

RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL
SUPPLEMENTARY COUNCIL SUMMONS
16 OCTOBER 2003

8. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

ii) Corporate Management Committee – 2 October 2003 and
Review Board – 9 October 2003

a) LEADER'S POSITION STATEMENT 2004/05

Corporate Management Committee – 2 October 2003

The Committee received the Position Paper for 2004/05 from the Leader of the Council. The Statement had altered slightly in style and aimed to take account of all the strategies that had recently been agreed, and where possible to link them together. The Statement was still in draft form and required further amendment to take into account comments by Members generally and other consultees.

The following suggestions were made regarding possible amendments to the Statement :-

1. Page 2, penultimate line, to read "amenity or interest groups".
2. Deletion of the last sentence of the fourth paragraph of the Foreword (page 3) and substitution with:-

"In particular the pooling of capital receipts from Right-To-Buy sales of Council houses, is likely to cost Runnymede in excess of £1 million a year when fully implemented. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill proposes a new planning framework developing the role of the Regional Planning bodies and the replacement of the current County Structure Plans and Local Borough Plans by new Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks in district authorities."
3. The extent of financial support to groups (approximately £400,000) should be included in the last bullet point on page 6, with it being made clear that support is also provided in other ways which are not financial;
4. Strategic Objectives on page 7 should include maintenance of objectives as well as striving for further improvement;
5. Use of material from the IEG Statement should be considered at page 9, paragraph 1.1.1.
6. Page 9, paragraph 1.1.3 - delete "consistent service delivery targets" and substitute "better service delivery targets".
7. Page 10, Paragraph 1.3.1 second sentence to be amended to read:-

"We will also work with Surrey County Council and its Local Area Committee to develop partnership working where mutual benefit can be demonstrated".
8. Page 10, paragraph 1.3.2 to be amended to read :-

"We will oppose the development of a directly elected South East England Regional Assembly as proposed by Government requiring the abolition of our current County Council and District authorities and the formation of new unitary authorities".

9. Page 14, Housing and Community Services Committee – In the section on matters that the Housing Strategy must take into account, quotes could be used from relevant documents such as the Regional Housing Body Draft Strategy, the Surrey Structure Plan and the Local Borough Plan. It may be premature to quote the Local Development Framework in this section and if it is to be referred to it might be in the context of Housing and Community Services input to the proposed Local Development Framework.
10. Page 15, paragraph 3.1.2.2 – Reword to avoid the implication that DIYSO is supported by the Government.
11. Page 15, paragraph 3.1.4.1 - make clear that the item in italics is the Government's definition of key workers.
12. Page 15, paragraph 3.1.5.1 - Amend so range of housing alternatives and benefits are provided "through" not "by" the Council.
13. Page 16, paragraph 3.4.1.2 - to be amended to read - "We shall continue, within the bounds of affordability, to support our high level of discretionary Community Services to reinforce and to complement the County Council Social Service, for the benefit of our elderly and vulnerable residents".
14. Page 18, paragraph 4.1.3 - 1st sentence to read - "We will continue to provide additional bins for dog fouling until they are available in all Wards".
15. Page 18, paragraph 4.1.4 to be amended to read:-

"We will fulfil our statutory duties and form a Licensing Committee to comply with the proposed Licensing Act, under which very substantial additional responsibilities for licensing public houses, etc. are being placed upon us, and we will seek additional funding to support the costs of providing this service."
16. Page 18, paragraph 4.3.2 - second line - "remove" should read "removed".
17. Page 18, at paragraph 4.3.3 include reference to the fact that the environment for residents when the widening of the M25 takes place, must be protected;
18. Page 20, paragraph 4.8.1 - First sentence to read - "we will continue to encourage the relocation of the Swan Sanctuary to a new site."
19. Page 21, paragraph 5.1.1 - First sentence - "Transport Authority" to read "Highways and Transportation Authority";

The following suggestions were made for subjects to be added to the Statement :-

1. The Council's opposition to Central Railway and support for Airtrack.
2. Mention should be made of the uncertainty caused by the withdrawal of the Local Authority Social Housing Grant and the impact this may have on the Council's ability to provide social housing.
3. The Council's opposition to any possible Motorway Service Area at Simplemarsh Farm.

4. More might be included on measures regarding flooding and the role of the Flood Risk Advisory Groups.
5. Explanation of how the Council's finances had been adversely affected by Government policies.

The Leader undertook to consider whether these amendments and additions should be incorporated together with others which might be made by the Review Board and others. The Review Board's comments are attached at Appendix '1' and an amended version of the Position Paper is attached at Appendix '2'.

RECOMMEND that -

subject to consideration of any comments by Members generally, other consultees and other drafting amendments agreed by the Leader,

- i) the Position Paper for 2004/2005 be approved as Council policy;**
- ii) the contents of the paper be reflected in the Best Value Performance Plan for 2004/05; and**
- iii) Officers be instructed to take the Position Paper into account in developing service targets.**

(Councillor P.A. Greenwood requested to be recorded as having voted against Recommendations i) to iii) above, in accordance with Standing Order 25.3).

b) FINANCIAL FORECAST

Corporate Management Committee – 2 October 2003

The Committee considered the Financial Forecast covering the period up to the 2008/09 financial year and the target budget for 2004/05 and noted an estimated breakdown of the 2003/04 budget between statutory and discretionary spending.

The Committee noted and recommended the General Fund Forecast on the Forecast balance of receipts and reserves, developments which were Government driven and Council approved, the proposed Council Tax, proposed General Fund spending and the Housing Revenue Account and Housing Capital Programme which had been drawn up in accordance with the decisions of the Housing and Community Services Committee. A new section was included which detailed the risks which might prevent achievement of objectives.

The budget summary for 2003/04 showed a net expenditure on services of £13,927,000, net General Fund expenditure of £10,247,000, less Formula Grant from the Government of £4,821,000, leading to a net demand of £2,775,000 and a Band D Council Tax of £85.50. This was the lowest Council Tax in Surrey and the second lowest in the country. The spend per head of population was the highest in Surrey, a large element of this consisting of spend on discretionary services.

A slight increase in Government grant was predicted over the next few years. For 2004/05, the main assumptions underlying the Forecast were that spending would be reduced by £1,000,000 per annum from 2004/05 (leaving £350,000 still to be identified); that further savings would be required to pay for the costs of new initiatives totalling £155,000; that a minimum balance of £1 million should be held in General Fund unallocated reserves and that there should be a stepped increase in Council Tax between 2003/04 and 2008/09. A substantial amount of this expenditure would be paid for by using reserves. If the Council wished to retain the proposals in the Forecast, new developments would have to

be paid for by savings or by Council Tax. The Council also had to be mindful that over the next few years, the Council Tax levels might be nearing the limits of acceptability amongst the public.

The Council had an ambitious Capital Programme for an authority of its size including projects on Painesfield Allotments, Roakes Avenue, affordable housing targets, Addlestone Community Centre and Civic Offices re-provision and Abbeyfit proposals.

The Committee observed that the Council had had to absorb inflation increases, the loss of receipts from Right to Buy Council house sales and would also be facing uncertainty left by the removal of Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG).

The Committee indicated that it was content with (i) anticipated developments against each service area within the General Fund (ii) the Council Tax forecast which adhered to the strategy of stepped increases in Council Tax adopted last year (iii) the £350,000 savings target set out on page 24, line 11 of the forecast (iv) the additional savings target of £155,000 at page 24, line 12 of the forecast and (v) the details of schemes proposed in the General Fund and Housing related capital programmes.

RECOMMEND that –

- i) the strategy summarised at Appendix '3' be pursued;**
- ii) the financial forecast for the five year period to 2008/9 be approved and referred to the Review Board for comments;**
- iii) savings be made in the General Fund budget with effect from the 2004/5 financial year as set out in Appendix '4';**
- iv) further savings of £155,000 be made in the General Fund to offset the cost of new initiatives; and**
- v) the forecast forms the basis for drawing up detailed service budgets for 2004/05, subject to the comments of the Review Board.**

(NB: The Review Board has already considered the Forecast and its comments are at Appendix '5').

Corporate Management Committee – 2 October 2003

c) COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CPA) - THE AUTHORITY'S SELF ASSESSMENT

Approval was sought for the Corporate Self Assessment document required by the Audit Commission as part of the CPA Inspection later in the year. The Council was working to achieve a high rating, in accordance with the 2003/04 Leader's Position Statement.

The CPA Assessment was being undertaken by the Audit Commission and a range of criteria were being applied to arrive at a final score for each authority. As part of the assessment framework, the Council was obliged to complete a Corporate Self Assessment and three diagnostics (two for housing and one for public spaces), as well as furnishing the inspection team with additional background material, published reports, strategies and financial data. The Council was obliged to submit the Self Assessment document and diagnostics to the CPA Inspection Team by 20 October.

As part of the required preparation process, a Peer Review had been undertaken by an Audit Commission accredited consultancy (SOLACE Enterprises). The report and findings had been the subject of briefings to Councillors and staff, and detailed follow up action had been considered by the cross party Local Government Act Member Working Group at its meeting on 22 September. The Committee noted a minute of that discussion, as well as the full Peer Review report. The observations and recommendations from the Peer Review Team formed an important part of the Improvement Plan detailed at the end of the Assessment document.

A working draft of the Self Assessment document had been circulated to Members and staff, as well as external stakeholders (including the Chief Constable of Surrey Police, the County Council Chief Executive, the Director of the Government Office for the South East, Runnymede Association of Voluntary Services, Members of the Local Strategic Partnership and others). The intention had been to ensure that the Corporate Self Assessment was a fair and balanced document, and that it had been produced in as inclusive a fashion as possible. The Committee agreed that it was appropriate to continue refining the CPA documents right up until the point at which they had to be submitted. It was also agreed that further amendments to the document should be referenced so that Members knew which edition they were using.

A very considerable amount of Member and Officer time had been spent on the CPA process and the preparation of the various documents. The opportunity costs had therefore been significant. Everyone involved had been anxious to make sure that it was a worthwhile exercise in its own right, with real opportunities for learning and the potential for making a useful contribution in driving continued improvement in services.

The public spaces and housing diagnostics had been considered by the appropriate Committees in this cycle and are attached at Appendices '7', '8' and '9'. The Committee recommended these, as well as the Corporate Self Assessment document, for approval at the Council Meeting on 16 October, while agreeing that they should continue to be further amended as appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Chairman.

RECOMMEND that -

the Corporate Self Assessment, at Appendix '6' (to be circulated separately) and the three diagnostics, at Appendices '7', '8' and '9' be approved and the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Chairman, be authorised to make appropriate drafting amendments before submission to the CPA Inspection Team.

d) COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Committee considered the adoption of a draft Communications Strategy for the Authority, following advice and recommendation from external consultants. Members noted the increasing service demands on local authorities, the variety of internal and external communication methods available, and the increasing demand and appetite from the public, local organisations, and local businesses, as well as news media, for information about the Council's services and activities. The development of a coherent structure to handle these communication needs and demands was more important than it once was. In addition, the Audit Commission Inspectorate would examine the authority's Communications Strategy, if it had one, during the process of Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

The Council had no dedicated public relations or communications staff. External consultants (Messrs Luther Pendragon of London EC4) had been commissioned to examine the Council's current situation and to present a draft strategy covering both internal and external communications.

The consultants had produced a comprehensive report and a suggested draft Strategy. The Committee noted an executive summary of the findings and recommendations, together with the suggested strategy. The consultants had held a series of interviews with both Members and staff during this process. They had also consulted members of the public, local businesses, and other local organisations. The Committee was particularly interested to note the results of feedback from staff to the consultants on the perceptions which the staff had of the organisation and their role within it. The Committee agreed that the material produced by the consultants needed further Member analysis.

The consultants had presented the draft Strategy on the basis that this was the action that they would suggest to build a basis for a longer term approach which would need development, with or without consultancy help, over the medium term. Much of the Strategy required consideration of the various recommendations put forward elsewhere in the Report, but adoption of the Strategy did not commit the Council to a specific decision on those recommendations.

Consideration of the detailed report, and a decision on the various elements of the Strategy, would require some in depth work and it was recommended that a Member/Officer Working Group be established to consider the full report and advise the Committee as to its views. Five or six Members, sitting with appropriate Officers, would give about the right size of group, with both majority and minority group representation.

The cost of the consultancy advice had been met from existing resources. The Strategy recommended review of a number of possibilities, some of which would carry resourcing implications. However, adoption of the Strategy itself committed the Council only to consideration of these matters, and the resourcing implications of any which might be recommended for approval would be reported at the appropriate time.

RECOMMEND that -

- i) the draft Communications Strategy attached at Appendix '10' be adopted; and**
- ii) a Working Group of six Members (nominated by political group leaders in a proportion to be determined by the Council) be constituted to examine the report in detail with appropriate Officers and to report back on the action recommended.**

e) PERSONNEL STRATEGY

At the recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment peer review it had been suggested that whilst much of the Authority's Personnel policies and procedures represented best practice, there needed to be sharper focus and a more obvious link with the Council's main aims and objectives. Accordingly a draft Personnel Strategy had been prepared which was considered by the Committee. UNISON had been consulted on the Personnel Strategy and their views had been taken into consideration in the document. UNISON considered the Strategy to be a fair reflection of the role of Personnel. The Committee noted that they would be receiving the results of a staff survey at its next meeting, which reflected and underlined many of the messages contained in the Personnel Strategy. It was also noted that the peer review had highlighted further work to be done, including in the areas of medium term training, planning, the linkage of appraisals to the core objectives within the organisation and making provision for learning, which meant that the Strategy represented a starting point and needed to evolve further over time. It was therefore recommended that a Working Group be set up to assist this process, with the objective of completing its task before the Civic Offices re-provision.

RECOMMEND that -

- i) the Personnel Strategy at Appendix '11' be adopted by this Authority; and**
- ii) a Working Group be formed consisting of Members, Officers and other appropriate persons to review and revise the Strategy prior to the move to the new Civic Offices.**

(Councillor P.A. Greenwood requested to be recorded as having voted against Recommendation ii) above, in accordance with Standing Order 25.3).

f) IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT RETURN 2003 (IEG3)

The Council was required to make periodic returns to the Government on its progress in Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) with the objective of achieving electronic enablement of all services by 2005. The Committee considered the proforma for the third of these returns (IEG3), along with the suggested responses from the Council. The Information Strategy Member Working Group had considered this item at its meeting on 2 September and made contributions which had been included. The deadline for submission of the return was 10 November 2003.

On this occasion the Government had been particularly prescriptive in the way that it required the information to be presented, adopting a system of "traffic lights" (red, amber and green) which reflected the amount of progress made, along with a "black" category, where the local authority had taken an alternative route but had produced a reasoned argument for doing so.

Two areas where the Council fell into the black category were contact centres and "one-stop shops." The Council had decided not to follow the call centre and "one-stop shop" approach. However, the infrastructure was being put in place to provide the same delivery of services with all the information needed using electronic means within a new Civic Centre. The Council was graded at amber for corporate use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software. The building blocks that were pre-requisite for an effective CRM were being put in place and suitable software would be investigated as appropriate. The Committee noted that this was a particularly expensive area of service delivery and that the Council was seeking the fullest range of information available and the results of pathfinder projects, before committing itself in this direction. The other area where the Council had reported an amber result was in the incorporation of e-government into the Community Strategy. This was because at present e-government was not seen as a significant item for residents from the consultation on that strategy, over and above other local priorities. In this connection, it was agreed that more information from the voluntary and health sectors would be helpful, in order to try and develop this area further. The Committee also agreed that there should be linkage between IEG and the Communications Strategy.

RECOMMEND that -

the return as set out at Appendix '12' be made to the Government.

g) BEOMONDS ALLOTMENTS - CAPITAL SCHEME - REMEDIATION AND CLEARANCE

At its meeting on 18 September 2003, the Leisure and Environment Committee had approved a scheme to remediate and clear the Beomonds Allotment site, where contaminants had been found earlier this year. The Corporate Management Committee agreed a Capital Estimate for this work at an estimated cost of £80,000, as well as a further £3,700 which would finance the full year revenue costs of the scheme. The completed scheme would require a maintenance programme, whose costs could not be ascertained until a decision

on the future use of the site had been made. The remediation and clearance scheme should be completed by the end of 2003, and Officers would seek external funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to minimise the financial burden on the Council.

RECOMMEND that -

- i) approval be given to a Capital Estimate in the sum of £80,000 accordingly; and**
- ii) the full year revenue costs of financing the scheme (£3,700) and the potential for further running costs of managing the site be noted.**

h) THORPE GREEN – CAPITAL SCHEME – ESSENTIAL ROAD REPAIRS

At the same meeting, the Leisure and Environment Committee recommended approval of a Capital Scheme to repair the access roads onto Thorpe Green that would benefit both residents and regular users of the open green space, which would last 10 years and would provide a pressure treated timber edging and a 30 mm thick tarmac wearing course over the existing road surface, in view of the rural nature of the area and the relatively light usage of the access roads. The Corporate Management Committee agreed the necessary funding (£55,000 and £2,500) for this measure, noting that the access road to the dwellings belonged to the Council who had a duty to maintain the road as safe and fit. Negotiations were taking place with new residents, with a view to them making a contribution to any future works.

RECOMMEND that -

- i) a Capital Estimate in the sum of £55,000 for the repair and improvement works necessary to bring the access roads up to standard, be approved; and**
- ii) a supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £2,500 for the associated Capital Charges, be approved.**

i) ANTI FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY

The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy had been approved in October 1998 but required periodic review for adequacy. The policy had now been amended to reflect changes in job titles. At its meeting on 16 September 2003, the Standards and Audit Committee received a report on the policy, and recommended its continuation with the updating amendments. When Internal Audit reviewed the operation of the policy last year, it was felt that it should be given greater publicity amongst new staff. Information had been circulated to all staff two years ago but in view of staff turnover since then, there would be some staff who might be unaware of the Council's policy. The policy would therefore be e-mailed to all staff and Members.

RECOMMEND that -

the Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy set out at Appendix '13' be agreed.

j) LICENSING COMMITTEE - ESTABLISHMENT

Members were advised of the need for the establishment of a Licensing Committee for the purposes of the Licensing Act 2003.

The Licensing Act 2003 had received Royal Assent and would be passed into law progressively by commencement orders. The timetable for the implementation of the Act had slipped because of the prolonged period

necessary for the House of Lords and House of Commons to reach agreement about draft amendments to the Bill. It had been proposed that a draft schedule of fees and charges and draft Statutory Instruments and Regulations would be circulated by the end of August 2003 and that Guidance would be completed and sent out to all Local Authorities and Police Forces, and made publicly available by the end of September 2003. This would have allowed for preparation of Licensing Policy statements, the establishment of Licensing Committees and the recruitment and training of staff and Members throughout the period September 2003 to March 2004. The drafting and consultation on Runnymede's licensing policy had been held up, pending final Guidance and Regulations.

It was a requirement of the Licensing Act 2003 that each Licensing Authority must establish a Licensing Committee consisting of at least 10, but not more than 15, Members of the Authority. All matters relating to the discharge by a Licensing Authority of its licensing functions were referred to its Licensing Committee and, accordingly, that Committee had to discharge those functions on behalf of the Authority. The Licensing Committee could establish one or more Sub-Committees consisting of three Members of the Committee. Regulations could make provision for the proceedings of the Licensing Committee and the Sub-Committees, public access, publicity to be given to the meetings, agendas and records to be produced in respect of those meetings and public access to such agendas and records and other information about those meetings. Subject to meeting such Regulations, each Licensing Committee might regulate its own procedure and that of its Sub-Committees. However, the Regulations had not yet been made. It was appropriate now to set up the Licensing Committee, especially to be ready to consider the Licensing Policy, but detailed consideration of the conduct and process of the Committee and Sub-Committees, and the delegation of functions to Officers, had to wait until final Regulations and Guidance were known. The Committee noted a list of functions of the Licensing Committee which had to be discharged by the Committee or a Sub-Committee of it and not by delegation to an Officer. It would also be necessary to change the terms of reference of the current Leisure and Environment Committee and Licensing Sub-Committee.

There would be very significant financial implications for Runnymede. A separate report on the Agenda recommended the appointment of a Licensing Officer and a Licensing Clerk, together with IT and support costs. There would also need to be provision made within Members Allowances for the new Committee work. The costs would be offset by income from charges, and the Government's intention was that the new function should be self-financing, but this was a matter of speculation. At present it was not known whether there would be a large number of applications to be dealt with by Sub-Committees and this would also affect the resource implications. Members noted that it was still not possible to quantify implications for legal and administrative support.

RECOMMEND that –

- i) a Licensing Committee of ten Members be constituted with immediate effect;**
- ii) the Licensing Committee consider all licensing and registration matters so far as they are not expressly committed to another Committee;**
- iii) the Licensing Committee be authorised to determine all matters before it, save for the Licensing Policy or other matters expressly reserved to Full Council by the Constitution;**
- iv) licensing and related functions be removed from the terms of reference of the Leisure and Environment Committee, and the existing Licensing Sub-Committee be abolished; and**

- v) **a further report follow as soon as possible as to the procedural and further financial arrangements which will be necessary for the Licensing Committee.**