mrs Lawson as residents' representatives on the Englefield Green Committee. Mr Telford, a resident of Englefield Green, who had been nominated by residents but not appointed, had alleged that the requirements of the lease had not been followed in making the appointment. At the request of Mr Telford, at its July meeting, the Board considered Mr Telford's arguments in favour of his allegation and Officers' comments on those arguments.
- 8.2 The Council's primary duty was to exercise its judgment and discretion to appoint the representatives it believed most suitable at the time in question. In doing so it had to have regard to the wishes of the general body of occupying tenants. It was not under a duty, either by virtue of the lease, or by virtue of any previously agreed procedure, to consider only candidates who had been specifically nominated by other residents in replying to the circular letter. The Council had complied with the lease and with its own established procedure. The Board noted that if the complainant remained dissatisfied with the Council's handling of the complaint, then representation should be made to the Crown Estate as lessor.
- 8.3 As a result of working through the various points arising from Mr Telford's complaint, Officers were implementing various measures. They were confirming the current addresses of all qualifying properties, and procuring a formal updating of the list by the Crown Estate. They would also be conducting a review of the method of canvassing residents. Particular attention would be paid to whether it was appropriate to continue to invite residents to 'nominate', which might give the impression of a more rigid and formal process than actually applied under the lease. Officers would be making an annual report to Englefield Green Committee on their Terms of Reference, together with a summary of the lease and the Scheme of Management under the Commons Act 1899. Although it could not be maintained that the Council had failed to follow the requirements of the lease in its annual appointments of residents' representatives, in future the report to the Council would draw explicit attention to the Council's duty to have regard to the expressed or ascertained wishes of the general body of occupying tenants of the qualifying properties, rather than merely placing before the Council the feedback from the circular letter.
- 8.4 The Board was content with the Officers' analysis of Mr Telford's complaint and noted and concurred with the action which was being taken by Council Officers. It was also agreed that the Englefield Green Committee should be advised of the effect upon the Green of the Egham Inclosure Act (1814).

9. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE BOARD'S ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08

- 9.1 At its July meeting, in considering its Annual Report for 2007/08, the Board noted that in connection with Delays at Level Crossings, it was suggested that Airtrack might be asked to undertake resource investment for improved signalling which could remove the waiting delays which were being experienced at various level crossings throughout the borough. It was noted that it might not be realistic to expect Airtrack to put right years of under-investment in railways (such as bridges and tunnels) and it was understood that Network Rail (NR) would be the only organisation that could undertake these improvements. However, NR did not have the resources to carry out such work. It was also possible that the Airtrack scheme might make delays worse, as although the signalling would be updated there might be more trains passing through.
- 9.2 At the request of the Board, Runnymede Officers had asked the County Council on two separate occasions if they could introduce a radio link between signals at the Station Road/Church Road junction in Egham in order alleviate delays and relieve congestion, by effectively introducing an "intelligent" system of traffic lights. On both occasions, County Officers had advised that the scheme cost would be in the region of £15,000 and that they did not consider that it would deliver any real benefit. The Board could not accept this conclusion of County Officers, and it was suggested that if Members wished to take this further they should contact the County Members or Officers directly, or put a question to the Surrey County Council Local Committee for Runnymede.

10. ENFORCEMENT OF PLANNING CONTROL – PROGRESS REPORT

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 The progress report the Board receives provides a record of those cases where the Council's Planning Committee has decided to take action. There are numerous other cases which are investigated by Enforcement Officers which do not provide grounds to bring Officer recommendations to that Committee and which do not therefore appear on the report to the Board. Once persons who have infringed have complied or a case has finished, the fact is recorded on the progress report on one occasion and thereafter the item is removed from that report. Enforcement action has always been viewed by Officers as a last resort after failure of all attempts at negotiation.
- 10.3 The Board has noted that long standing problematic sites with complex planning histories have tended to dominate enforcement work, e.g. Padd Farm, as well as sites in which local residents have taken a particular interest requiring Officers to investigate regularly, such as Aymer Drive. Officers also have to react to urgent, unexpected developments such as at a site in Virginia Water, where a landowner had been felling trees in a protected area of woodland. The Council sought to secure costs in cases wherever possible. On Certificates of Lawfulness, the Council might suspect that unauthorised uses might be taking place, but required evidence of this which could often be obtained by using aerial photographs.
- 10.4 The Board noted that the Council's Planning Division currently included one senior Enforcement Officer and two part-time members of staff (one of which was on long-term sick leave). This represented a full-time equivalent of two members of staff engaged on enforcement work. The Development Control Manager also provided significant support for the activity. After a senior member of legal staff had moved to another local authority, the Council's Legal Division had allocated a small number of prosecutions to the London Borough of Camden who had provided this service to a number of local authorities over recent years. The Legal Division had also employed two part-time temporary Solicitors who were processing most of the substantial planning enforcement prosecution caseload for Runnymede.
- ## 11. DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER
- 11.1 At its October meeting, the Board considered a response to the Government's proposals for developing and strengthening overview and scrutiny. The Government set out various proposals and indicated that it wished to raise the visibility of the scrutiny function in particular by looking to develop its role as a forum for community debate. The Board agreed a series of responses and some general comments regarding the Consultation Paper to be forwarded to the Government.

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.