

Runnymede Borough Council
CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 3 October 2002, at 7.30 p.m.

in the Council Chamber
at the Civic Offices, Addlestone



Members of the Committee

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

and all other Members for information

A G E N D A

Notes:

- i) Any report on the Agenda involving confidential information (as defined by section 100A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972) must be discussed in private. Any report involving exempt information (as defined by section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972), whether it appears in Part 1 or Part 2 below, may be discussed in private but only if the Committee so resolves.
- ii) The relevant 'background papers' are listed after each report in Part 1. Enquiries about any of the Agenda reports and background papers should be directed in the first instance to **Mr. J. Gurmin, Committee Section, Borough Secretary's and Leisure Services Department, Civic Offices, Station Road, Addlestone (Tel. Direct Line: 01932 425624).**
- iii) Agendas and Minutes are available on a subscription basis. For details, please ring Mr. B.A. Fleckney on 01932 425620.
- iv) In the unlikely event of an alarm sounding, members of the public should leave the building immediately, either using the staircase leading from the public gallery or following other instructions as appropriate.

COMMITTEE SECTION



LIST OF MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

PART I

Matters in respect of which reports have been made available for public inspection

	<u>Page</u>
1. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP	3
2. MINUTES	3
3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	3
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	3
5. LEADER'S POSITION STATEMENT	3
6. REVENUE FORECAST AND TARGET BUDGET	3
7. 'THE WAY FORWARD FOR HOUSING CAPITAL FINANCE' - CONSULTATION PAPER	3
8. DRAFT COMMUNITY STRATEGY	10
9. REFERENCE FROM LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (1)	12
10. WRITE OFFS	12
11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC	13

PART II

Matters involving Exempt or Confidential Information in respect of which reports have not been made available for public inspection.

	<u>Page</u>
a) <u>Exempt Information</u>	
12. CIVIC OFFICES MEMBER WORKING GROUP MINUTES	14
13. REPLACEMENT OF THE FINANCIAL INFORMATION SYSTEM – MARKET EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS	14
14. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES (2)	20

b) Confidential Information

(No reports to be considered under this heading)

1. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

2. MINUTES

To confirm and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 September 2002 (attached at Appendix 'A') (to follow).

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

If Members have an interest in an item please record the interest on the form circulated with this Agenda and hand it to the Legal Representative or Committee Administrator at the start of the meeting. A supply of the form will also be available from the Committee Administrator at meetings.

Members who have previously declared interests which are recorded in the Minutes to be considered at this meeting need not repeat the declaration when attending the meeting. Members need take no further action unless the item in which they have an interest becomes the subject of debate, in which event the Member must leave the room, if the interest is personal and prejudicial.

5. LEADER'S POSITION STATEMENT

To follow.

6. REVENUE FORECAST AND TARGET BUDGET (COMT)

To consider the revenue forecast covering the period up to the 2005/06 financial year and to recommend a target budget for 2003/04 as set out at Appendix 'B' circulated separately with this Agenda.

(TO RECOMMEND)

Background Papers

None

7. 'THE WAY FORWARD FOR HOUSING CAPITAL FINANCE' - CONSULTATION PAPER (BT)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **To propose a response to the Government Consultation Paper on 'The Way Forward For Housing Capital Finance'.**

2. Background Information

2.1 In December 2001 the Government published its Local Government White Paper, '*Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Service*'. This Paper set out proposals for a reform of the Local Government finance regime, including the removal of the requirement for central Government approval before Councils could borrow and the introduction of a new prudential borrowing regime. Proposals were also made for the simplification of the housing finance regime, including the introduction of a new housing capital pooling regime to replace the current housing set-aside arrangements.

2.2 In June 2002 the Government published for consultation a draft Local Government Bill to give effect to those proposals in the White Paper which require new primary legislation. The proposals in this Consultation Paper are closely related to the draft Local Government Bill, in particular to Clause 10 of the Bill. The contents of the Bill were given detailed consideration by a Member Working Group and a copy of its response to the Government is attached at Appendix 'C'.

2.3 Runnymede is a "debt free" Authority under the present capital control system. Authorities that have housing debts currently have to set-aside a proportion of their housing capital receipts as a provision to repay debt. Therefore, the requirement to set-aside receipts currently does not apply to Runnymede.

3. Report

Consultation Process

- 3.1 A copy of the Consultation Paper has been placed in the Members' Room. Comments are sought by Friday 18 October 2002.
- 3.2 The Consultation Paper deals with two specific proposals surrounding the introduction of the new housing capital finance regime:
- Operation of the proposed housing capital receipts pooling regime; and
 - The future of the Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG).
- 3.3 The Consultation Paper also seeks to start a debate on options for a radical reform of the Housing Revenue Account capital finance regime. Here the Department has no specific proposals to float and wishes to provoke a wide-ranging debate.
- 3.4 The Housing and Community Services Committee received a similar report at their meeting held on 11 September 2002. The comments made by Members at that Committee have been reflected in the suggested responses to the Government proposal in this report.
- 3.5 Runnymede is a supporter of the 'Capital Receipts Group', a cross-party group of debt free authorities, that has been established to oppose Clause 10 of the draft Local Government Bill. The response of the Capital Receipts Group is relevant to Runnymede's position and is attached at Appendix 'D'.

The Government's Proposals

- 3.6 The Paper lists a number of particular questions on which views are requested. The report sets out the points made in the Consultation Paper, followed by Officer comments (printed in italics), and then the suggested response (printed in bold).

Capital Receipts Pooling

- 3.7 The Government states that the housing capital receipts pooling regime is intended to be a simpler and more flexible successor to the current housing set-aside system. It should be noted that the Government sees the ownership and use of HRA (Housing Revenue Account) assets in a different way to that traditionally adopted by Councillors. The Consultation Paper states that:

"Most HRA assets have been funded in large part by Central Government subsidies and it is therefore reasonable that a substantial proportion of the proceeds of disposals should be recouped by Central Government and used to fund spending where the need is greatest."

- 3.8 Debt-free Authorities like Runnymede currently have significant flexibility as to the use of capital receipts from housing disposals and are, in effect, excluded from participation in any re-distributive mechanism. The Government proposals would change this position. The Consultation Paper states that in many cases the relative need of debt-free Authorities to spend is less than that of Authorities with debt. The Government therefore proposes that the new capital receipts pooling regime would apply to all Councils. This part of the consultation is about the detail of how the new capital receipts pooling regime should be applied, not whether it should be extended to debt-free Authorities.
- 3.9 The Government states that the current 75% set-aside rate (for Authorities with debt) for sales of HRA dwellings does not encourage the active management of that asset base. There is little incentive, for instance, to replace elements of the stock with either more modern or attractive properties (e.g. in areas of low demand) or with dwellings better suited to the delivery of good quality housing. On the other hand, the re-distributive mechanism that set-aside underpins is essential if the current level of support is to be provided to more needy Authorities without increasing public expenditure.

- 3.10 The Government therefore suggests distinguishing between receipts from disposals which a local authority has chosen to make and Right to Buy (RTB) receipts, which are not the result of any decision by the Authority. The Government does not propose to make any change to the current treatment of transfer receipts (for either debt-free or with-debt Authorities) although the LSVT (Large Scale Voluntary Transfer) levy would probably be put into the capital receipts pool.
- 3.11 Therefore the Government proposes that Right to Buy receipts would be subject to pooling. Other proceeds would not be pooled, provided they were used either to replace existing HRA assets with accommodation that was better suited to today's needs or to fund new social or affordable housing in areas of housing need.

Officer Comment

- 3.12 *The Member Working Group and the Capital Receipts Group of Authorities have already expressed their opposition to the sequestration of capital receipts. At the Housing and Community Services meeting Members were keen that the absolute opposition of the Council towards the Government proposals was emphasised and that the Government was left in no doubt as to this opinion.*
- 3.13 *There is a suggestion from the Consultation Paper that the Government is prepared to distinguish between types of capital receipt in calculating the proportion payable to the pool. It seems probable that the Government will require Councils to pay a proportion of RTB receipts to the pool. The likely rate of the contribution would seem to be set quite high, possibly the 75% rate currently used in the set aside arrangements. This is very unwelcome as it removes a source of capital from the Council (reducing ability to spend and investment income).*
- 3.14 *There is a possibility that the Government is considering that other receipts might not be subject to the pooling arrangements. This appears to be a relaxation of the proposals and would allow the Council to manage land sales without the encumbrance of having to pay a proportion of receipts to the Government. This would allow initiatives such as estate redevelopments, better use of unpopular assets (e.g. garages), and other asset management opportunities to be carried out without a Government levy.*
- 3.15 *The suggested response repeats the points made by the Member Working Group, with particular emphasis on the Housing Service. The Government assertions that most HRA assets have been funded in large part by Central Government and that the relative need of debt free authorities to spend is lower than with-debt authorities are strongly challenged.*
- 3.16 *The suggested comments also aim to encourage the Government to keep the pooling rules as simple as possible and to maximise local discretion.*

i) **Consultation Issue 1**

The proposal that certain types of receipt should be exempted from pooling provided they are used for specified purposes.

ii) **Consultation Issue 2**

Which receipts should be excluded from pooling under such a system?

Suggested Response

The Council strongly objects to the proposal that the Council should pay an unspecified proportion of its capital receipts to the Secretary of State. The reasons for this were previously set out in the Council's response to the draft Local Government Bill (copy attached at Appendix 'C').

The Government proposals represent a major shift away from local authority and towards the central control of local assets. This does not reconcile with

the Government's policies to encourage local authorities to manage assets in a holistic way. It also directly contradicts policies that seek to deal with cross-cutting measures that involve the use of housing assets to, for instance, achieve long term benefits for the overall community.

The assertion that most HRA assets have been funded in large part by Central Government is strongly challenged. Runnymede has not received either capital or revenue Government support for housing for many years. Indeed, a significant proportion of the stock has been built up using local resources including substantial sums provided by tenants. These resources should remain in the locality. It would be palpably unfair for these resources to be sequestered by the Government to be used in other parts of the country.

Debt free authorities are usually in areas of high demand for social housing. These demands are particularly acute in areas like Runnymede where the opportunity for low income families and individuals to enter into home ownership are very limited. Housing for key worker groups is also much in demand. Appropriation of local assets will mean that the opportunities to provide much needed local housing will be considerably reduced. Indeed, the ability to use receipts to lever in other resources (eg through shared ownership schemes and/or working with Registered Social Landlords to lever in private finance) means that any transfer of receipts to the Government will result in a disproportionate reduction in the Council's ability to provide social housing.

The Government methodology for distributing central housing resources does not recognise the needs in high demand areas like Runnymede.

The latest housing needs survey for the Runnymede area calculates that 750 new units of affordable housing are required to meet need over the current five year period (i.e. an average 150 units a year). The expected contribution from the current Approved Development Programme allocations towards this target will only meet 10% of the need. Although Government programmes such as key worker initiatives will also assist, the bulk of the units required will need to be met through the use of the Council's resources. Removing resources from the Runnymede area will inevitably mean that housing needs are not met unless equivalent Government support is redirected back to the area (this would therefore be a confusing and meaningless circulation of funds).

The long term implications of not meeting housing need in the Runnymede area will inevitably be that the costs of homelessness and other support services for disadvantaged groups will increase. A consequence of this will be that local taxation will have to increase to fund these costs, unless Government support is redirected back to the area. The long term consequences of the proposals for areas like Runnymede have not been recognised or thought through by the Government in the Consultation Paper.

iii) **Consultation Issue 3**

What limitations should there be on the expenditure on which excluded receipts might be spent?

Suggested Response

There should be no limitations as this would inevitably restrict the ability of local Authorities to meet the main priorities affecting its area. Local Authorities should be trusted to use local resources to meet the needs of communities. The framework of local elections, the Community Strategy, the Housing Strategy and Best Value Inspections and other national and local programmes sets a framework that meets this aim. Any imposition of limitations would restrict this freedom to act in the best interests of the community and would also give rise to perverse incentives to act in certain ways. It would also be very difficult to frame any limitations in a way that

would enable them to be easily understood and administratively straightforward.

Pooling Rate

- 3.17 Broadly speaking, the current set-aside rates are 75% for HRA dwellings and 50% for other HRA assets. The Consultation Paper points out that any reduction from the current rates would mean a lower amount of central resources for capital expenditure unless public expenditure were to be allowed to rise. The Department therefore proposes that the current rates should be retained and would apply to all Councils. The current arrangements for setting-off certain administrative costs incurred could continue to apply.

Officer Comment

- 3.18 *The suggested response reinforces the points made to the Government in the responses to the Local Government Bill. The aim of the suggested response is to influence the Government to impose a lower rate than 75% on RTB receipts. The suggested response also makes a plea for clarity in the rules that the Government will need to set to introduce pooling.*

iv) **Consultation Issue 4**

Views are invited on the pooling rates that should apply.

Suggested Response

The Council does not agree that pooling would be fair and therefore has no comment to make on pooling rates.

Capital receipts pooling mechanism

- 3.19 The Paper explains options for pooling of capital receipts for Authorities with housing debt and for debt-free Authorities. The Paper proposes that the pool be used for housing investment purposes and distributed through the Housing Investment Programme (HIP) and Approved Development Programme (ADP). As now, it is envisaged that decisions will be made in each Spending Review on how much the Exchequer should add to the pooled receipts.

Officer Comment

- 3.20 *Much of these arrangements are of a technical nature. The transfer of local receipts to a Government pool is an increase in central control. The Government has stated that it sees this as a process for transferring receipts from rich to poor areas. Given this policy statement, it is difficult to see that the Runnymede area will receive much back from the pool despite the acknowledged high demand for housing in the area.*

v) **Consultation Issue 5**

Comments are invited on these proposals.

Suggested Response

None.

Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG)

- 3.21 Local Authority Social Housing Grant is a mechanism by which local Authorities help support the provision of new social housing by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). This approach has the advantage that RSLs can use the resources to lever in private funding (borrowing) with the result that more houses can be built for a given amount of public expenditure than if the Councils were to acquire new housing themselves. It also contributes to greater choice and competition in the provision of social housing. Councils normally have a right to nominate the tenants that occupy homes built through LASHG.

- 3.22 The mechanics of the current LASHG system are complex, involving a loan by the local authority to the RSL, and a repayment of that loan by the Housing Corporation. LASHG is subject to the same provisions as to eligibility, assessment, regulation and monitoring etc as the Corporation determines for SHG (Social Housing Grant).
- 3.23 Current local authority capital finance arrangements require Authorities to set aside 100% of the repayment made by the Housing Corporation as provision for credit liabilities. This means that it may only be used for certain prescribed purposes, primarily repayment of debt. If the Authority is debt free, the set-aside requirement is effectively waived, and the Council is free to use the repayment for any capital spending, apart from another loan to an RSL which would generate further LASHG.
- 3.24 The Government sees little merit in seeking to perpetuate such a complex regime, assuming the introduction of the new, simplified capital finance system. Options might include:
- Providing resources through the ADP (Approved Development Programme) in the normal way; this would enable the resources to be directed to support the priorities in the Regional Housing Statements which are produced in each region by regional and local stakeholders including local Authorities.
 - Replacing LASHG with a regime in which local Authorities made grants to RSLs. This would not require any form of repayment from the Housing Corporation or any other body. Such an arrangement would be outside the provisions of Section 18 of the Housing Act 1996, but Authorities might be expected to consult the Housing Corporation on applications for grant made by RSLs, development proposals, grant rates etc. In considering bids from RSLs, the Department would also expect Authorities to have regard to the priorities established in the Regional Housing Statement and their own housing strategies.

Officer Comment

- 3.25 *The rules surrounding LASHG are complex and not widely understood. However they have enabled Runnymede to attract large sums of Government money into the area to support new social housing provision. To the extent that direct ADP finance replaces LASHG there would be no change to this arrangement.*
- 3.26 *However, there seems little likelihood that the amount of ADP would compensate for the loss of LASHG under these proposals. This is especially so in high demand areas like Runnymede where the method of distributing national capital resources does not recognise this need. This means that Runnymede would have considerably lower capital resources for new affordable housing schemes under these proposals. The table below shows the actual and projected level of ADP and LASHG support for RSLs in Runnymede over recent years and estimated for future years:*

Support to RSLs in Runnymede through ADP and LASHG funding		
Financial Year	ADP	LASHG
	£000	£000
2000/01 (actual)	1,004	6,217
2001/02 (actual)	945	4,737
2002/03 (estimated)	1,180	5,786
2003/04 (estimated)	1,000	5,988
2004/05 (estimated)	1,000	5,300
Total	5,129	28,028

- 3.27 *The table shows that the amount of ADP would have to increase by around 5 times to meet the removal of LASHG funding. This seems highly unlikely. It would be difficult to see how Runnymede could meet affordable housing targets should the current LASHG system be discontinued.*

vi) **Consultation Issue 6**

Comments are invited on these proposals.

Suggested Response

The proposal to replace the LASHG arrangements is not supported.

Despite the complexity of the current regime, LASHG does allow Authorities in high demand areas the ability to provide affordable housing. It encourages partnership working between local Authorities and RSLs at a local level and is effective in generating small scale but important schemes that meet real local needs.

There seem very few incentives for local Authorities to support RSLs under a regime where outright grants are the only option. The cost to local Authorities would be considerable in terms of interest lost on receipts and use of scarce local capital resources. Given the current demands and constraints on local authority revenue and capital budgets, it is difficult to see that many cash grants would be made to RSLs.

Other Options For Reform

3.28 The housing capital funding arrangements are by far the most complex part of the HRA. The Consultation Paper invites ideas on:

- Different approaches to providing support for HRA capital investment; and
- Options for dealing with debt servicing costs in the HRA.

Officer Comment

3.29 *Whilst the opportunity for debate is welcome, the desire of the Government to keep strict control over the local authority role in housing means that the benefit of such changes is limited to administrative or marginal improvements. Therefore, the different approaches to providing support for HRA capital investment are very much subservient to the mechanism by which the Government distributes the resources it devotes to housing capital. The options for dealing with debt servicing costs are not very relevant to the debt-free position of the Runnymede HRA.*

Suggested Response

None.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 It is clear that in their current form the proposals will involve redistribution of resources away from Authorities like Runnymede to areas assessed as being in greater need.
- 4.2 The first year of implementation of the pooling regime would be 2004/05, assuming that the Government makes the necessary legislative changes in time. The tables below show the estimated housing capital receipts from 2004/05 onwards and the potential transfer of capital receipts to the Government pool based on various scenarios:

Based on 75% of RTB and 50% of other capital receipts transferred to the pool					
Year	Housing Capital Receipts		Contribution to the National Pool		
	RTB	Other	RTB	Other	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
2004/05	1,850	75	1,387	38	1,425
2005/06	1,850	1,075	1,387	519	1,906

Based on 75% of RTB capital receipts only transferred to the pool					
Year	Housing Capital Receipts		Contribution to the National Pool		
	RTB	Other	RTB	Other	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
2004/05	1,850	75	1,387	0	1,387
2005/06	1,850	1,075	1,387	0	1,387

- 4.3 The implications of the new regime on the General Fund will be factored into the forthcoming financial forecast. The main immediate impact on the General Fund would be the loss of investment income on capital receipts transferred to the Government. Further costs may arise if Government capital resources granted to the Runnymede area under the new regime are insufficient to meet local needs. These costs may include making cash grants to RSLs to support new housing schemes and higher homelessness provision if affordable housing becomes even scarcer.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The implementation of all of these proposals will require some changes to primary legislation.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The Government seems intent on the capital receipts pooling proposals and they will almost certainly be less beneficial to the Council than the current arrangements.
- 6.2 The long-term prognosis for the level of capital resources available for the provision of affordable housing is unfavourable. The removal of the LASHG mechanism will almost certainly mean that the level of Government funding in Runnymede will be reduced. This will have a serious negative impact on housing strategy and the ability to meet housing needs targets. It also comes at a time when the demand for additional housing for vulnerable groups, the homeless and key workers has never been greater.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

the comments made in this report form the basis of the Council's response together with any others this Committee resolves to make.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Letter from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister dated 2 August 2002 on 'The Way Forward for Housing Capital Finance' together with the accompanying Consultation Paper.

8. DRAFT COMMUNITY STRATEGY (CEO)
(Ref: Minutes of the Corporate Management Committee, October 2001, page 450, para 291; November 2001, page 505, para 352; May 2002, page 17, para 41)
1. Purpose of Report
- 1.1 **This report updates Members on progress in developing the Council's Community Strategy and recommends that the draft Strategy (Appendix 'E') be adopted. Targets for the section entitled "A Runnymede That Has An Exciting Future" will be tabled at the meeting.**
2. Background Information
- 2.1 The Local Government Act 2000 includes the statutory obligation for all local authorities to prepare a Community Strategy for their area. Members were informed of the statutory duty and its implications at the meeting of the Corporate Management Committee on 4 October 2001.

- 2.2 The Local Government Act Member Working Group amended the timetable for implementation and recommended the use of consultants for the main consultation event. The Corporate Management Committee agreed the recommendations of the Member Working Group at its November 2001 meeting.
- 2.3 All Members were invited to a briefing session, at the request of the Member Working Group, where Officers outlined the process of implementing the Community Strategy and gave Members the opportunity to engage with this process. 19 Members were able to attend.
- 2.4 The previous Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) referring to the development of the Community Strategy for 2001/2002 has now been changed to the year 2002/2003 to limit ambiguity and to allow Local Authorities to demonstrate progress in developing their Community Strategies. The Committee was informed of these proposed changes at its meeting on 6 December 2001.
- 2.5 A progress report on the Community Strategy was put to the Corporate Management Committee on 30 May 2002.
- 2.6 As has been stressed previously by the emerging Strategy, task group targets and outcomes require input both in the short and long term from a range of statutory agencies (e.g. Police, Health bodies, Surrey County Council) and other community stakeholders (e.g. business, voluntary and charitable groups) not just the Borough Council. The Strategy document and proposed follow up actions must therefore be seen as a collaborative community endeavour with a range of responsibilities for delivery.

3. Progress

- 3.1 Runnymede Borough Council has undertaken four steps in the implementation process to develop a Community Strategy:-
 - Step 1: A knowledge building exercise
 - Step 2: Consultation exercise
 - Step 3: Develop a Local Strategic Partnership
 - Step 4: Develop a draft Community Strategy.
- 3.2 Previous reports to the Corporate Management Committee have outlined the first two steps in the implementation process.
- 3.3 Step 3 involved the establishment of a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The LSP has now met three times. The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen from each of the designated Task Groups as well as the three Councillors appointed by the External Appointments Sub-Committee are members of the partnership.
- 3.4 The LSP has now named itself 'A Partnership for Runnymede'. The full membership list is detailed at Appendix 'F'.
- 3.5 'A Partnership for Runnymede' and the Task Groups have now approved a draft of the Community Strategy. It is anticipated that the formal launch of the strategy will be in early November 2002.
- 3.6 It is proposed that two versions of the Strategy will be produced. The first version will be a comprehensive document for internal use and for partners. It is suggested that a second 'popular' pamphlet style version for the general public be scrutinised and approved by the Chief Executive Officer, subject to the agreement of Local Government Act Member Working Group, before distribution.
- 3.7 A web page is being developed to publicise the Community Strategy and provide an information centre for the work being carried out. Both versions of the Strategy will be on the website, with links provided to the partner organisations.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There have been significant opportunity costs (from Members and Officers) in the preparation of the Community Strategy, support of Task Groups and the LSP. These have

been contained within the existing staffing provision. Printing and distribution of the Strategy document and summary can be contained within various corporate budgets.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

- i) the draft comprehensive Community Strategy for Runnymede be approved;**
- ii) subject to the agreement of the Local Government Act Member Working Group, the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to approve and publish the summary version of the Strategy document; and**
- iii) the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make any necessary editorial drafting changes to the Strategy before final publication.**

(TO RECOMMEND)

Background Papers

Runnymede Community Strategy file 69.23.17
Local Strategic Partnerships file 69.24

9. REFERENCE FROM LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (BSLSO)

THORPE CEMETERY REFURBISHMENT

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2001, page 625, para. 394)

At its meeting on 19 September 2002 the Leisure and Environment Committee was informed that the condition of the gravel paths and car park surface at Thorpe Cemetery had deteriorated over time. The Committee accordingly agreed that the following refurbishment works should be undertaken:

- i) Reinstatement of the gravel paths, including the incorporation of timber edging to tidy the uneven grass margins.
- ii) Creation of a natural stone paving feature at the intersection of the two gravel paths, in place of an existing grass circle.
- iii) Levelling of the car park surface and removal of the railway sleepers marking the parking bays. The railway sleepers would be re-positioned to form an edge to the grass banking.

Since there is currently no budgetary provision for the above scheme, this Committee is asked to approve a supplementary revenue estimate in the region of £8,000 to fund the above works.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

a supplementary revenue estimate of £8,000 be approved to fund the Thorpe Cemetery refurbishment works.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None

10. WRITE-OFFS (BT)

1. Council Tax

- 1.1 Set out at Appendix 'G' is a schedule containing three cases that are in excess of £1,000, totalling £5,981.91. These have proved to be irrecoverable for the reasons shown. Authority is sought to have the debts written off. They will then be passed to Credit G Limited to recover on the Council's behalf.

2. Non-Domestic Rates

- 2.1 Set out at Appendix 'H' is a schedule containing four cases that are in excess of £1,000, totalling £6,404.34. These have proved to be irrecoverable for the reasons shown. Authority is sought to have the debts written off. They will then be passed to Credit G Limited to recover on the Council's behalf.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

- i) the Council tax arrears, totalling £5,981.91 as detailed in Appendix 'G', be written off as irrecoverable; and**
- ii) the non-domestic rates arrears totalling £6,404.34 as detailed in Appendix 'H', be written off as irrecoverable.**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Borough Treasurer's Council Tax write-off file (exempt)
Borough Treasurer's Non-Domestic Rates write-off file (exempt)

11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

the press and public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following reports under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the reports in question would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraphs 7, 8, 9 and 12 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

(TO RESOLVE)

PART II

Matters involving Exempt or Confidential information in respect of which reports have not been made available for public inspection

a) <u>Exempt Information</u>	<u>Para</u>
12. CIVIC OFFICES MEMBER WORKING GROUP MINUTES	7 and 8
13. REPLACEMENT OF THE FINANCIAL INFORMATION SYSTEM - MARKET EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS	9
14. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES	7, 8, 9 and 12
b) <u>Confidential Information</u>	
(No reports to be considered under this heading)	