

Runnymede Borough CouncilCORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE3 April 2003 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Committee present : Councillors G.B. Woodger (Chairman), J.M. Edwards (Vice-Chairman), D.P. Easton, J.E. Haas, R.K. Habgood, H.W.V. Meares, C.J. Norman, R. Pate, Mrs E.E. Price and P.B. Tuley.

Members of the Committee absent: None

Councillors A. Alderson, P.A. Greenwood and C. Knight also attended

745. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 March 2003 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

746. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A. Alderson declared a prejudicial interest in the reference from the Leisure and Environment Committee on Association for the Improvement of Runnymede Funding as he was a Director of AIR and left the room for the discussion thereon.

747. PUBLIC SPEAKING AT MEETINGS

The Committee considered the introduction of public rights to speak or ask questions at full Council meetings, and speak at the Planning Committee about planning applications, on an experimental basis, together with draft Standing Orders. It was increasingly common for local authorities to allow members of the public to speak, subject to restrictions and safeguards, at Council or Committee meetings. A recent survey of Surrey authorities showed that eight out of twelve had introduced this opportunity in some form. Public speaking at meetings was also likely to count in the Council's favour in the context of its Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

The Committee considered whether to introduce clauses specifying the type of objector or supporter who could speak on planning applications and it was agreed that details could be varied at a later date if it was thought to be necessary but at this stage it was wise to keep the scheme as simple as possible. The operation of the public speaking arrangements would be reviewed through the Local Government Act Member Working Group after six months.

**RESOLVED that -**

**Officers be instructed to incorporate Standing Orders to the effect shown at Appendix 'A' in the Council's draft Constitution for 2003/04.**

748. MEMBER/OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Committee considered a Member/Officer protocol for adoption by the Council as part of its Constitution. The Government wished local authorities to adopt a protocol to clarify what was expected of both Members and Officers in their dealings with each other. These guidelines would sit alongside other documents including staff and Member Codes of Conduct, and the Council's anti-bullying policy. The local branch of UNISON had been consulted and was content with the proposed protocol. The Committee agreed to approve the protocol subject to the last sentence of paragraph 2.7 being amended to read "Advice sought at such meetings from the staff should focus on the matters to be considered and not party political advantage". This is reflected in Appendix 'B' attached.

**RESOLVED that -**

**the draft Member/Officer Protocol attached at Appendix 'B' be approved and incorporated in the Council's draft Constitution for 2003/2004.**

749. CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCIL - REVISIONS FOR 2003/2004

The Committee considered the Monitoring Officer's review of the Constitution as required by Article 14.01 and the proposed revisions to the Constitution for the next Municipal Year. Local authorities were required to prepare and keep up to date a written constitution under Section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000. No major problems had arisen in the operation of any part of the Constitution in the current Municipal Year. The public right to speak at Council and Planning Committee meetings was included, along with the Member/Officer protocol, both of which had been agreed earlier in the meeting. Article 8 included the expanded Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee, to be renamed the Standards and Audit Committee. The Standards Committee had concurred with these changes. Reference to the Intranet and private network as a means of communication with Members was incorporated in Annex 3 to the Constitution. Various amendments were made to Standing Orders for Contracts.

Following discussion at the Review Board and Economic Development Committee and recommendation by the Local Government Act Member Working Group, a new provision had been proposed allowing 30% of the Members of a Committee to require that a decision be made at full Council which would otherwise fall within the delegated powers of the Committee.

Article 6 reflected the creation of a single Review Board. Paragraph 8 of the Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules was amended to make it clear that the right of a single Member of the Review Board to request that an item be included on the Board's agenda did not imply a right to require substantial expenditure, or a full scale scrutiny investigation, in advance of such action being approved by the Board itself. (This was a separate right from the ability of any two Members of the Review Board to call in a Committee decision within four days, thus preventing its implementation before consideration and report by the Board). The Members' Code of Conduct was amended, as suggested at the last meeting of the Standards Committee, to avoid the automatic exclusion of a Review Board Member when the Board was scrutinising or reviewing another Committee's decision. It would normally be left to the judgement of the Review Board Chairman as to whether the Member had been involved in the decision sufficiently to treat the interest as prejudicial. Revision of the allowances payable to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Review Board had been incorporated.

The Constitution would be checked for editing amendments before final production.

**RECOMMEND that -**

**subject to the Director of Administration and Leisure making any necessary editing amendments, the amended Constitution as shown at Appendix 'E' on the Committee's agenda be adopted by the Council and take effect for all purposes connected with the Annual Meeting on 15 May 2003, and subsequently.**

750. COMMUNITY STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee was notified of progress in developing the Council's Community Strategy and implementing the action plans. The Local Government Act 2000 imposed a statutory obligation for all Local Authorities to prepare a Community Strategy for their area. The Community Strategy would inform the development of Council policy. The Strategy would also guide and inform the actions of other participating agencies and bodies. On 11 December 2002, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), set up under ministerial guidance to discuss the content of the Strategy and known as the 'Partnership for Runnymede', had launched the Community Strategy at Thorpe Park. The Council had received many positive comments on the development of the Strategy, particularly from the Government Office for the South-East (GOSE). Two documents had been produced: the full Strategy, which was essentially a practitioners guide, and a smaller pamphlet summary.

The 'Partnership for Runnymede' received updated Action Plans at each of its quarterly meetings. These were used to monitor progress, check whether the targets were on course to be met and identify any problems which might prevent progress. The six Task Groups had met a number of times and had made progress in a wide range of areas, despite their relatively short period of existence. The Strategy had managed to engage a wide range of organisations, amenity groups and community representatives. The support of Members had also been key to

its successful start. Following on from previous practice, the Committee would receive progress reports on a quarterly basis.

The Annual Visioning Forum was due to take place at the end of the year. This would outline, in public, a full review of the progress of the Community Strategy and provide an opportunity to re-inform the Strategy's priorities through consultation, in accordance with 'best practice' guidelines and the targets set out in the Government's Best Value Performance Indicator 1 for 2003/04.

#### 751. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME

The Committee considered a consultation paper from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) examining the effectiveness of the Local Government Pension Scheme and identifying amendments that could be made to the Scheme and the way it was administered. Comments were invited on the consultation paper. The Committee also considered a Pensions Green Paper entitled "Simplicity, Security And Choice: Working And Saving for Retirement". The comments of UNISON on these issues were noted.

The Pension Scheme was an important element in the Local Government employment package. As reported in the Annual Personnel Report, currently 67% of Runnymede staff were aged over 40, with an average age of 45. This situation was not unique to Runnymede and therefore this age profile emphasised the importance of the Pension Scheme for the majority of staff. Whatever changes were made to the LGPS, they would not be retrospective and therefore accrued Scheme Members' benefits were protected. However, any diminution of the Scheme benefits for the future would only add to recruitment and retention problems although these benefits had to be weighed against affordability.

The Green Paper was wide ranging and made proposals for reviewing all public and private sector pension schemes. The proposals were to set 65 as the normal age for retirement in the public sector, to increase the minimum age for early retirement due to redundancy or efficiency from age 50 to age 55 and to introduce taxation of the lump sum payment on retirement. The Committee did not support the introduction of taxation on the lump payment on retirement which was proposed. This would, in their view, be a severe disadvantage to those who had undertaken their personal financial planning on the basis of the existing rules.

The Committee noted the suggested comments which had been drafted by Officers on the ODPM consultation paper and added that a scheme was required that recognised the fact that many staff now moved through a number of employments during their working life. Currently, if an individual changed their job in the public sector and they moved outside the Pension Scheme for their sector of work they would receive no additional pension if they had been in their previous job for less than two years. Furthermore, every time they moved to another employer an administration charge would be levied which would diminish their funds, sometimes quite significantly. There also needed to be scope to facilitate phased retirement, possibly combining a salary/pension income during the final period of service. The Committee also considered that the "earnings cap" imposed by the Inland Revenue on senior staff should be removed.

The Committee also took the view that rather than the future benefits of the scheme being reduced, staff should be given the option to make additional contributions to safeguard current benefits. Variable contribution rates for both employer and employee would help in meeting the costs of providing the Local Government Pension Scheme. Significant variations in the types and standards of pension schemes in both public and private sectors would result in a reluctance by employees to move between sectors and employers if their pension provisions were disadvantaged. Government policy should be directed towards a common model to facilitate movement of employees between different employers. The Government should also seek to make the Local Government Pension Scheme less complex and more understandable.

**RESOLVED that -**

**the comments on the discussion paper in Appendix 'C' be submitted to the ODPM as this Authority's response.**

752. CEMETERY SERVICE - COMPUTER SOFTWARE

Funding was sought to provide computer software for the Cemetery Service. This would meet a target in the Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards Best Value Continuous Improvement Plan and provide a back up facility to manual records.

During periods of high demand on the Cemetery Service, the current manual system occupied the Cemetery Registrar virtually full time. This limited the time available to bring about other enhancements to the service, supervise staff working in the cemeteries and deal with enquiries from the public, in a timely manner.

The new software would also provide preparation of documentation and registration from a single data entry, thus reducing administrative workload and the risk of error from multiple manual entries and provide built in back-up support to ensure burial records were held securely, as required by law. Other benefits included automation of the administrative process, allowing support staff to cover more easily in the absence of the Cemeteries Registrar, an efficient search capability that would speed up the administrative process and allow a detailed report to be generated, as well as management reports, to identify trends and future needs for burial grounds and improvements to the Cemetery Service.

The scheme consisted of three elements - Computer Software for Administration (£4,000) digitising of cemetery plans and software for 'mapping' capability (£4,000) and back-loading of historic data (£12,000). The Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration (IBCA) had been consulted and they had identified three companies offering systems. Burial and Cremation Administration System (BACAS) from Clear Skies Software Ltd had been selected, further to demonstrations at the Civic Offices. All three systems cost a similar amount but the management of Clear Skies had close working contacts with IBCA and upgrades to their system had the support of the Institute. Clear Skies had also been very helpful in providing back-up information on their system and the process of plan digitisation, which had created confidence in their organisation. The back-loading of historic data would cost in the region of £30-40,000 if sent away to be carried out professionally. By keeping this in-house, by employing a temporary archivist, the cost was estimated to reduce to £12,000.

A capital estimate of £20,000 would be required along with a supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £2,400 in the first year to cover the associated capital charges. £3,400 in revenue costs would be incurred in full years thereafter. The computerisation of the cemetery records linked with the Council's Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) strategy and it was therefore agreed that this should be financed from the Government grant paid to the Council for its IEG Initiatives.

The proposals had been discussed by the Council's Information Strategy Member Working Group at its meeting on 6 March 2003. After analysing what the system could offer, the Group concurred with the course of action proposed.

**RESOLVED that-**

- i) capital programme provision and a capital estimate of £20,000 be approved, financed from the IEG grant monies, to fund the provision of computer software for the cemetery service;**
- ii) a supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £2,400 be approved to cover the cost of capital charges in 2003/04, and the full year revenue cost of £3,400 be noted;**
- iii) subject to the above, the necessary computer software for cemetery administration and for digitising of cemetery plans be purchased as described in the above report; and**
- iv) a temporary archivist be employed to complete the back-loading of historic data.**

753. GIS - BEST VALUE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS REPORT

In the GIS Best Value Continuous Improvement Plan, five targets to be implemented at Officer level had been identified as intentions to improve. The Committee noted progress on these targets and considered ways in which they could be reviewed and updated.

The first target was a formal Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Land Charges. A draft SLA document had been prepared but the imminent introduction of the new Land Charges system (Total Land Charges) (TLC) meant that it was appropriate for the SLA completion to be amended to September 2003. The possibility of drawing up SLAs for other users should be examined. In particular, the service for the Planning Division should be assessed. The second target was a survey of existing and potential users to establish where GIS could achieve service benefits. A detailed survey had been undertaken and potential for further uses identified. It was agreed that the next development within this target area should be the identification of priorities for the different uses of GIS. The third target was to gain ISO 9000 accreditation for data capture. At the current time the Council's accreditation system was still under review and progress on the target had therefore been delayed. The Committee agreed to amend the target to the production of appropriate documentation. The fourth target concerned maximising service benefits of GIS on a corporate basis. In order to ensure that different Departments of the Council could keep pace with the corporate strategies for electronic delivery of services, it was agreed that a Committee report detailing Phase 2 of the GIS upgrade should be prepared for consideration by Corporate Management Committee in the summer. The fifth target entailed preparing a user guide to enable improved access to existing data held on GIS. A guide had been prepared and it was agreed that GIS Section should also provide written guidance for other users within the Council.

In the light of progress towards the existing Best Value targets the Committee agreed the following revisions to the targets:-

- Target 1:           Establish a formal SLA with Land Charges. Investigate the possibility of drawing up an SLA with the Planning Division.
- Completion Date: 31 August 2003
- Target 2:           Continue to update information on existing and potential users to establish where the use of GIS can achieve service benefits.
- Completion Date: 31 May 2003
- Target 3:           Ensure that the working practices for data capture are adequately documented to conform with industry standards.
- Completion Date: June 2003
- Target 4:           Prepare a report for Corporate Management Committee setting out the service benefits of making GIS available throughout the Council including an assessment of benefits against costs. This programme should be compatible with the Council's ICT strategy and IEG programme.
- Completion Date: Summer 2003
- Target 5:           Prepare and maintain a series of user guides to enable potential users from throughout the Council to be able to use the GIS if required.
- Completion Date: Ongoing.

**RESOLVED that -**

**the changes to the targets set out above be approved.**

754. BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN - MUNICIPAL STORES AND DEPOT

The Committee noted a summary of the main findings and recommendations of the Best Value Service Review of the Municipal Stores and Depot.

It had been difficult to make meaningful comparisons with other organisations. The operation of the depot had been compared with Spelthorne Borough Council and some statistics on the stores operation had been derived from a survey of other local authorities. Consultation had taken place with budget managers and staff generally. The response indicated that while the majority considered the service either good or average, there was some room for improvement. The consultation exercise had been very helpful in shaping the proposals in the Continuous Improvement Plan. The service review included a proposal to subject elements of the stores service to competitive tendering. A number of possible improvements for procurement policy in general had been identified during the review process. These formed part of the targets and the actions were for corporate consideration rather than for action by the Stores Section.

The Committee reaffirmed the long standing policy of the Council to maintain a depot within the Borough to provide a convenient operational base for its services, promote efficient service delivery and maintain flexibility of managing services in-house if it wished to do so. The Committee also agreed that the Council should aim to achieve both their own and the Government's targets for payment of invoices and that this required a further report to the Committee. Any IT proposals would be submitted initially to the IT Member Working Group. Relocation of the depot had been previously examined and the cost would be prohibitive.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) **the Service Review and the Continuous Improvement Plan be approved with particular attention to the following:-**

<b><u>Targets to be implemented at Officer level:</u></b>	<b><u>Timescale</u></b>
1) <b>reconfigure the area occupied by the gritters when the winter maintenance contract expires at the end of April 2003 and rent out the surplus space;</b>	<b>By June 2003</b>
2) <b>transfer to the Stores Section the procurement of (i) seeds and fertilisers; ii) bedding plants, and (iii) dog and litter bins;</b>	<b>By June 2003</b>
3) <b>Complete the review of items purchased with a view to achieving greater standardisation;</b>	<b>By September 2003</b>
4) <b>invite tenders for stationery, cleaning materials, tools and protective clothing with the following options:</b>  i) <b>Supply to stores,</b> ii) <b>Supply to a limited number of nominated locations,</b> iii) <b>Desktop supplies;</b>	<b>By September 2003</b>
5) <b>reduce administration costs in stores by 5% after a replacement IT system is installed;</b>	<b>By March 2005</b>
6) <b>draw up sectional procedures for the Stores Section, to include a statement of service levels;</b>	<b>By June 2003</b>
7) <b>provide information and guidance on the intranet about the stores service;</b>	<b>By June 2003</b>
8) <b>achieve ISO 9002 accreditation;</b>	<b>By June 2003</b>

- 9) **complete the resurfacing of the depot site;** **By June 2003**
- 10) **review and report on procurement practices in each department;** **By May 2003**
- 11) **re-issue corporate instructions on the procurement of goods and services, with particular reference to the use of the stores and purchasing section;** **By May 2003**
- 12) **ensure that the corporate guidelines on procurement are included in future staff training;** **By June 2003**
- Targets with policy implications, requiring a further report to the Corporate Management Committee:**
- 13) **review the handling of invoices with the aim of meeting the Council's and the Government target for the prompt payment of invoices (BVPI 8);** **By June 2003**
- 14) **review the Council's disaster recovery plans;** **By June 2003**
- Targets with policy and financial implications, requiring a further report to the Corporate Management Committee:**
- 15) **invite tenders for the replacement of the Storemaster system.** **By September 2003**

**ii) the Council's policy to maintain a depot resource be reaffirmed; and**

**iii) the Director of Technical Services report in July on progress made in achieving targets.**

755. PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT

The Government had set aside £350m for the period 2003-06 for Planning Authorities to deliver improved performance both in determining planning applications and progressing development plan work.

All districts would receive a minimum of £75,000 for the 2003/04 financial year, (although the Government had warned that it was not envisaged that there would be a minimum allocation for the next financial year) and grant above that had been linked to improvements in speed of planning application determination, over the year June 2001 - June 2002. Runnymede had been allocated £139,569, due to improved performance over the relevant period. This sum was not ring-fenced but it was assumed that it would be used to improve performance both in Development Control and plan making.

The improvement that led to this grant was a 13% increase in the number of planning applications processed within eight weeks over the period June 2001 to June 2002. During this period, 1,250 applications had been determined. Performance had reached 74% of applications determined in eight weeks and this was against the background of the highest number of applications registered on the weekly list in 2002 for over ten years. This was already a high performance, which made it difficult to further improve.

In anticipation of the Planning Delivery Grant, authority had been given as part of the Annual Personnel Report, to appoint two new posts of planning assistants/senior assistants on grade E/MM2. It was anticipated that salary costs for both posts in the next financial year would not exceed £45,000.

One of the elements identified in the Development Control Best Value Continuous Improvement Plan was a career progression scheme, to encourage staff to remain at the authority and to allow for rises in salary, in addition to performance related pay (PRP) and cost of living increases. The Committee recognised the need to enable the three Planning Advice Assistants to take advantage of this progression and it was agreed that their posts be extended. Normal budgetary provision would have to be made in future years in the salary baseline, although the shortfall in the budget for 2003/04 to meet increases in line with this career progression scheme was £17,067, which could be allocated from the Planning Delivery Grant.

One of the criticisms of the Best Value Inspectors was that planning applicants and neighbours were not kept informed of progress in processing planning applications. The Planning Delivery Grant offered the opportunity of creating a new administrative post to undertake this work, which could extend to administration of public speaking at Planning Committees. It was agreed that this post be on grade A/C (£17,262 at scale maximum). The Committee also agreed to spend part of the Planning Delivery Grant in developing the new Local Development Framework or Documents (LDF/LDD's) which replaced Local Plans. In order to assist with this, it was agreed that the post of Environmental Policy Officer which was currently 0.5 full time equivalent (FTE) be funded as a FTE for one year, at a maximum additional cost of £13,000. A considerable amount of work needed to be put into housing policy issues which would also form a key part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment at the end of the year. This work might be progressed by the use of consultants, part-time staff or overtime payments to existing staff. It was agreed that an overall allocation of £10,000 from the Planning Delivery Grant be set aside for this.

The two new staff in Development Control would require Personal Computers (PC)s to access the Development Control computer system and also the Council's Electronic Document Management System. The section's appeals officer currently did not have a PC and the Planning Delivery Grant enabled this to be rectified. The scanning of planning application histories required electronic public access to these at the Technical Services reception area, and a further PC was required for this. The total cost of these four PC's with flat screen monitors and licences was £4,556.

The total financial implications of these proposals for 2003/04 were as set out in the table below:

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Planning Career Progression Scheme	£ 17,067
Two additional Planning Assistant/Senior Posts	£ 45,000
New post of Administrator	£ 17,262
On-costs for above 3 new staff	£ 15,000
Potential cost of additional pension fund contributions	£ 7,500
0.5 FTE Environmental Policy Officer	£ 13,000
LDF/LDD consultancy	£ 10,000
4 new PC's	£ 4,556
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£129,385</b>
Planning Delivery Grant	£139,569
Balance	£ 10,184

The new posts of two Development Control officers and administrator were permanent posts on the establishment. Whilst there may be further calls on the outstanding balance during the year, it was agreed that any unspent money be carried forward to offset salary costs in future years. It was clear that future (and far greater) allocations over the next two years would be based on performance in processing planning applications and developing the Local Development Framework. Even if future grant was forthcoming, it was not felt likely that further staff increases would be envisaged. Rather, future funding would be set aside to ensure that the staff increases outlined above were funded in the future, and that existing staff salaries remained competitive to retain and motivate staff.

**RESOLVED that -**

- i) the Planning Delivery Grant for 2003/04 be allocated as set out above;**
- ii) the three Planning Advice Assistants posts be extended from the current grade of E to E/MM2 with a bar at the top of grade G**

**pending full qualification and Membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute;**

- iii) the Director of Technical Services report further on any other proposals for expenditure; and**
- iv) any outstanding monies be carried forward to support salaries of new permanent staff in 2004/05.**

756. REFERENCES FROM HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE AND LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

- i) Housing and Community Services Committee - 12 March 2003
- a) NHS Scrutiny in Surrey – Appointment to Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead NHS Scrutiny Committee

At its meeting on 12 March 2003, the Housing and Community Services Committee had received a report advising Members of the arrangements for NHS scrutiny in Surrey. Englefield Green fell within the Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead Primary Care Trust area. Consequently, the scrutiny of health services in Englefield Green was the responsibility of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Royal Borough was due to establish an NHS Scrutiny Committee following the May 2003 elections and the Corporate Management Committee supported the Housing and Community Services Committee's nomination for a Runnymede Councillor to be co-opted onto the Scrutiny Committee for a two year term.

**RESOLVED that -**

**Councillor J.E. Haas be appointed to serve as Runnymede Borough Council's Representative on the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead NHS Scrutiny Committee for a two year term.**

- b) Concessionary Television Licensing Scheme

At the same meeting, the Housing and Community Services Committee had agreed that the cost of television licences for all tenants under 75 years of age in two of the Council's Sheltered Housing schemes should be met as they were no longer covered by the concessionary television licensing scheme. That Committee agreed that it would be unfair to expect younger tenants in these two schemes to pay the full cost for a television licence, when sheltered housing tenants elsewhere in the Borough continued to receive the licence at a reduced or no charge. The tenants affected would still make a £5 contribution towards the cost of the licence, as required under the concessionary TV licensing scheme. The Corporate Management Committee agreed to approve the required supplementary estimate.

**RESOLVED that -**

**a supplementary estimate in the sum of £5,000 be approved to purchase television licences for those tenants under 75 years of age in the two Sheltered Housing schemes not covered by the Concessionary Television Licensing scheme, to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account for 2003/04.**

- c) Redevelopment of Roakes Avenue Estate - Progress Report

At the same meeting, the Housing and Community Services Committee had noted that certain major works had not been undertaken to properties on the Roakes Avenue Estate, as it was anticipated that the estate was due to be demolished. However, as access to Painesfield Allotments had been delayed, the APEX Housing Group would not be able to commence building as early as they had planned and this would in turn delay the Council's decanting programme at Roakes Avenue. The Roakes Avenue Estate was also experiencing problems with abandoned vehicles, fly tipping and graffiti. Under the

Government's rent restructuring scheme, there was provision for a 5% variance to be applied when it was felt that the formula rent did not accurately reflect local circumstances. In view of the local conditions and general environment at the Roakes Avenue Estate, the Housing and Community Services Committee had agreed that the 5% variance should be applied in this case. This would result in a loss of income to the Housing Revenue Account of a little under £10,000 per year and the Corporate Management Committee agreed to approve the necessary supplementary estimate to cover this loss.

**RESOLVED that -**

**a supplementary estimate in the sum of £10,000 be approved from the Housing Revenue Account to cover the loss in income from properties on the Roakes Avenue Estate.**

d) Central Heating Programme

At the same meeting, the Housing and Community Services Committee had agreed that central heating systems should be installed in the Council's Precast Reinforced Concrete (PRC) properties in New Haw and in the PRC houses and bungalows at Bowes Road/Wapshott Road, Egham. It was anticipated that 65 Council properties would require these systems, which would cost approximately £200,000, including works to improve insulation and electrical upgrading. The Corporate Management Committee agreed to recommend a supplementary estimate in this sum to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account.

**RECOMMEND that -**

**a supplementary estimate of £200,000 be approved to be met from the Housing Revenue Account for 2003/04 to fund the installation of central heating in approximately 65 PRC properties in the Borough.**

e) Essential Repairs

At the same meeting, the Housing and Community Services Committee had agreed that works should be undertaken to Council owned blocks of flats at Oaklands Court, Sussex Court, Hampshire Court, Fair Oaks Court and Middlesex Court, Addlestone in the 2003/2004 financial year. It was estimated that the total cost of these works, including consultancy assistance, would be in the region of £367,000. There were 32 leasehold flats in the various blocks to which these works related. Although some of the works were outside the terms of the repairing obligation contained within the lease, it was anticipated that a contribution of approximately £30,000 might be expected from the leaseholders which might reduce the Council's overall expenditure. The Corporate Management Committee agreed to recommend a supplementary estimate of £367,000 in order that these works could be undertaken in the forthcoming financial year.

**RECOMMEND that -**

**a supplementary estimate in the sum of £367,000 be approved from the Housing Revenue Account for 2003/04 to enable the additional essential repairs outlined above to be undertaken.**

ii) Leisure and Environment Committee – 20 March 2003

a) Association for the Improvement of Runnymede (AIR) Funding

Having noted at its meeting on 20 March 2003 that there was uncertainty about the level of fee income that AIR could generate, the Leisure and Environment Committee had agreed that £5,000 be awarded to AIR in 2003/04, in accordance with the original decision of the Housing and Community Services Committee in September 2001. The Leisure and Environment Committee had also granted a second payment to AIR of £5,000, subject to a satisfactory appraisal of the progress with AIR projects by the Director of Administration and Leisure in consultation with the Chairman of the

Committee, and the Runnymede representative on the AIR Management Committee. The additional grants would be made on the condition that should AIR fees generate adequate income, they should be repaid to the Council. The Corporate Management Committee agreed to approve the required supplementary revenue estimate.

**RESOLVED that –**

**a supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £10,000 be approved in the financial year 2003/04 subject to:-**

- i) funding for the second payment of £5,000 being dependent on the satisfactory appraisal described above; and**
- ii) the additional grants described above being repaid, if AIR fees generate adequate income.**

**b) Frank Muir Memorial Field, Rosemary Lane, Thorpe – Capital Scheme for Vehicular/Pedestrian Access and Car Park**

At the same meeting, the Leisure and Environment Committee had approved a capital scheme to provide vehicular and pedestrian access together with car parking and signage arrangements at Frank Muir Memorial Field in Thorpe. The Corporate Management Committee was also pleased to note that the proposed scheme also included the provision of a height barrier at the site which would protect it from traveller incursion and fly tipping. Permission from the Highways Authority would be required to erect a direction sign in Green Lane, and planning permission would be required for the change of use of the land to form a car park. There was currently a £10,000 provision in the Capital Programme for this scheme, but the completion of the works would cost a further £25,000 which could be met from capital resources, whilst the additional ongoing maintenance costs and associated capital charges could be met from within existing revenue budgets.

**RESOLVED that –**

**subject to the granting of relevant permission, Capital Programme Provision and a Capital Estimate in the sum of £25,000 be approved for the provision of a vehicular access point together with car parking and associated works at Frank Muir Memorial Field, Thorpe, to be funded from capital receipts in hand.**

**757. STANDING ORDER NO. 42 – URGENT ACTION**

The Committee noted that acting in accordance with Standing Order 42, the following action had been undertaken by the Officer shown below after consultation with the Chairman:-

<b>Officer</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>	<b>Central Index No.</b>
Director of Housing and Community Services	Authorising a supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £179,000 to be met from the Housing Revenue Account for the purpose of underwriting planning and architects' fees in relation to the schemes at Roakes Avenue and Painesfield in Chertsey.	521

**758. INFORMATION STRATEGY MEMBER WORKING GROUP MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Information Strategy Member Working Group held on 6 March 2003 were noted.

759. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION - ANNUAL MEETING, ANNUAL CONFERENCE, AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

By reason of special circumstances, namely the need to make appointments prior to the next meeting of the Committee in June, the Chairman had agreed that this item should be considered as a matter of urgency.

The Committee was invited to appoint a representative to the Local Government Association (LGA) General Assembly for the year 2003/2004, and to appoint a representative to attend the Annual Meeting and Annual Conference. The LGA Annual Meeting and Annual Conference were being held at Harrogate between 1 and 4 July 2003.

**RESOLVED that -**

- i) the Leader of the Council for the Municipal Year 2003/2004, or in his stead the Deputy Leader, be the Council's representative on the LGA General Assembly for the Municipal Year 2003/2004; and**
- ii) the Leader of the Council for the Municipal Year 2003/2004, or in his stead the Deputy Leader, be authorised to attend the Annual Meeting of the LGA at Harrogate on 1 July 2003, and also to attend the Annual Conference if (s)he so wishes.**

760. NEW CHERTSEY ALLOTMENT SITE AT BARRSBROOK FARM

By reason of special circumstances, namely the need to apprise the Committee of latest developments and for decisions to be made prior to the next meeting of the Committee in June, the Chairman had agreed that this item should be considered as a matter of urgency.

The Committee noted the outcome of investigations into the proposed use of Barrsbrook Farm as the new Chertsey allotment site and the necessary surveys. The Corporate Management Committee had been designated as the lead Committee for this project. Various investigations had been put in hand. There were no title problems. The site appeared to be free of badgers. A preliminary drainage survey indicated no major problems. Consultants had been commissioned to produce a design for consultation with potential plot holders and for the seeking of planning permission. A soil and contamination survey had been commissioned and was in hand. Officers had met representatives of the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) in order to discuss the project. The sale of Painesfield Allotments to a housing association would require ministerial consent. Thus far no insurmountable problems had been encountered and it was appropriate to seek authority to take the project forward to planning permission.

Relocation of the thirty plot holders remaining at Painesfield Allotments was essential in order to allow that site to be used for an extension to Chertsey Cemetery and a social housing development, to be carried out by Apex Housing Association. This would in turn allow tenants at the Roakes Avenue estate to relocate to the new housing and enable redevelopment of the Roakes Avenue properties, which no longer met modern standards.

Following the withdrawal of Local Authority Social Housing Grant, only a limited amount of time was available in which to start the housing project and qualify for transitional grant. Planning permission had to be obtained by 30 June 2003, and contractual arrangements had to be completed by 31 January 2004. A new allotment site had to be available by no later than 1 April 2004, when it was envisaged that the housing association would start work at Painesfield, if all necessary approvals could be achieved. It was therefore necessary to authorise the use of Barrsbrook Farm to accommodate the replacement site now, in order to allow all related elements to move forward together.

Bemonds Allotments was originally to be used as the replacement site for Painesfield until flooding and contamination problems had been encountered at the beginning of the year. The full report on contamination had not yet been received. The preliminary investigation did confirm the need for the full investigation, although the quantities of contaminants were generally lower than the December 2002 survey indicated.

A new allotment site at Barrsbrook Farm would provide local allotments to accommodate the six remaining plottolders from the Beomonds site. Land fronting the proposed Barrsbrook Allotment site might be used for a limited housing scheme on the area of the former farm buildings, and it was envisaged that the same access would serve both. The design would take this into account.

It was not yet possible to report an estimated cost for the allotments project at Barrsbrook Farm. The existing capital budget would continue to be used in the meantime for the preparatory work. Expenditure on design and other work for Barrsbrook Farm could prove to be abortive if planning permission was not granted for the housing or allotment proposals, or if GOSE consent was withheld. There was, however, no alternative but to take the project at least as far as necessary to meet the housing deadlines, if the related projects were to proceed.

**RESOLVED that -**

- i) subject to planning permission and all necessary approvals, and approval of the cost estimate when available, a new Chertsey allotment site be established at Barrsbrook Farm;**
- ii) Officers be authorised to continue the preparatory work including consultation with prospective plottolders; and**
- iii) the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to cease the use of Beomonds Allotments for allotment purposes, and a further report on this site be made, following completion of the full contamination survey.**

761. REFERENCES FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - 13 MARCH 2003

a) 151 Station Road, Addlestone

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraphs 7 and 9 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

At its meeting on 13 March 2003, the Economic Development Committee had approved the purchase of 151 Station Road, Addlestone for a sum of up to £300,000, subject to the acquisition of the neighbouring property at 147/149 as part of the attempt to assemble and redevelop the entire block of properties. The premises at 151 Station Road comprised a retail unit, flat and rear store. There was currently no identified tenant. Officers would endeavour to secure a short term let but it was possible that the property might remain empty for some time. The rental value of the shop was estimated at £8,000 - £13,000 but the store was not expected to generate any income. The flat could not be let directly in order to avoid establishing any security of tenure. The revenue impact of the purchase would comprise the financing costs of the purchase (£12,800 at 4%) and sundry other costs of holding the property (maintenance, insurance, etc), totalling approximately £19,000 per annum. There was no provision in the capital programme for the acquisition, but it could be financed from the sale of the Crabtree Estates properties which would be auctioned in April. The Corporate Management Committee agreed to approve a capital estimate in the sum of £316,000 in respect of the purchase and associated stamp duty.

**RECOMMEND that -**

- i) a capital estimate of £316,000 be approved for the acquisition of 151 Station Road, Addlestone, including the cost of stamp duty, financed from capital receipts;**
- ii) a supplementary revenue estimate of £19,000 be approved for the 2003/04 financial year to meet the financing and sundry other costs of holding 151 Station Road, subject to this being offset by any rental income; and**

**iii) the potential revenue costs in future years be noted.****b) Addlestone Community Association Reprovision - Costings**

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 8 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

At the same meeting, the Economic Development Committee had received latest details of the cost estimates for the reprovision of the Addlestone Community Association (ACA) premises on part of the Garfield Road car park, representing the first phase in the redevelopment of the Civic Offices site. The approved capital programme included a provision of £2,172,000 for the new facility (this figure did not represent the build costs alone). However revised cost estimates predicted a provisional outturn figure of £2,486,000 including £325,000 for enhanced facilities sought by ACA. Officers would enter into further dialogue with ACA to determine the nature and scale of the additional elements, together with the appropriate method of financing. The ACA was currently pursuing a number of grant applications with local and regional funding providers. If the costs of the extra facilities were excluded, a revised figure of £2,241,000 was reached, representing an increase of £69,000. Capital estimate provision of £250,000 had already been made for architectural and associated professional and consultancy fees. The Corporate Management Committee agreed to recommend a revised capital provision of £1,991,000, in respect of the balance of the total scheme costs.

**RECOMMEND that -**

**a revised capital programme provision and capital estimate of £1,991,000 (making a total of £2,241,000) be approved for the reprovision of the Addlestone Community Association premises, to be financed from capital receipts.**

762.

**WRITE OFF**

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 7 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

**RESOLVED that -**

**the non-domestic rate arrears, totalling £2,335.28 be written off as irrecoverable.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 10.25 p.m.)