

Runnymede Borough CouncilSERVICES REVIEW BOARD12 February 2002 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Review Board present : Councillors P.B. Tuley (Vice-Chairman), Mrs.C.Y. Jones, F.J. Tourlamain and K.J.T. Walmsley

Members of the Review Board absent: Councillor E.C. Pattington

Councillors C.J. Norman, Ms C.M. Simmons, P.J. Waddell and G.B. Woodger also attended.

545. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The following Groups had notified the Chief Executive Officer of their wish that the changes listed below be made to the membership of the Review Board for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting. Thereafter the Councillors removed should be re-appointed.

Group Requesting Change	Remove from Membership	Appoint Instead
Conservative	Councillor P.J. Poole	Councillor Mrs C.Y. Jones
Runnymede Independent	Councillor Mrs L.M. Gillham	Councillor F.J. Tourlamain

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

546. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Review Board held on 11 October 2001 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

547. CULTURAL STRATEGY

(Ref: Minutes of Executive Committee 1 November 2000, page 875, para. 393, Community Services Review Board, 16 November 2000, page 912, para. 433 and Leisure and Environment Committee, 21 June 2001, page 120, para. 103)

The Board's views were sought on the draft Cultural Strategy. The Leisure and Environment Committee had agreed to the formulation of a Cultural Strategy in June 2001, with a view to i) stating priorities for facility and service development to assist in bids for external funding such as the National Lottery, ii) providing a basis against which local community groups could demonstrate the need for proposed facilities or service developments, iii) developing increased networking between local cultural organisations and iv) producing a framework for reviewing the Council's performance in the areas of culture defined by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The Council's Leader's Position Statement had also stated that the Strategy should address the range of leisure provision available and the areas where Council direct funding or support was provided. The Strategy was not a statutory requirement but was an Audit Commission Performance Indicator.

An Officers' group had been formed to look at areas in which an impact could be made and had drawn out themes itemised in the Strategy. Three versions of a questionnaire had been developed and sent to 200 members of the Residents' Panel, to known "umbrella groups" based

in Runnymede and to local business representatives. Regional, national and other local plans and strategies which informed and influenced the development of the Strategy in Runnymede had been reviewed. The results from the questionnaire were shown on pages 13 to 16 of the Strategy and draft action plans were shown on pages 17 to 25. The Strategy was in draft form and was intended to evolve. It built on existing work and made some recommendations for developments. The process had been constrained by time and resources and the draft was presented as an initial stage. It would be influenced by the pending Community Strategy, but the recommendations that were presented in this draft would also have an important role in informing the Community Strategy itself.

The main themes identified by the Strategy were young people, community safety, inclusion, leisure facilities, identity and promotion. No quantification of resource commitments in implementing the various actions had been undertaken as yet.

The Board made the following suggestions concerning the detail of the Strategy. The various pages of the Strategy are in brackets next to the suggestions below:-

- i) Television might be included within the definition of culture (page 2);
- ii) "Well developed transport infrastructure" be modified to reflect modest public transport facilities (especially rail) in the Borough (page 5);
- iii) Royal Holloway College's contribution to the Arts in terms of music and the Picture Gallery be added (Page 6);
- iv) The role of the Sports Council be amplified (page 6);
- v) River activities e.g. (Penton Park Marina and Wraysbury Skiff and Punting Club) be added (page 6);
- vi) Lists of Sports and Arts (including Drama) organisations, Council grant support for cultural activities, bed and breakfast accommodation and hotels and details of Duke of Edinburgh Award Schemes be included as Appendices (page 6);
- vii) Windsor be added to the list of large towns in the proximity (page 8);
- viii) A statement that most youth-related functions lie with the County Council and this Council has a supporting role be added (page 9);
- ix) The value of cross-borough initiatives be emphasised (page 11);
- x) The role of the Runnymede Business Partnership and the various Chambers of Commerce in promoting activities within the borough be emphasised (page 11);
- xi) An Appendix with a map showing locations of various visitor attractions (e.g. Wentworth, Runnymede, Thorpe Park, etc) be added (page 11);
- xii) An estimate of visitor numbers to the various attractions in the Borough be added (page 11).

The Board noted that the response rate from the Residents Panel (120 out of 200) had been encouraging. The 17 to 21 age bracket was the most difficult one from which to obtain responses. The Board suggested that Royal Holloway and Strode's College and Sports Drama and Arts Clubs, could be approached for further feedback. The Board made the following comments on the Action Plans:-

Youth

Regarding Action 2 (page 18) – the Council should consider ways of broadening its support to voluntary youth groups other than scouts and guides. Action 3 (page 19) "work with all agencies to develop diversionary activities for young people" might be the first action priority in this section. On a general point, the Board agreed that pressure should be brought to bear on other agencies for their facilities (e.g. youth clubs) to be utilised more frequently.

Inclusion

Although improvement of disabled access to local shops and offices was not a statutory responsibility of the Borough Council, the Board identified this as an area of the Strategy which would need attention by other agencies in order to comply with statutory requirements by 2004. (Action 1, page 21).

Community Safety

The Board identified the need for safety of students at Royal Holloway to be further examined, in discussion with the Principal, under the remit of the Crime and Disorder Working Group.

Leisure Facilities

It was suggested that action to promote drop-in facilities should not wait for the development of Surrey County Council's Connexions Services. (Action 2, page 23). "Encourage the growth of smaller Communities" was more of an economic Action which should be deleted from the Leisure Facilities Section. (Action 3, page 23).

Runnymede's Identity/Promotion

The harmonised accommodation scheme should include the objective of seeking lower cost accommodation, which could be fed into the Local Plan process. (Action 1, page 24). Magna Carta Trust should be added to the list of partners for the Guided Walks/Visitors Centre at Runnymede. (Action 2, page 24). The problem with a Visitors Centre was that in order for it to be self financing the whole Thames Meadow character of the area would change with considerably more traffic, whereas a more limited scheme would have implications for revenue budgets, as it would not generate sufficient profits. The Board also discussed consideration of the appointment of a public relations officer. It was noted that such an appointment did not necessarily mean a better profile and a better press. Considerable expertise was needed for such a role. It might be better and more cost effective to employ an agency for a particular item of work. Nevertheless, the matter should continue to be kept under review. (Action 2, page 25).

General Comments

The Board generally took the view that the Strategy, in order to be effective, needed to emphasise the vitality of Runnymede and engage with the Community (e.g. performing groups giving street performances in the borough as a condition of funding). The local media would have a crucial role in this. Ways might be explored of tapping in to the thousands of people who visited the Borough and the needs of the minority community within the Borough. The Authority needed to emphasise and articulate more fully the wide range of activities taking place within its boundaries. Competitions might be held with prizes to encourage young people to involve themselves in activities. More publicity was required on the resources which the Council made available for cultural activities. The Strategy was not just about those items which the Council wished to accomplish. It was also about identifying need which might be satisfied through other agencies, e.g. Surrey County Council, local business groups.

It was agreed that the Strategy should be adopted in an interim form, subject to incorporation of the comments which the Board had made, and that the revised version be submitted to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Board and the Leisure and Environment Committee and then resubmitted to the Board's next meeting. It was also agreed that the version of the plan incorporating the Leisure and Environment Committee's comments should be put on the Internet for comment and that the press be encouraged to publicise it widely, along with the message that the public's comments were welcomed.

The Board thanked the Projects and Support Manager (Leisure) for her hard work in preparing the Strategy.

RESOLVED that -

the Leisure and Environment Committee be asked to recommend

- i) the adoption of the draft Cultural Strategy in full as an interim document subject to the comments made by the Board and make further comments to be resubmitted to the Board at its next meeting; and**
- ii) that the findings of the draft Strategy and action plans be integrated into new policy developments across the Borough.**

548. RESPONSE TO TRAVELLER INCURSIONS

(Ref: Minutes of Council Meeting, October 2001, page 488, para. 330)

The Board looked at progress on each of the recommendations which had been agreed by the Council at its meeting in October 2001 regarding traveller incursions.

The Council had agreed that "the existing protocol to guide action in the event of traveller incursions be reviewed and broadened into a multi-agency agreement with contingency arrangements to manage large scale encampments." The existing protocol which was a procedural guide for dealing with unauthorised encampments had originally been agreed in 1997. This had been checked and was still compliant with the legislation and Central Government guidance for its implementation. Surrey Police agreed that the document remained accurate and could therefore be used as a working document pending preparation of the multi-agency agreement. The next stage would be to formalise existing arrangements with other agencies who had an input into the process of dealing with traveller incursions, which might take some time.

The Council had also agreed that "representations be made to the Government, through the Local Government Association, the Member of Parliament, and other appropriate channels, seeking changes in the legislation in order to enhance the enforcement powers of local authorities and the Police in respect of traveller incursions" and that "the Chief Executive Officer arrange a meeting with the Member of Parliament for the Runnymede and Weybridge constituency, the Chairman of the Services Review Board, and the Chairmen of the Planning and Leisure and Environment Committees to co-ordinate the lobbying activities on this issue."

In relation to both these points, a meeting had been held in December 2001 with the MP and relevant Chairmen. It was clear that, to receive political support from Central Government for greater powers to act against unauthorised incursions, pressure must concentrate on the most disruptive traveller elements rather than be seen as anti-traveller "per se". The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions in a News Release had confirmed that the Government was not complacent in recognising problems of unauthorised camping, especially criminal and anti-social behaviour and was particularly keen to ensure that full use was made of the current powers to tackle any criminal and anti-social behaviour which occurred. The meeting agreed that a strategy needed to be put in place to take this matter further. However, the lack of recent statements by the Government indicated that they were considering carefully whether they wished to legislate or take any further action on this matter.

The Council had also agreed that a leaflet be produced to inform residents and local businesses of the constraints presently imposed upon the Authority and Police in managing such incursions and discourage the practice of employing travellers engaged in unlicensed activities. This leaflet had been produced, and had been endorsed by the Police. It was intended to publicise this in the Council's Annual Report and make copies widely available for distribution through residents groups and other channels.

The Board commended the action taken.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the actions taken be endorsed; and**
- ii) it be agreed that matters have been taken as far as they can at this time.**

549. SCRUTINY OF FLOOD RESPONSE – AUTUMN 2000: FOLLOW UP ACTION
(Ref: Minutes of Council Meeting, February 2001, page 1403, para. 693)

Members were updated on the various recommendations that had been made by the Council following the scrutiny by the former Community Services Review Board of the Borough Council and other agencies' responses to the localised flooding incidents occurring in the Autumn of 2000.

The Council had agreed that the Environment Agency be encouraged to appoint Flood Wardens at all areas liable to flood in the Borough, including the Riverside Park and Rose Park Mobile Home sites, to provide a clear point of contact for the Emergency Services (Police, Fire and Rescue, and Ambulance Services) and the Council. Formal representation had been made to the Environment Agency on this matter. The Environment Agency wanted to focus primarily on direct warnings via their Automatic Voice Message System and did not have the resources for further appointments of Flood Wardens, save in wholly exceptional and targeted locations. The Environment Agency had published a Flood Directory and a pamphlet entitled "Would you like to receive a flood warning?", which were noted by the Board and had been distributed to the vulnerable mobile home sites previously identified in the report.

The Council had agreed that discussions take place with the residents of Riverside Park and the site owner on emergency procedures for the site and the identification of an emergency contact. A meeting had taken place on 31 July 2001 to which all seventy-seven residents of Riverside Park had been invited, together with the Park Owner. Eight residents had attended the meeting. Officers from the Council, together with representatives from the Environment Agency and Surrey Police, had also been present and the role of the respective agencies had been clarified.

Officers had been requested to liaise with the Environment Agency and Emergency Services in order that residents in flood risk areas could be provided with a list clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies involved, together with appropriate contact numbers. In addition to the action taken above, Officers were proposing to produce a half page information feature in the Council's Annual Report that was to be published in the mid year and circulated to all households in the Borough. This would briefly identify roles and relationships and contact telephone numbers. The roles and responsibilities were still not as well defined as the Council would wish, and it was agreed that the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Board draft a letter for the local MP, Mr Hammond, seeking further clarity from the Government on this.

Officers had also been asked to assess the cost implications of providing identification badges and Runnymede Borough Council jackets, to ensure Council Officers were more easily identifiable at incidents. This had not been immediately actioned because of the major loss of highway related activities in April 2002, as a result of the County Council's termination of the Highways Agency. Appropriate tabards with "Runnymede Borough Council" and jackets had been ordered, with costs contained within existing budgets.

Another Council recommendation was that appropriate Members be advised by telephone or e-mail of designated emergency situations that had been declared in the Borough or were likely to affect residents of the Borough. This had been put in place via Safer Runnymede and would be included in the procedural arrangements when the revised Emergency Plan was published in the next three months. The Safer Runnymede Manager was the representative of Surrey Districts on the project team working on a Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions funded "Pathfinder" project to improve communications in the event of a major incident. The project included development of a web site, "www.SurreyAlert.info". A further report would be submitted to Members when the results of the project became clearer.

The Council also sought an update on training needs of staff likely to be involved in emergency situations. A major review by Chief Officers had been undertaken and appropriate staff had visited the Home Office major incident Training Centre in Easingwold, Yorkshire. A range of local training sessions had also been put in place. Training would be on-going, particularly as staff turnover occurred. In addition, those staff fulfilling the key role of liaison officer at the scene of incidents also attended multi-agency training sessions organised by the Surrey County Council Emergency Planning Unit.

The Council had also recommended that the Emergency Services, Environment Agency and Thames Water be urged to review their present arrangements, both individually and in consultation with each other, and the Council, as regards preparation for and response to incidents of flooding. The Environment Agency had produced a report in March 2001 entitled "Lessons Learned" relating to the Autumn 2000 floods. In addition, Surrey County Council Emergency Planning, together with the eleven Boroughs and Districts, Surrey Police and others, had commenced a review. This had not yet been concluded, because of some disagreement as to roles and relationships between the agencies, and the fact that the Government itself was undertaking a detailed review on emergency planning, including the arrangements for future funding. The letter to the MP proposed above could be included as part of the Council's input to that review.

The Council also requested that the possibility of installing notice boards at key flood risk locations throughout the Borough be proposed to the Environment Agency and the outcome be reported to Members. Following work carried out by Environmental Health staff, flood warning notices had now all been posted by site owners at the various mobile home sites throughout the Borough, to ensure they fully complied with the Caravan Site Licence Requirements.

The Board commended the action taken.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the actions taken be endorsed; and**
- ii) it be agreed that matters have been taken as far as they can at this time, subject to the drafting of a letter to the MP as described in the preamble to this resolution.**

550. ENFORCEMENT OF PLANNING CONTROL - PROGRESS REPORT

The Board noted the progress report on enforcement of planning control as at 18 January 2002. The present position at Padd Farm and Willow Farm was explained. It was confirmed that the progress report consisted of the list of sites at which formal action had been taken, 100 enforcement complaints having already been received this year. The number of complaints were high as the public knew they would be investigated. The Board was pleased to note that a number of sites previously appearing on the progress report no longer appeared on it, which meant that the issues had been resolved.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.45 p.m.)