

Runnymede Borough CouncilCORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE30 September 2004 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Committee present: Councillors J.R. Furey (Acting Chairman), Mrs. F.M. Angell, A.J. Davis, Mrs. L.M. Gillham, P.A. Greenwood, H.W.V. Meares, C.J. Norman, Mrs. J. Norman, P.B. Tuley and G.B. Woodger

Members of the Committee Absent: None

Councillor A. Alderson also attended.

241. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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

<u>Remove from Membership</u>	<u>Appoint Instead</u>
Councillor R.K. Habgood	Councillor A.J. Davis
Councillor N. Thewlis	Councillor Mrs. F.M. Angell
Councillor Ms. C.M. Simmons	Councillor H.W.V. Meares
Councillor P.J. Waddell	Councillor Mrs. J. Norman

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

242. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

As neither the elected Chairman of the Committee, (Councillor R.K. Habgood), nor the Vice-Chairman, (Councillor N. Thewlis), were members of the Committee for the evening, Councillor J.R. Furey was appointed Chairman by the Committee for the meeting.

243. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 September 2004 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

244. FINANCIAL FORECAST

The Committee considered the Financial Forecast covering the period up to the 2009/10 financial year and the target budget for 2005/06. The demand on Council Taxpayers in 2004/05 was £100.44 for a Band D property. The Council had been able to set this low level of Council Tax because it had withdrawn £2,559,500 from its working balances to offset the cost of services. If working balances had been not been used, the Band D Council Tax would have been £179.61.

For the past three years, the Council's Financial Forecasts had shown expenditure on services outstripping the available income. In October 2002 the Council had adopted a policy of reducing net expenditure by £1 million per annum from 1 April 2004, increasing the Council Tax in even steps until incoming resources balanced outgoing resources, and until this balance was achieved, using revenue reserves to pay for the shortfall.

The Committee noted that Council Tax would have to pay for an increasing share of the Council's expenditure over the period covered by the forecast as the use of reserves and capital receipts declined. Government grant and investment income would remain relatively flat leaving

Council Tax to shoulder the burden of inflation over the period.

The Government had decided to exercise its capping powers under the Local Government Act 1999 in 2004/05 in response to local authority decisions on their budgets. Five Councils and one fire authority had been deemed to have set excessive budget requirements and were required to reduce their budgets in accordance with criteria determined by the Secretary of State. If the Government adopted the same approach in future years, it would mean that the Council would be capped if its tax were greater than the shire district average (£137 this year) and the budget requirement had increased by more than 6 ½% and the Council Tax demand by more than 8 ½%. This meant that the Council should be able to increase its Council Tax in line with last year's Financial Forecast for the next two years without facing the threat of capping. Thereafter, it could be vulnerable unless it moderated its tax demands.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced the Government's spending review in July. While the Chancellor was providing for Formula Spending Shares to increase by over 5% each year, most of this was directed at Education and Social Services. The increase for Environmental, Protective and Cultural Services (EPCS), the spending block that covered all of Runnymede's services, was 0.58% for 2005/06, which represented a reduction in real terms (although it was followed by increases of 3.5% and 3.7% in the following two years). The amount of grant that the Council would receive would depend upon how this was translated into the formula for floor protection. The assumption made in the Forecast was that there would be no increase in the floor in 2005/06 but that it would be increased by 2.5% in subsequent years. This was lower than last year's projection (3%). The Government appeared to attach weight to the claims in the Gershon report that efficiency savings of 2 ½% were achievable across the public sector and it was likely that this argument would be used to resist demands for a more generous settlement for Local Government.

The financial strategy approved two years ago included the objective of making annual savings of £1 million commencing in 2004/05. Last year the Council had approved budgetary reductions of £650,000 towards this target, leaving £350,000 still to be identified. In addition, the Council had decided to increase the savings target by £155,000 in order to offset the cost of new initiatives. At that stage the savings that were still required to meet the target stood at £505,000. The target included savings of £84,000 attributable to increased income generated by the Safer Runnymede CCTV operation. It now seemed unlikely that this would generate income growth of more than £5,000 each year because this income was generally subject to long-term agreements. The shortfall in the savings previously identified would need to be added back to the target (£54,000 by 2009/10). The Council had approved growth items totalling £60,000 in the 2004/05 Budget for which no provision had been made in last year's Financial Forecast. There would also be the full year costs of the new posts approved in the Annual Personnel Report, the cost of the increased grant awarded to the Runnymede Association of Voluntary Services in April 2004 and the cost of the new Communications Officer post. These spending commitments would require compensating savings in order to preserve the integrity of the Council's financial plans, so this increased the target to £717,000. On top of this there were developments in the Forecast which the Council would only be able to afford if the cost was met by savings elsewhere. These increased the target to £1,307,000. The target was offset by savings of £353,000 that had already been identified. Some of these savings had not yet been considered by Committee and would require approval.

This left savings of £954,000 to be found. The Council faced a considerable challenge in achieving its spending and taxation plans. The target saving now required was almost back to the original £1 million target, in spite of the savings that had already been achieved.

Over the last two years the Council's financial strategy had been to reposition itself so that by the end of five years its outgoings were in balance with its income. In the last resort, it had been assumed that the Council had the option of increasing its tax to pay for services. The potential imposition of a cap on tax increases removed this flexibility and meant that the Council would have to reduce its expenditure by a further £550,000 in order to keep within what were assumed would be the Government's future capping restrictions.

Almost 90% of the capital programme would be financed by the use of capital receipts. By far the most significant scheme in the programme was the potential redevelopment of the Civic Offices site in Addlestone, providing a new Community Centre and Civic Offices. It was noted that this redevelopment had been the subject of a number of reports to the Economic

Development Committee and it had been concluded that this was preferable to repairing the current building. It was proposed to finance this development from capital receipts, part of which would be generated by the disposal of the land occupied by the present office building after the new offices had been constructed.

The Committee considered anticipated developments and decided that it was content with each of these developments, decided to make no change to the minimum level of revenue balances and agreed the details of the schemes proposed in the General Fund related capital programme. The Forecast continued the strategy of stepped increases in the Council Tax but it had been modified to restrict increases from 2006/07 to avoid the potential imposition of Council Tax capping. The Committee was content with those projections. The Committee also approved savings on top of the savings approved last year and requested the relevant Committees to make plans for their effective implementation. Key assumptions had been made in order to arrive at the financial projections. However, there was a risk that some of these assumptions might prove to be inaccurate or that other developments might occur which would require the Forecast to be revised. The significant areas of risk were noted.

The major issues facing the Housing Revenue Account were the requirement to meet the Decent Homes standard by 2010, continued major investment in improvements to existing stock and the estate redevelopments at Roakes Avenue and Wapshott Road. The Business Plan assumed that the estate developments would proceed in line with the current plans to develop new housing in partnership with Apex Housing Group. It was noted that if a decision were to be made to transfer the housing stock, and many conditions would need to be satisfied before this took place, any implementation would not coincide with and therefore would not offset the costs arising from the Civic Offices redevelopment. Even if the stock were to be transferred, a substantial proportion of housing staff would be retained in-house.

In the General Fund Capital Programme for 2005/06, provision appeared for £1,500,000 for a vehicle procurement exercise, an assumption having been made in this case that the vehicles would be bought rather than leased. The General Fund Revenue Forecast made provision for expenditure on recycling and environmental issues of £294,000 in 2005/06 and future years. It was suggested that this might be a conservative estimate of the amount of expenditure which might be incurred. If an additional financial commitment was required in this area, it would have to be offset by an equivalent saving in other services.

**RECOMMEND that –**

- i) the Financial Forecast for the five year period to 2009/10 be approved;**
- ii) the savings set out below be approved with effect from the 2005/06 financial year:-**

<b>Details</b>	<b>£</b>
<b><u>Leisure and Environment</u></b>	
<b>Review of Public Conveniences</b>	<b>12,000</b>
<b>Pest Control</b>	<b>5,000</b>
<b><u>Planning</u></b>	
<b>Review of Enforcement Function</b>	<b>25,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,000</b>

- iii) relevant Committees identify the service areas that should be examined in more detail with a view to achieving the "savings to be identified" target and Officers be instructed to bring forward reports as appropriate;**
- iv) each Policy Committee be requested to consider increasing the contribution that users make to the cost of services where it is lawful to do so when undertaking the next review of fees and charges; and**

**v) the Forecast form the basis for drawing up detailed service budgets for 2005/06.**

245. WEBSITE CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

(Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, November 2003, page 927, para. 444)

The Committee considered the results of the investigation into the most appropriate website Content Management System (CMS) to satisfy the needs of the Council, along with the purchase and implementation of a system.

A CMS would allow the increased volume of material on the website to be more effectively managed, assist in maintaining accuracy, provide improved search facilities, make the sites easier to access for the disabled, provide integration with other software at Runnymede and help the Council comply with Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) requirements imposed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). As a result of its IEG3 submission the Council had been awarded £350,000 in 2004/05 and £150,000 in the following year in order to implement outcomes specified in detail in "Defining e-Government Outcomes for 2005" circulated by the ODPM. The Outcomes document detailed 29 required outcomes, 8 of which could only be achieved by the introduction of a content management system. Failure to achieve these required outcomes gave the ODPM the option of recovering all or part of the grant distributed and would also have a serious impact on the Council's Best Value Performance Indicator scores (BVPI 157) and its rating compared with similar Councils.

After a thorough review of the market place that had taken place over the last nine months, three products had been assessed in depth by the Information Strategy Member Working Group (ISWG). Microsoft Content Management Services (MCMS), Vignette V7 (the market leader whose products had been used by New York City and UK Central Government and who had just purchased Tower Technologies, the supplier of the Council's document management system), and a newcomer to this marketplace, Macromedia. The Macromedia products were very new and did not have the same functionality as the Vignette and Microsoft solutions and would require the introduction of further software to meet all of the outcomes covered in the specification. Microsoft and Vignette both offered a package which would meet Council requirements and showed similar costs for licences, configuration and implementation.

However, Vignette showed greater integration potential, especially in relation to the Council's Corporate Document Management System, now renamed Vignette IDM. In addition, the version of the product that would be used, version 7, was highly scalable with sophisticated user interfaces and development potential. In particular, the ability of the software to build web applications presented through "portlets" was attractive to an information provider such as the Council with many public interaction requirements.

In order to achieve the ODPM outcomes identified using the Microsoft product set, licences would be required to be purchased for further Microsoft products. Vignette supplied the Application Portal (VAP) and Application Builder (VAB) which contained the functionality that would allow future development, without the need for further licences. The roadmap for Vignette products indicated that the content management and document management solutions would be integrated in the next 12 months, giving the Council's Intranet and Internet sites ready access to the information stored within the imaging and workflow applications. Achieving the same end by interfacing the Microsoft product set would be more costly and complex. It was therefore recommended by the Committee that the Vignette solution should be adopted.

Adoption of CMS would allow the activities of staff in all parts of the organisation to be refocused. In user departments, volatile information would be updated directly by staff closest to the data. In the Web team the three part time members of staff (one and a half full time equivalent) would require a degree of retraining to carry on development, administration and support of the sites. The team would concentrate on achieving the targets in the Council's IEG programme. The Committee queried whether staffing costs of this process would be neutral and suggested that Officers should look at whether staff time costings might be incurred on the project. Additional hardware would be required so that a reorganisation could make available a database server for the SQL Server back end. The total capital and revenue costs of the project through pursuing the Vignette package were noted.

**RECOMMEND that -**

- i) capital programme provision and a capital estimate of £211,120 be approved for the supply and installation of a Content Management System;**
- ii) the Council purchase Vignette Portal and Application Builder licences for use on the Council's Web site and intranets and install, configure and implement Web and Intranet sites in order to assist in achieving Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) and Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 157 targets;**
- iii) the associated licences and installation be purchased for the sums set out in Exempt Appendix '1' to the Committee report;**
- iv) suitable hardware be purchased to facilitate the implementation at a sum not exceeding £10,000;**
- v) the capital expenditure be financed from the IEG3 grant received from the Government; and**
- vi) a supplementary revenue estimate of £67,481 be approved, in respect of the annual support costs and capital charges.**

246. TELEFORM UPGRADE TO IMPLEMENT IEG

The Committee was informed of the requirement to upgrade the existing Verity (formerly Cardiff) Teleform software. For nearly three years, the Council had used Verity Teleform software for the collection of data from questionnaires and forms. The benefits included reduction of the amount of manual processes including data checking and data collection, as well as distribution and paper handling, increased accuracy and speed of data collection and support for the E-Strategy. In conjunction with the Document Management System (DMS) with its workflow capability, Teleform assisted in meeting Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) and Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) targets and was central to the success of the Safer Runnymede and Local Development Framework (LDF) processes which were under investigation.

Recently an upgrade to Teleform had been announced. Verity had a policy of supporting the current and only one previous version of the software. There was a risk that support would be stopped if the Council did not implement the upgrade. Maintenance and software support were covered under the agreement though there was no provision for upgrades of the Teleform software. Therefore, when new versions of Teleform were released, the Council was obliged to renew the entire licence contract.

The total cost of the software upgrade was £14,550. This would entail an upgrade in maintenance charges from 18% to 20% of licence price so that the Council would receive all new releases of the product. As this software was essential to the achievement of IEG objectives, it was appropriate that it be funded from the IEG allocation received from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (OPDM). Additional maintenance costs associated with this upgrade required a supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £2,900. Additional annual capital charges of £3,400 would also be incurred.

In order to use Teleform effectively, staff required a minimum of one day of training. Experience had shown that if the software was not used on a regular basis then the person trained lost the skill gained and the first form designed after a break took a considerable time to complete. It was therefore agreed that for the next twelve months all forms should be designed by a small group of skilled staff who would be able to "keep their hand in". Payment would be accomplished by internally charging survey budgets for the work carried out on a marginal cost basis.

**RESOLVED that -**

- i) the Council purchase, configure and install the Teleform upgrade at a total cost of £14,550;**
- ii) as this solution is required for implementation of the IEG statement, the capital and installation cost be funded from the £500,000 IEG3 grant received from the ODPM;**
- iii) the Council purchase the upgrade to a version-protected licence;**
- iv) a supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £6,300 be approved to cover the additional maintenance and on-going capital charges, to be met from existing provision; and**
- v) the design of forms and surveys using Teleform be carried out principally by a small group of staff who will be able to make the most effective use of the software.**

247. PROCUREMENT FITNESS CHECK

The Committee was informed that the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) would be undertaking a fitness check of the Council's procurement activities on 20 and 21 October 2004 and received details of the programme. The procurement fitness check involved an analysis of the Council's policies and procedures, along with interviews with Members and Officers. The Committee's attention was particularly drawn to a Members Workshop on 20 October. The exercise would be conducted in a similar way to last year's Comprehensive Performance Assessment inspection, whereby a team would be on-site for two days but would also conduct some of their research as a desk top exercise using material already provided by Officers. During the exercise the IDeA would benchmark the Council's performance against the national strategy and recommend actions to improve the Council's procurement activities. Every district Council had to carry out a check on progress against the national procurement strategy by 2006 and the IDeA procurement fitness check satisfied this need.

248. STAFF TERMS AND CONDITIONS - REVIEW OF

(Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, May 2004, page 1532, para. 879)

The Committee was updated on progress regarding the introduction of a formal Job Evaluation Scheme in the Authority. At the meeting of the Corporate Management Committee in September 2003, Members had considered a report recommending the introduction of a job sizing/ranking system. Members had decided to appoint a consultant to undertake a more comprehensive review including, inter alia, the introduction of a formal Job Evaluation Scheme.

Following a tendering exercise, Tribal GWT HR Consulting had been appointed. A considerable amount of work had been undertaken by Tribal, Council Officers and UNISON in the development of an in-house Job Evaluation Scheme. However, it had become apparent that the original objective of designing a "simple" scheme was not achievable. After reviewing potential suitable products, which had already been developed and were tried and tested at other authorities and might be adapted for use at Runnymede, Officers had recommended the scheme produced by the Greater London Provincial Council (GLPC). Members had decided that the GLPC Job Evaluation Scheme offered the most satisfactory solution for the Authority and the services of Tribal Consulting had accordingly been terminated.

Following a meeting of a cross party Member Working Group in May 2004, arrangements had been made for presentations to be made to staff and Members by the GLPC and for appropriate Management, UNISON and Personnel representatives to be trained as evaluators in the scheme. Once trained, panels of three, comprising a Management, UNISON and Personnel representative, had worked in tandem during July, August and September 2004 undertaking trial evaluations of a 10% sample of jobs across the Authority in order to establish whether or not the GLPC Scheme was in fact suitable for use in Runnymede and to ascertain a measure of

resource implications for the Authority if the scheme were to be implemented in full across the Authority.

A random sample of 51 staff had been invited to participate in the trial. This was a higher number than was needed in order to achieve a 10% sample of job types (35) as it was recognised that because of the amount of work involved, a number of invited staff might not want to participate. In the event, 37 staff participated in the trial, of which the panels evaluated 28. It was considered that the sample used in the exercise yielded a representative indication of the implications for the Authority if the scheme were to be introduced. The exercise proved to be much more labour intensive than had been envisaged originally. It involved individual staff together with their Managers completing and agreeing a questionnaire that provided evidence for the evaluation panels to use in undertaking the evaluations. The questionnaires were reported as generally taking between two to four hours each to complete. Once completed, the questionnaire (often running in excess of 20 pages) together with job descriptions and organisation charts had been passed to the panels for evaluation. Each evaluation took on average one hour to undertake. The exercise, if it was to be undertaken by the whole Authority, would take in excess of 1,000 staff hours for evaluations and up to 1,500 staff hours for completion of the questionnaires. The quality of information contained in the questionnaires varied considerably. This was due partly to the complexity of the questionnaire and the varying abilities of staff in its completion. It was evident that the collection of data needed to be undertaken in a different manner in order to provide greater consistency of approach, better data for the evaluators and a reduction of time for staff and their Managers. In order to assist the process, it was suggested that the services of a trained job analyst should be used in future to interview staff and Managers and to prepare reports for use by the panels. Specific recommendations would be brought forward in due course, via the Member Working Group.

The evaluations which had been undertaken had resulted in an unexpectedly high number of jobs being found to fall outside the existing salary ranges. This was a surprising result as from regular independent salary surveys and benchmarking exercises Runnymede salaries were generally found to be within the market range. The GLPC had undertaken a sample quality check on the trial evaluations and had suggested that the panels were unduly harsh in their approach. One reason for this might have been the difference in scale and individual staff duties and responsibilities between London Boroughs and smaller Districts such as Runnymede.

Consequently, further work needed to be undertaken in association with the GLPC in order to ensure that the panels were applying the scheme appropriately before it could be recommended for adoption throughout the authority. This approach was supported by UNISON.

The Committee noted the progress of the scheme and agreed with the proposed way forward. The length of time needed to progress job evaluation was considerable but it was noted that the concerns expressed at an earlier grading appeal considered by the Standards Committee and the issue of equal pay in general throughout the Council needed to be addressed.

#### 249. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES - CONSULTATION

The Committee's views were sought on a response to an Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) consultation paper on a Code of Conduct for local government employees. The ODPM had launched a proposed Code on 19 August 2004. It was inviting comments by 19 November 2004.

The effect of the Act (S.82) would be to make the Code a part of each Council's Standing Orders, and to incorporate the Code into the Council's employees terms and conditions. Breach of the Code would then be misconduct. The Code itself was a short document. It built upon the experience of local authorities, touching the matters included in most of their own Codes, and echoing the Seven Standards promulgated by Lord Nolan's Committee on Standards in Public Life in 1995. The Code could be added to by a local authority. Many local authorities already had in place their own locally devised Codes of Conduct. Most local authorities would need to add detail to the proposed Code. Runnymede in common with most Councils, already had a Code of Conduct in place, with the rules thought to be required locally. This had served the authority well over the years and would not be easily or quickly abandoned, particularly as there were elements in the local code that were not covered in the national proposal.

The Committee agreed that the response should include mention that the Code imposed another burden on local Authorities and that Teachers, Firefighters and Community Support Officers should not be covered by the same Code as they worked to different contracts of employment.

**RESOLVED that -**

**the response set out in Appendix 'A' be submitted to the ODPM.**

250. POLITICALLY RESTRICTED POSTS – CONSULTATION

The Committee's views were sought on a response to an Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) consultation paper on whether change was required to the regulatory regime governing the political activities of local government employees. The ODPM was asking for any response by 19 November.

S.2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 identified certain posts on a Council's staff that were "*politically restricted*". These Politically Restricted Posts (PoRPs) were: the Chief Executive, any Chief Officer, any Deputy Chief Officer, the Monitoring Officer, any Officer identified by the employing Council as required by his/her job to give advice to the Council regularly, or to speak regularly to journalists or broadcasters, or any Officer who is paid at spinal column point 44 (currently £33,009 per annum) or above. The Local Government Officers (Political Restrictions) Regulations 1990 then defined how the people in these posts were restricted. He or she could not be a candidate for election as an MP, or MEP, or a Member of a local authority, or be an election agent, or an officer of a political party, or canvass, or speak to the public or publish written or artistic work with the apparent intention of affecting support for a political party. Employees not "caught" by these restrictions could be active politically. The Local Government Act 1972 prevented them being elected Members of their employer. Under the Employment Rights Act 1996, these employees had a right to time off if they were a Member of a local authority. Political Assistants (which Runnymede did not currently employ) were also politically restricted. The ODPM had also invited comments on the role of the Independent Adjudicator, currently located in the ODPM, whose role was primarily to determine applications from local authority employees for exemption from political restriction for their posts.

In Runnymede, issues had not frequently arisen around the application of these rules. The Committee agreed that the Regulatory Framework, codifying what was previously accepted and understood, was working satisfactorily. However, the Committee agreed that the criteria for identifying posts that were politically restricted should be relaxed so that more staff were enabled to act as representatives of their local community. This, in turn, could benefit the local government service in increasing the pool of able people available to stand as elected representatives. This could be achieved by retaining the other criteria safeguards but deleting the salary criterion, so that whether an employee was "caught" by these criteria would depend solely on the functions which they performed, and not on what they were paid. The Committee considered the other questions contained within the consultation paper and decided that they did not wish to recommend any further changes to the ODPM.

**RESOLVED that -**

**with the exception of deleting the salary criterion for identifying Politically Restricted Posts, the Council indicates to the ODPM that the review should result in no change.**

251. LONG TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Committee considered and approved a long term sickness absence policy that had been negotiated by Personnel and UNISON. Best practice suggested that a pro-active approach to absence management together with a system for a phased return to work could be beneficial for both staff and the employer.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the policy detailed at Appendix 'B' be incorporated in the Authority's Sickness Absence Policy and reviewed after a period of twelve months.**

252. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Committee considered appointments to outside bodies which had been deferred at the meeting of the External Appointments Committee on 13 July 2004 and of the Corporate Management Committee on 2 September 2004. Grange Community Infant School had written to the Council to state that they had reconstituted and therefore did not wish to receive a nomination from the Council for a Minor Authority Governor.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) Councillor Mrs Haylor be appointed to the Surrey Museum Consultative Committee as a substitute representative; and**
- ii) consideration of a suggestion for Community Governor to the Englefield Green Infant School be deferred to allow for further discussion amongst the political groups.**

253. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

- (a) Housing and Community Services Committee – 8 September 2004

Housing Computer System - i-World Implementation

At its meeting on 1 April 2004 the Corporate Management Committee had agreed the upgrade of the current housing software from SX3. The upgrade needed to be completed by November 2004 as very soon after this it would be necessary to deal with rent increases and other vital end of year work. However, the Housing and Community Services Committee had been advised at their meeting on 8 September that two of the staff with vital knowledge of their service modules would not be available for the upgrade. It would therefore be necessary to train other staff to deal with the upgrade. In turn arrangements also had to be made to cover the work of these staff. The training required was specialised and consequently expensive as the product was complex and not particularly intuitive. In addition to the staffing difficulties it had also been necessary to arrange for unforeseen changes to the desktop integration elements of the system. It had been necessary for the data to be migrated twice. In order to meet the extra costs of these elements of work, and to allow for a contingency to meet any other difficulties that might arise, it was necessary to seek an additional £20,000. This amount was considered to be the maximum and would only be used entirely if this proved necessary.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) an additional capital estimate in the sum of £20,000 to enable the Housing i-World computer system to be implemented successfully and a supplementary estimate in the Housing Revenue Account in the sum of £2,000 to cover the cost of capital charges in 2004/05, be approved; and**
- ii) the associated full-year cost of the capital charge in the Housing Revenue Account in the sum of £5,000 be noted.**

- (b) Economic Development Committee – 9 September 2004

Civic Offices Reversion

At its meeting on 9 September 2004, the Economic Development Committee had received details of progress on the reversion of the Civic Offices. It was noted that

three architectural practices had been shortlisted for interview by the Member Working Group with a view to appointment of the Architectural Project Manager by the end of October. A Notice had also been placed in the Official Journal of the European Community inviting Chartered Quality surveying practices with relevant experience to register their interest in the project. Preparations were now sufficiently advanced to require a capital estimate of £1.25m in order to progress the design, detailed costings and associated works.

**RESOLVED that –**

**a capital estimate of £1.25m be approved for the professional and associated fees required to carry forward the detailed design and costings for the Civic Offices.**

254. RUNNYMEDE CARE AND REPAIR - CHANGE TO ESTABLISHMENT POST

At its meeting on 8 September the Housing and Community Services Committee had noted that the Care and Repair Technician post had now become vacant, and needed to be advertised. In 2001 Runnymede's former Executive Committee had agreed that the hours of this post should be increased from 18 hours to 30 hours per week because of the high demand for the service and that this should continue for as long as the Government funding for Care and Repair remained in place. Government funding was still being received and was expected to continue in the foreseeable future. The workload of the post remained high and there was still a demand for the service. It would be difficult and confusing to advertise a post in which part of the hours were permanent and the rest were temporary. The Committee therefore considered that the post should be amended so that it was for 30 hours on a permanent basis. The current cost of 30 hours was included in the budget and revenue forecast and this change would not have any financial implications to the Council as long as the Government funding continued. Any change in this funding would require a review of the service as a whole.

**RESOLVED that -**

**an amendment to the working hours of the establishment post of Care and Repair Technical Officer to 30 hours per week be approved.**

255. DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT (DPE) – PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee was updated on progress in introducing Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) in the Borough. Approval was sought to enter into an agreement with the National Parking Adjudication Service for the adjudication of Penalty Charge Notices and to authorise changes to the establishment consequent upon revised working arrangements for existing car park inspectors. This report, apart from the staffing elements, would normally be for Economic Development Committee. In view of the need to authorise the agreement with the National Parking Adjudication Service (NPAS) before that Committee met, it was considered by the Committee with the agreement of the Chairman of the Economic Development Committee.

The work carried out so far towards introducing DPE included assessing the financial implications of DPE in the form of a Financial Model, a review of the existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), which imposed the parking restrictions, continuing negotiations with Surrey County Council (SCC) on the content of the Agency Agreement, the submission of a draft application to the Secretary of State for Transport, recruiting additional staff, procuring new equipment and applying to join the National Adjudication Service for Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs). SCC had agreed, in principle, to meet all of the agreed capital costs and revenue set up and ongoing revenue start-up costs for the first two years of operation and would retain the income from on-street PCNs for that period. SCC was also paying for use of CCTV monitoring for DPE, subject to the results of a trial period. The introduction of DPE in Runnymede was currently programmed for early November 2004.

The Secretary of State's approval was required before DPE could be introduced in the Borough. A draft application had been made and initial comments returned. There appeared to be no significant difficulty in SCC receiving approval for the introduction of DPE to allow implementation in November 2004.

Under the current procedures, unpaid PCNs were brought before the Magistrates Court for prosecution and any fines imposed were retained by the Court with costs awarded to the Council. Under DPE the owner of a vehicle, and not necessarily the driver at the time, would be responsible for any PCNs incurred by the vehicle. If a person receiving a PCN claimed that they should not be fined and the Council did not accept their representations they would be given the opportunity to state their case to an independent adjudicator from the NPAS who would consider the evidence and decide whether the fine must be paid. SCC would keep the income from PCNs that had been paid.

A National Parking Adjudication Service (NPAS) had been established in Manchester to act as the independent adjudicator for local authorities outside London that were operating DPE. Officers had applied to the NPAS for the Borough to join this service. The Council had to nominate a representative and a substitute to serve on the NPAS Joint Committee, which met in January and June each year. Councillors Furey and Haas had been nominated for these posts. There was an annual registration fee of £250 to belong to the NPAS and a payment of £0.65 per PCN processed.

The Committee had approved the installation of a replacement computer system for handling PCNs at its meeting on 27 July 2004 with equipment supplied by Spur Solutions. The equipment had been ordered and arrangements were currently being made to supply and install the equipment during October.

The Economic Development Committee had approved the principle of entering into an Agency Agreement with SCC for the Borough Council to operate DPE and authorised the Director of Administration and Leisure, in consultation with the Committee Chairman, to negotiate and conclude an appropriate Agency Agreement. The DPE Agency Agreement between SCC and the Council would be reviewed after two years. After this review, SCC would be required to give a minimum of 12 months notice of cancellation of the agreement. Council and SCC Officers had been negotiating the terms of the Agreement and were close to agreeing these terms, subject to the approval of the Economic Development Committee Chairman.

An advertisement and leaflet explaining the process had been placed in the September edition of the Runnymede Business Partnership newsletter. Leaflets had been produced to be distributed to local organisations, such as Chambers of Commerce and residents associations and to be issued in public places. Press releases were also being issued. SCC Officers were looking at sites on the approach to the Borough and the main town centres for the erection of banners advertising the start of DPE. SCC had reviewed all of the Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) relating to parking restrictions, had advertised some changes and had reconciled all of these TRO's. SCC had assessed the relevant road markings and traffic signs for compliance with the TRO's and was currently carrying out any required changes. Council Officers were dealing with any required changes to the off-street Car Parking Orders.

The Committee had previously approved the recruitment of the additional staff needed to operate on-street decriminalised parking enforcement and the Borough's off-street car parks. This included a full-time Parking Manager, two additional parking attendants, a part-time Parking Technician and a part-time Administrative Assistant. All of these staff had now been recruited. It had previously been reported that SCC had agreed to contribute £2,000 to enhance the salary of an existing Officer to create the post of Parking Manager. Officers had since negotiated an enhanced contribution and SCC had agreed to pay for half of the salary costs for this post and the £2,000 supplement.

The report to the Committee on 27 July 2004 had also stated that approval for the proposed operational arrangements for existing parking attendants would be sought at a future Committee meeting. Negotiations including UNISON were continuing with existing parking attendants but needed to be concluded before the next Committee meeting. Approval was therefore given for delegation of authority to allow the Director of Technical Services to effect the necessary changes to establishment in consultation with the Corporate Management Committee Chairman. UNISON concurred with that course of action.

New and existing staff would shortly receive training in the legislation covering DPE and the issuing of PCNs and in the operation of the PCN operational and processing equipment. DPE staff would meet with local Surrey Police Officers and Community Support Officers to discuss

their respective roles and the operation of the Runnymede Borough Council /Police DPE Protocol.

**RESOLVED that -**

- i) the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to enter into an agreement with the National Parking Adjudication Service for the adjudication of Penalty Charge Notices, and Councillor Furey be appointed as representative and Councillor Haas be appointed as substitute representative to the NPAS Joint Committee; and**
- ii) the Director of Technical Services, in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Management Committee, be authorised to effect the necessary changes to establishment provision consequent on agreement with the existing parking attendants on their future terms and conditions of employment.**

256. IT HARDWARE - REPLACEMENT OF - UPDATE

At the Corporate Management Committee in July 2004 it had been decided that replacement PC monitors should only be flat panel where there was a Document Management System (DMS) or space requirement. A review had been carried out of each monitor to be replaced and DMS/space requirement criteria used to determine how it would be replaced. As a result of this exercise the number of flat panels required had been adjusted to 44 from the previous 85. These numbers had been reported verbally to the Information Strategy Working Member Group (ISWG) at their first meeting following the July Corporate Management decision. Selection of a Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) instead of a flat panel monitor had resulted in a saving of £100 per unit, thus delivering a projected underspend of £4,100 on the budget allocated. It was suggested that the remaining monitors might have their life extended so that the Council might take advantage of any changes in market prices. This course of action would be considered by Officers and the Chairman of the ISWG.

257. WRITE OFFS - NON-DOMESTIC RATES

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 discussions would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 7 of Schedule 12A of Part I of the Act.

**RESOLVED that -**

**the non-domestic rate arrears, totalling £1,487.54, be written off as irrecoverable.**

258. FUND MANAGERS - SELECTION OF

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 discussions would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 8 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Act.

Following consideration of a report on the performance of the Council's two fund managers on 1 April 2004, the Committee had decided to establish a Member Working Group to undertake a market testing exercise and recommend the selection of a fund manager. At the meeting of the Member Working Group held on 14 September 2004, it was recommended that Alliance Capital be appointed as the Council's new fund managers. The Committee noted details of the information which had been supplied to the Member Working Group, along with a record of the Working Group's discussion of the matter.

**RESOLVED that –**

**Alliance Capital be appointed as the Council's new fund managers, to replace Investec and Invesco.**

259. PURCHASE OF TWO DSO VEHICLES CURRENTLY ON LEASE HIRE

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.

The contracts for two Transit tipper trucks that the DSO currently leased expired at the end of October 2004. The DSO could acquire replacement vehicles on short-term leases until the new fleet vehicles were delivered in the summer of 2005, or they could take advantage of the leasing company's offer to sell the vehicles to the Council.

The Committee noted the costs of leasing the vehicles including chargeable repairs and the costs of buying the vehicles and their likely disposal value if sold next summer. Having considered this information, the Committee recommended purchase of the vehicles. There was no provision in the capital programme for this expenditure and therefore both capital programme provision and a capital estimate would need to be approved. The revenue implications could be met from within existing budgets.

**RECOMMEND that –**

- i) the purchase of the two Transit tipper vehicles on expiry of the leasing contracts at the end of October 2004 be approved; and**
- ii) capital programme provision and a capital estimate for the sum set out in the report to the Committee be approved for this purpose, to be financed from capital receipts.**

260. PLANNED AND REACTIVE MAINTENANCE MEASURED TERM CONTRACT – TENDERS

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.

The Committee was requested to approve the appointment of a company identified in the report as the most economically advantageous tenderer of the four contractors who had been invited to tender for the repair and maintenance contract.

The Council had historically undertaken routine maintenance and repair works by the use of a measured term contract (one under which the contractor was allocated the work during the contract period at rates which had been agreed in advance). The current repair and maintenance contract had been terminated by the contractor and a temporary contractor had been appointed to carry out reactive works until the appointment of a new contractor. Tenders had been invited for the award of a new term contract. The value of the works (estimated at £3.2m over 5 years for Planned and Reactive maintenance) required that the European Journal be used to seek expressions of interest from suitable contractors. At its meeting on 27 July 2004, the Committee had agreed that the contract should be for a period of two years with an option to extend up to five years if this was considered to be beneficial to both parties to the contract. Contract Standing Order C4.4 required that where the value of the contract exceeded £100,000, the replies from contractors be reported to Committee, who would choose at least four tenderers who appeared to offer the best chance of obtaining a satisfactory bid offering good value for money.

The Committee had resolved that the four contractors achieving the best score after evaluation by Officers be invited to tender for the repair and maintenance contract. Tender documentation had been accordingly despatched to those four companies. Three companies had returned

completed tender documentation and one of them did not make a bid. One of the companies had later withdrawn their bid. The Committee noted the tender analysis compiled by Officers. Visits had been undertaken to the operational locations of the companies, to assess their capacity to deliver the service. The sound operation of this contract was essential to the proper use and maintenance of the Council's assets, and to service delivery. Having considered references, operational locations, levels of detail provided in the tenders, and differences in prices, the Committee agreed that the company identified in the report should be appointed.

**RESOLVED that –**

**subject to contract, the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to accept the tender from the company identified in the report as the most economically advantageous and to enter into an appropriate form of agreement with that company.**

261. FORMER BEOMONDS ALLOTMENTS SITE – SOIL REMEDIATION

The acting Chairman agreed that this item be considered as a matter of urgency as it was necessary for Standing Orders to be waived to allow work to start before the onset of winter, otherwise the work would be delayed until late spring 2005 to avoid increased risk of spreading contamination in wet winter weather.

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.

The Committee's approval was sought to waive Standing Orders and appoint a selected contractor to carry out the remediation works to the former Beomonds allotment site without obtaining competitive tenders. Work was in hand to undertake remediation and clearance of the contaminants found at the site, for which a capital estimate had been approved. At its meeting on 16 September 2004, the Leisure and Environment Committee had declared the site to be surplus to requirements for allotment purposes.

The source of contamination had been identified as the material used to backfill an old pond on the Beomonds site. The remediation works would involve the removal by excavation, of approximately 1000m<sup>3</sup> of contaminated material and the backfilling of a similar volume of clean non-contaminated soil.

There was a need to carry out the excavation work as soon as possible as the ground water and river levels and the amount of rainfall were normally higher during the winter months. Exposing the contaminated material at that time could result in a greater risk of the contaminants being spread by those sources of water. A tender process would take several weeks to complete.

Capital programme provision existed for the excavation work in the sum of £80,000. The Council's Standing Orders stated that at least four tenders should be invited for contracts with an estimated value exceeding £30,000. A waiver of the relevant Standing Order would be needed if the Council were to award the Contract to a particular company without seeking tenders. The Committee compared the costs which would be incurred by a company identified in the report which proposed to undertake the excavation, with the costs of other methods of procurement. The Committee concluded that the company identified in the report would be more cost effective and would be capable of undertaking the work satisfactorily.

However, the Leisure and Environment Committee's decision that no further action be taken in respect of the construction of a proposed pond at Bourne Meadow, Chertsey, had been called in for consideration at the Council's Review Board at its meeting on 7 October. It had been envisaged that the soil from the Bourne Meadow site which would need to be excavated to create the pond might be used to fill in the hole resulting from the removal of the contaminated soil at the former Beomonds Allotments site. This would be significantly cheaper than using a landfill site.

In view of the interrelation of the pond and the soil remediation projects, concern had been expressed by some Members that the Review Board's consideration of the Bourne Meadow

pond issue might be prejudiced if a decision was taken on the method of dealing with Beomonds, in advance of that Review Board consideration.

A delay of a fortnight would not seriously affect any excavation works. The Review Board would have the power to make a recommendation to the Council meeting of 14 October regarding the pond.

The Committee therefore agreed to recommend its support for the soil remediation proposals to the Council meeting on 14 October, so that, subject to the Review Board's process, the Council could consider the question of the pond and the question of the soil remediation proposals together at the same meeting.

**RECOMMEND that -**

- i) Standing Order C2.5 be waived in order to award the contract for removing the contaminated soil and replacing it with uncontaminated soil to the company identified in the report thus achieving significant cost savings compared to other methods of procurement; and**
- ii) a capital estimate be approved for the work to be undertaken by the company identified in the report in the sum reported to the Committee.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.40 p.m.)