

Runnymede Borough CouncilREVIEW BOARD6 July 2006 at 7.30 p.m.

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

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

144. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Conservative Group had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that Councillor J.E. Haas be removed from membership of the Committee and that Councillor J.M. Edwards be appointed in his place for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting. Thereafter Councillor Haas would be reappointed.

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

145. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Review Board meeting held on 21 April 2006 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

146. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Board Members declared interests as set out below in respect of the items entitled Items from the April 2006 Council Meeting for the Board's Consideration and Progress Report On Other Items within The Board's Work Programme. Councillor H.A. Butterfield declared a personal interest having been a Member of the Corporate Management Committee on 29 June 2006 which had made recommendations with regard to the roll-out of green garden waste collection across the whole Borough and Final Accounts 2005/06 and had noted progress on the achievement of revenue reduction targets. Councillor J.B. Dean declared a personal interest having been a Member of the Leisure and Environment Committee on 15 June 2006 which had made recommendations concerning the roll-out of green garden waste collection across the whole borough and had made a resolution regarding consultation on a potential future move to alternate weekly domestic refuse collections.

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

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

147. ITEMS FROM THE APRIL 2006 COUNCIL MEETING FOR THE BOARD'S CONSIDERATION
(Ref: Minutes of the Council Meeting, April 2006, page 1034, para. 700)

At its meeting on 27 April 2006, the Council had received and approved the Annual Report of the Review Board for 2005/06. Eight points and suggestions had been made by Members of the Council on some of the issues referred to in the Annual Report and the Council had agreed that these would be addressed in a report to the next meeting of the Review Board.

The Board accordingly noted the points and suggestions made by Council Members, the comments made by Officers on them, and the details of the latest position where appropriate. The Board was asked if it wished to pursue any of these matters further.

Point 1 – Garden Waste Collection Bags

A Member of the Council had asked that consideration be given to revisions to the policy on provision of garden waste collection bags to allow for one or two bags to be purchased instead of the currently supplied three bags.

At its meeting in July 2005, when the Board had considered the progress of the pilot project for the collection of green garden waste, the Board had been advised of the number of 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 residents wishing to use the service using three 120 litre polypropylene bags. At that time, additional bags had been available at £10 each. Collection was on a fortnightly basis. Since then, the Leisure and Environment Committee had agreed at their meeting in September 2005 that residents could opt for one or two garden waste sacks, at a reduced rate, or more than three at an additional rate. In the current year's budget, fees had been set at £35 for three sacks, £30 for two and £15 for one. The Board agreed that they did not wish to recommend that the policy on provision of garden waste collection bags required revision.

The Board had mentioned in its last Annual Report that it hoped that the roll out of the green garden waste collection across the Borough would happen as soon as possible. At its meeting on 15 June 2006, the Leisure and Environment Committee had agreed to recommend to the Corporate Management Committee on 29 June 2006, that a supplementary estimate be made to give effect to this, which would be achieved by employing another driver and a part-time Recycling Assistant, providing for agency staff to cover absences, and publicising the whole borough roll-out. However, introducing a Borough-wide scheme and enforcing the green waste embargo already in place on wheeled bins would go some way to reducing the deficit on the operating costs of the service. The Corporate Management Committee had agreed to recommend to Council on 20 July 2006 that the supplementary estimate be made. The Board was pleased to note that the roll out of this scheme across the Borough should be taking place in the near future and would continue to monitor progress.

The Board discussed the Council's proposals to introduce fortnightly domestic refuse collections at some stage in the future. The Leisure and Environment Committee had agreed at its meeting on 15 June 2006 that leaflets consulting the public on a potential future move to alternate weekly refuse collections be produced and delivered to all households and that Officers would report back to that Committee on the results of the consultation exercise. Whilst public acceptance of recycling was growing, many people were still reluctant to participate and it appeared both through Audit Commission research and also from the experience of other Councils that only the move to less frequent waste collection had the desired effect of increasing recycling of domestic waste, thereby reducing the amount of waste collected.

There were also financial reasons, as well as environmental ones, for reducing the amount of waste for disposal. In response to European legislation, the Government had introduced a Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) under the Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003, whereby Waste Disposal Authorities had been allocated a tonnage of biodegradable municipal waste that could be landfilled, known as an allowance. In Surrey, the Waste Disposal Authority covered the same area as the County Council. Surrey Waste Disposal Authority was required to make considerable percentage reductions in comparison with its 1995 allowance, in the years leading up to 2020.

Each waste disposal authority was able to determine how to use its allocation of allowances in the most effective way and was able to trade allowances with other authorities, save them for future years or use some of its future allowances in advance. However, authorities would be fined for each tonne of waste landfilled in excess of the allowances set by the Government. This was a particular challenge in Surrey where waste disposal had been heavily reliant on landfill. Surrey County Council was looking to provide sites for waste treatment facilities in the County that would provide an alternative to landfill. However, these were very unpopular and realistically, it would be some years before any facility was operational. Therefore, unless waste was reduced and recycled, the cost of incurring fines for excessive landfill or of having to acquire other allowances would pass to the local tax payer.

It was estimated that approximately 130 district councils had now moved to alternate weekly refuse collections, including Mole Valley, Woking and Waverley in Surrey. There was still a widespread public perception that such moves were based on Councils saving money and reducing services rather than being environmentally driven. As this level of service became more commonplace across the country, public acceptance was increasing, although any introduction needed careful planning, consultation, well resourced publicity/communication and implementation.

The Board agreed that a proposed move to fortnightly waste collection would need to be skilfully explained to the public. For some residents, the refuse collection was their only point of contact with the Council. Residents might think that alternate week collection was not hygienic and would encourage the spread of rats and was also a way of withdrawing the level of service. The Council would need to issue clear instructions on the public's need to avoid the risk of being afflicted by maggots or rats by putting refuse material in bags, to double bag material where it was appropriate to do so, and to not include material that was unsuitable for domestic waste collection in their bins. The Council would need to demonstrate why alternate weekly collections would help the environment. The whole process would require an extensive public educational programme. Continental Europe and Ireland had moved more swiftly than the UK in taking action about the environment, e.g. with an emphasis on using paper bags rather than plastic bags for greater recycling potential, while in Germany there were a number of receptacles provided to homes for different types of waste and penalties for their citizens who put items in the wrong receptacles.

Point 2 – Council Participation in the Local Committee of the County Council

A Member of the Council had been of the view that Council participation in the Local Committee of the County Council should be actively progressed.

The development of partnership arrangements with Surrey County Council was an item within the Board's work programme which had been referred to in the previous Comprehensive Performance Assessment of Runnymede. At its meeting in December 2005, Runnymede's Council meeting had agreed that, subject to settling detailed arrangements and to agreement on the content of meetings, the Council would participate in the Local Committee of the County Council which covered the Runnymede area. The Council had also agreed that the Chairman of the Corporate Management Committee, in consultation with the other Party Leaders, would seek to agree satisfactory arrangements for participation in the Local Committee. This would include content of Agendas, structure, topic emphasis, timing and opportunities for non-member participation. The Board noted that following discussion at political level, it was likely that a report would come forward in the September cycle with specific proposals.

One of the Board Members drew attention to one of the items in the Council's Constitution which related to the Board's functions, namely Article 6—Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Review Board)—Specific Functions - paragraph 6.03a)v) in which the Board could liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local to ensure that the interests of local people were enhanced by collaborative working. This could include liaising with local organisations such as the Police Service and the Health Service. The Board agreed that liaising with partners locally was an aspect of their remit which they should bear in mind over the course of the year and which they could follow up where they considered that there was an area where they could have some impact, taking into account any cost implications.

Point 3 – Fuel Poverty

A Member of the Council had suggested that action was required to address one of the outcomes of a recent survey which had found that 24% of respondents were in fuel poverty and would struggle financially to heat their homes.

Households were described as being in fuel poverty if they needed to spend more than 10% of their income to achieve adequate levels of warmth and comfort in the home. Fuel poverty was a problem in particular for people on low incomes and for elderly people living alone in larger properties. The survey in question had been mentioned in the Review of the Runnymede State Report in the section on Social Inclusiveness. The Runnymede State Report measured quality of life and sustainability within the Borough through social, economic and environmental indicators. The Annual Review of the Runnymede State Report had been considered by the Board at its meeting on 8 February 2006

and the outcome of the survey on energy use was one of the items noted by the Board at that meeting.

The Board noted the contents of The National Energy Action (NEA) Charity publication entitled "Fuel Poverty Policies and Progress—A Guidance Note for Overview and Scrutiny Committees". NEA was one of a number of UK fuel poverty charities which promoted energy efficiency measures to tackle fuel poverty in the UK. Their Guidance Note outlined fuel poverty in the UK and the effects that this had on residents and other agencies. It also provided advice on how a scrutiny into the issue of fuel poverty might be undertaken.

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) required every UK local authority with housing responsibilities, described as "energy conservation authorities", to submit to the Government an energy conservation report identifying measures to improve the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in their area and reporting on progress made. Runnymede Borough Council had prepared an Energy Conservation Report that responded to the HECA 1995 Act and provided a reference base for the assessment of energy conservation activities to be accomplished within the Government's timescale. From this a potential reduction of 30.4% of energy usage across the Borough had been identified. By the time of the HECA Annual Progress Report for the period 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005, the contents of which were noted by the Board, Runnymede, through the introduction of its many schemes and initiatives, had achieved savings of 28.28%. The Government Office for the South East had declared that the Borough continued to make excellent progress towards achieving its target. The Government also required each local authority to produce a Fuel Poverty Strategy and the contents of the Council's Fuel Poverty Strategy were noted by the Board.

The actions identified within the HECA Annual Progress Report addressed the majority of the points raised in the NEA report. Runnymede, through the Runnymede Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEP), continued to work with all agencies to promote and facilitate grants and schemes to address fuel poverty issues. Two new schemes utilised EEC funding, namely the British Gas Council Tax Contribution Scheme and Whole House Solutions, and the Runnymede Free Insulation Scheme was also in operation. By offering this range of schemes, along with the Government's 'Warm Front' grant scheme, the Council aimed to cover all sectors of the community, encouraging them to insulate their homes, thereby reducing the possibility of fuel poverty, saving energy, and reducing emissions which were harmful to the environment.

The Board noted the action which the Council was taking on fuel poverty and agreed that it did not wish to recommend any further action on this subject to the Housing and Community Services Committee. Board Members agreed that they should take every opportunity to make people aware of the various energy management and energy efficiency schemes which were available. Officers agreed to check the Council's website to see whether it had links to other organisations that provided this kind of information. The Council was not able to provide any direct financial assistance for people in fuel poverty.

Point 4 - Air Quality

A Member of the Council had considered that details were required on what action the Council was taking to mitigate and alleviate poor air quality in the Borough.

Air quality was an item within the environmental section of the Runnymede State Report. When the Board had looked at the review of the Report in February 2006, it had agreed that more information was required in the section on air quality on the measures which the Council was taking to mitigate and alleviate poor air. The Board considered that this information should cover all of Runnymede and not just feature motorways and the Air Quality Management Area within the borough. The Board agreed that pollution from Heathrow airport should also be included with the information, if it was possible to obtain such data.

The Board noted a number of activities being undertaken to improve air quality. The main area of concern for air quality in Runnymede was a narrow band of land either side of the M25, which had been designated as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Runnymede was required to have an 'Updating and Screening Assessment' carried out on air quality in the Borough each year, and the Environmental Research Group at King's College, London was currently carrying out this work, which it was noted should be completed and published on the Council's website within the next two months. The Council had been carrying out enhanced air quality monitoring of nitrogen dioxide, in conjunction

with the Highways Agency, to monitor the effect of widening the M25 on the AQMA. Particulates were being monitored at the roadside monitoring station just north of the Borough on the M25, so that their effect could be reviewed over the next 12 to 18 months. Widening of the M25 which had recently been completed north of junction 13 and variable speed limits which had been in place for several years should result in reduced emissions and improved air quality in the AQMA.

Runnymede's work in promoting company travel plans (including the Council's own plan) should result in fewer car journeys in the area. The Council's Yellow Bus scheme was cutting down the effects of the school run. Reduced car journeys should result in improved air quality, as would 'walking buses' and the Runnymede cycle strategy. Two of the policies within Surrey County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) should also lead to improved air quality. These were LTP 1 on Integration which sought improved co-ordination and integration of transport and LTP2 on the Environment which sought to reduce the adverse effects of motorised transport. This would include promoting improved rail services in the Borough. There were also various national and EU initiatives to reduce air pollution from motor vehicles which required new less polluting engines and particulate traps to be fitted to all diesel engine vehicles (known as 'EURO 4 standards'). In terms of Heathrow airport, the London Air Quality Network reported that for 2005, the Government's Air Quality Strategy objectives had been met in respect of carbon monoxide, PM10 particulates and nitrogen dioxide hourly mean, but not nitrogen dioxide annual mean.

The Board agreed that they needed to consider whether they needed to undertake a scrutiny on Air Quality. The Board asked for further information from Officers about the data capture and measuring undertaken for PM10s and on the monitoring of nitrogen dioxide. The Board also agreed that a report should be submitted to the Board's next meeting on Air Quality which would be in a question and answer format and all Members of the Council would be asked if they had any questions which they would like included as part of the report. When the Board had considered that report, they would be able to decide whether to undertake some form of scrutiny on the subject of air quality.

Point 5 – Enforcement Appeals

A Member of the Council had suggested that representations needed to be made to the Planning Inspectorate over the length of time that enforcement appeals were taking to be processed.

There were now substantial delays associated with enforcement appeals which could occur at a number of stages in the process. Appellants had several weeks during which they could appeal and other hold-ups could take place in the registering of appeals by the Planning Inspectorate and in the arrangements made by the Inspectorate for appeal hearings, site visits and public enquiries. These delays had been of concern to residents in the borough.

Planning Inspectorate targets for 2005/06 were for 80% of all enforcement appeals to be decided by written representations to be determined in 32 weeks, for 80% of all enforcement appeals to be decided by hearings to be determined in 33 weeks and for 80% of all enforcement appeals to be decided by inquiries to be determined in 43 weeks. Details of actual performance were awaited and would be published in the Planning Inspectorate's Annual Report. In the interim, the Planning Inspectorate had in March 2006 published a report entitled 'Customer Satisfaction 2005' which had found that Planning Inspectorates had made significant efforts to speed up the appeals process through recruiting Inspectors and reorganising administrative functions. However, dissatisfaction had applied largely to the first stages of an appeal, i.e. the time taken between submitting an appeal form and receiving a date for a hearing or inquiry. The report concluded that Planning Inspectorates therefore needed to focus on helping to speed up this part of the process. Two reports which had been published recently, the Advisory Panel on Standards report and the Barker report, had also made similar findings.

The Board agreed that their voice needed to be added to those who were seeking a speedier appeals process, so that they could be seen to be responsive to residents' concerns on the matter. As this was a matter which affected all Councils in the County, the Board agreed that Officers should suggest to the Surrey Local Government Association (SLGA) that the SLGA write a letter on behalf of all the district Councils in Surrey to the Planning Inspectorate, seeking reduced delays in dealing with enforcement appeals.

Point 6 – Out of Hours Call-Out Enforcement Service

A Member of the Council had been of the view that the loss of the out-of-hours (evenings and weekends) call out service provided by Enforcement Staff needed to be reviewed.

As the Board had previously noted, the Council's Planning Committee at its meeting on 14 December 2005 had decided to reduce staffing levels in the Planning Enforcement Section. That Committee had considered the implications of a reduction of staffing levels in the Planning Enforcement Section and noted that the ability to investigate complaints and instigate action would be reduced. One of the services which would be lost by reducing staff levels was the out of hours call-out service. The Committee had balanced these implications against the Council's challenging financial forecast and the need to realise savings and, with some reservations, had approved the disestablishment of a post of Enforcement Officer to realise the savings identified in the 2005/06 budget.

At its last meeting the Board had asked about the effect on the enforcement section of the loss of the member of staff. It was noted that staff had found that they were currently having to spend a considerable amount of time answering e-mails and other enquiries, which otherwise could be spent in investigating complaints of alleged planning breaches. A report had been made to the Planning Committee in May 2006, in which it was agreed that more information than had been given previously would be forwarded to complainants when the receipt of their complaint was acknowledged. Complainants would be asked to leave the matter with Officers and not keep continually enquiring about progress. It was hoped that these new ways of working would help to offset the reduction in staffing resource.

Concerning the out of hours call-out service in particular, the Board noted that when the service operated, it had been rarely used, as few planning matters required such an immediate response. Regarding traveller incursions, staff were in any event unlikely and were also not advised to go on site unaccompanied at night or weekends. Incidents of tree felling might be stopped, but even on those rare occasions where staff were called out to deal with them, irreparable damage had usually already been done. Even without a reduction in staff, consideration was being given to stopping this service as it required staff to be available on a rota basis in evenings and at weekends for only a handful of call-outs per year. The Board did not therefore wish to recommend that the loss of the out-of-hours call-out service be reviewed by the Planning Committee.

Point 7 – Signalling – Delays at Level Crossings

A Member of the Council had suggested that details were required of progress made by Network Rail on improvements to signalling so that traffic flow at the six level crossings in the Borough could be improved.

This was an issue which was of particular concern to the Board as they considered that the level crossing barriers were lowered too far in advance of the train arriving. It was the level crossings in the Egham areas which had caused most difficulty and on one occasion in the past a bus had become stranded on a level crossing.

At its last meeting the Board noted that, as part of its initiative to enhance rail and bus transport in the Borough, it had previously agreed that Officers should continue to seek new signalling from Network Rail to reduce delays at level crossings. Network Rail had responded by stating that they were concerned with keeping level crossing barrier 'down times' to a minimum as this reduced the likelihood of drivers trying to beat the barriers, as well as reducing local traffic congestion. Network Rail considered that the safest policy was to permanently close as many crossings as possible and they were constantly looking for opportunities for closure. However, it was not clear what criteria Network Rail would use in deciding whether closures of level crossings were feasible and the Board thought that this type of information should be publicly available.

Runnymede was in Network Rail's Wessex area and the Level Crossing Risk Controller (LCRC) for Wessex had provided information regarding signalling at the six level crossings in Runnymede. At Station Road, Egham, Thorpe Road, Hythe and Guildford Street, Chertsey the signals were due for renewal in the Feltham programme in 2007. At Vicarage Road, Pooley Green and Station Road, Addlestone the signals had been renewed and were not due for any further work in the near future.

At Rusham (Prune Hill) no work was planned and the phasing of the signals had been recently reviewed. The Board noted that the renewal of signals in the Feltham programme was likely to involve the replacement of the existing signals with modern ones and would not necessarily result in changes to the phasing, so that the length of the waiting times for road users when the barriers were down might not necessarily reduce.

At the crossing at Rusham (Prune Hill) there was no human involvement in lowering and raising the barriers, which were activated by the approach of the train and were raised automatically after the train had passed over the crossing. The LCRC had visited the crossing on a number of occasions and was satisfied that the timings were set appropriately for the conditions. The crossings at the other locations in the borough were all considered to be 'high risk' because of the large volumes of road and rail traffic that passed over them. Consequently, these crossings were controlled by signallers at Feltham Signal Centre, via CCTV cameras. The signallers were regularly monitored and were expected to keep barrier down times to a minimum. However, the results of that monitoring were not available to the general public. The Board was of the view that the rail authorities did not provide sufficient information on this kind of topic.

The Board also enquired about the progress of the Airtrack scheme. If this scheme ever came to fruition, improved signalling would be an essential part of it. It was noted that while at present the Airtrack Scheme was referred to in the Regional Transport Strategy and in the South East Plan, this could provide no certainty that the scheme would take place.

The Board agreed that Officers should write to Network Rail seeking detailed information on the amount of time for which barriers were down at each of the level crossings in the Borough. Depending on the response received, the Board would consider whether to invite a representative of Network Rail to attend a future meeting to explain their operations in detail.

Point 8 – Affordable Public Transport for Young People in Evenings

A Member of the Council had asked that consideration be given to the use of yellow buses/ Council Community vehicles, in conjunction with Surrey County Council, to provide young people with affordable public transport in the evenings.

The Board noted that the Community Transport service currently consisted of the Day Centre transport and the Dial a Ride Service. Both services had to be heavily subsidised in order to provide an affordable service for users. The cost of both services had grown substantially over recent years. An extension of the service to provide young people with transport in the evenings would entail additional salaries for drivers (£12 - £15 per hour plus on costs), extra maintenance to vehicles, additional administration costs, extra fuel, and an extension of the section 19 licence that the Council had for the vehicles. It was unlikely that any reasonable charge could be made to young people that would be adequate to cover these costs and therefore the service would have to be subsidised. This would be an additional item of expenditure for the Council at a time when savings in current services had to be identified.

Unless the service was to cover set routes between major towns, it was likely to be very difficult to schedule and plan. The Dial a Ride services for older and disabled people required complex scheduling arrangements, which were currently undertaken for the Council by Woking Community Transport (WCT). This service operated during the day and any extension to the service to include scheduling for younger people in the evenings would lead to an increased fee from WCT. If the service was to operate on set routes between major towns then it would avoid the need for scheduling, but would duplicate existing public transport services.

The Council had only recently taken Community Transport Services back in house and to take on an additional service, for which there was no quantified level of need or funding or any experience of operation, could put at risk elements of the existing service.

Yellow School buses were funded by a combination of fares, business sponsorship and monies collected from developers related to planning permissions granted. The funding targets for the latter two elements were already challenging, in order to subsidise fares. Buses were filled as they went to a single destination, i.e. the school, or on a school trip and routes were based on home postcodes of school children.

Buses running in the evenings would be in direct competition with commercial routes, and could cause them to cease running if they were no longer viable. The Board did not wish to see the Council competing with local providers. The Board also thought that if the Council did provide young people with affordable public transport in the evenings this might also provide commercial operators with an opportunity to withdraw from less profitable routes. Delivery to many destinations might be required for buses to be well used and even if they were filled, they would require substantial subsidy from additional funding which was not available. Considerable administration and support would also be needed which would be a further cost.

Having noted the information provided, the Board considered that the provision of affordable public transport for young people in the evenings was not a subject which they wished to recommend to be pursued further by the Council.

148. PROGRESS REPORT ON OTHER ITEMS WITHIN THE BOARD'S WORK PROGRAMME

The Board noted progress on the other items within the Board's Work Programme not covered in the previous report.

Rail And Bus Transport - Disabled Access at Stations

At its last meeting, as part of its initiative to enhance rail and bus transport in the Borough, the Board had raised the issue of disabled access at stations. It was understood by a Board Member that South West Trains would not provide disabled access or assistance after 4.00 p.m. at stations, which would probably not be late enough to serve disabled people who were on the second part of day return journeys. It was agreed that the question of improving disabled access would be taken up by Officers in their discussions with South West Trains. Much of the problem lay with station infrastructure and rolling stock being designed for an earlier age and it would take time and considerable investment to ensure that all stations and trains provided full disability access standards. Furthermore, a number of stations were not staffed on a full-time basis. However, South West Trains could provide assistance to disabled persons travelling where at least 24 hours prior notice was given. This could be arranged by telephoning a South West Trains number or accessing their web site.

Surrey Pension Fund Issues

At its meeting on 5 January 2006, the Corporate Management Committee had made a number of resolutions on Surrey Pension Fund issues, having considered a series of recommendations arising from the Board's detailed examination of the triennial actuarial valuation of the Surrey Pension Fund.

At its last meeting the Board had noted that the latest position was that a further meeting would be taking place between Runnymede Borough Council and Surrey County Council Officers to discuss the issues which Runnymede had raised. However, Surrey County Council's Business Development Review, which included a staff restructuring exercise, had delayed that further meeting, because the Surrey Officer responsible for Pension Fund issues would be changing as a result. The Board had then agreed that when it had been informed of the outcome of the further meeting between Surrey and Runnymede Officers referred to above, it would consider whether to have a full scrutiny of the issue. It was also agreed that the Runnymede Director of Finance should continue to pursue the matter with whichever Officer emerged as dealing with the Surrey Pension Fund at Surrey County Council.

No progress had been made on this as Runnymede Officers had been unable to gain any further response from Surrey County Council, in the wake of the County Council's reorganisation. The Board agreed that it would be a fruitless exercise to ask Surrey County Council Officers to attend the Board without further information on the key questions which Runnymede had identified being provided by Surrey County Council. This information was, however, proving very difficult to obtain. The Board therefore agreed that Officers should involve Leaders and Chief Executives of Runnymede and Surrey County Councils in pressing for answers from Surrey County Council on the Pension Fund issues which Runnymede had raised.

Progress In Achieving Net Revenue Reductions

The Board noted that a report had been submitted to the Corporate Management Committee on 29 June 2006 on the Final Accounts 2005/06 which contained the outturn. The Board noted a copy of that report. The Committee had agreed that the recommendations contained therein should be submitted to Council on 20 July for approval. Two of the recommendations on the Final Accounts sought approval of the methods of financing capital expenditure and the disposition of the General Fund reserves as set out in that report. The other recommendation sought agreement from the Council to the additional revenue savings that had been identified being investigated to ascertain whether they could form the basis for further revenue reductions towards the overall savings target. A report had also been noted at the same meeting of the Corporate Management Committee on progress on the achievement of the revenue reductions in 2005/06. This report was also noted by the Board.

The Board considered whether any of the savings being made were to the detriment of the services which the Council provided. It concluded that Officers had managed the process well and that the Council's services had been affected by the least amount that was reasonably possible. The Board was also pleased to note the increases in revenue which had been achieved and considered that all Members of the Council had been kept regularly informed of progress on the savings targets.

149. ENFORCEMENT OF PLANNING CONTROL–PROGRESS REPORT

The Board noted the progress report on enforcement of Planning Control as at 19 June 2006. For the benefit of new Members of the Board, it was explained that the progress report only provided a record of those cases where the Planning Committee had decided to take action. There were numerous other cases which were investigated by Enforcement Officers which did not provide grounds to bring Officer recommendations to that Committee and which did not therefore appear on the report to the Board. Once persons who had infringed had complied or a case had finished, the fact was recorded on the report on one occasion and thereafter that item was removed from the report. The Council was not often able to recover full costs in taking enforcement action. Partial costs from prosecutions could, however, sometimes be obtained. Members were invited to contact Officers to find out about cases which did not appear on the report (for the reason identified above) or to find out about the process by which people in breach could comply with development control requirements. Enforcement action had always been viewed by Officers as a last resort after failure of all attempts at negotiation.

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

i) The Conifers, 111A, Almnors Road, Lyne

The breaches concerned a residential caravan site hardstanding and roadway and the construction of walls and tarmacadam at the site. A report would be made to the Planning Committee regarding committal proceedings, following the determination of a fresh application and consideration of the occupiers' personal circumstances in addition to changed circumstances on site. The occupiers were a family of travellers and the reassessment of their personal circumstances would entail examination of medical and education records. In view of the detail necessary and the problems in obtaining it, December 2006 was a realistic date for the preparation of a draft Committee report.

ii) Edenvale, Docket Eddy, Chertsey

This case concerned the siting of two caravans and a chalet in residential use and a pergola. A Magistrates' Court hearing date had been adjourned until 4 August 2006.

iii) Willow Farm, Chobham Road, Ottershaw

Counsel would be instructed to proceed to committal proceedings by September 2006, in respect of various breaches at this location. The occupiers had left but had now returned and site ownership was being clarified.

iv) Warrenhurst, West Drive, Virginia Water

A public inquiry had been held on 16 May 2006 in respect of development at this property which in the view of the Council was not in accordance with planning permission. The inquiry decision was awaited.

v) The Farm Shop, Hardwick Lane, Lyne

A site visit would be made to confirm compliance by the Shop in respect of areas for retail use, caravans and a structure.

vi) 105 Chertsey Road, Addlestone

A Waste Land Notice had been issued for this property in view of the poor condition of the building and its environs. The Board noted that a Waste Land Notice could be issued in respect of untidy, unkempt land, which was deemed detrimental to public amenity. There was no right of appeal against the Notice.

Negotiations were under way with the owner of the property to secure planning permission for redevelopment and an application was expected.

Members were invited to let Officers know of any sites which they thought might be suitable for Waste Land Notices and Officers would then investigate in accordance with the priority order for enforcement tasks, as agreed at the May 2006 meeting of the Planning Committee.

vii) Renalds Herne, Coldharbour Lane, Egham

The unauthorised works to a listed building at this location had now been rectified.

The Board agreed that its appreciation of the amount of Enforcement work being done (especially in view of reduced Enforcement staffing levels) should be passed on to Planning Enforcement and Legal Officers of the Council.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.00. p.m.)