

Runnymede Borough Council

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday 2 September 2004, at 7.30 p.m.

in the Council Chamber

at the Civic Offices, Addlestone



Members of the Committee

Councillors R.K. Habgood (Chairman), N. Thewlis (Vice-Chairman), J.R. Furey, Mrs L.M. Gillham, P.A. Greenwood, C.J. Norman, Ms. C.M. Simmons, P.B. Tuley, P.J. Waddell and G.B. Woodger

## 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. G. Marson, Administration and Leisure Department, Committee Section, Civic Offices, Station Road, Addlestone (Tel. Direct Line: 01932 425625). (Email: gary.marson@runnymede.gov.uk).**
- iii) Agendas and Minutes are available on a subscription basis. For details, please ring Mr. B.A. Fleckney on 01932 425620. Agendas and Minutes for all the Council's Committees may also be viewed on [www.runnymede.gov.uk](http://www.runnymede.gov.uk).
- 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.

## **LIST OF MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **PART I**

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

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### **PART II**

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

- a) Exempt Information
12. WRITE OFFS 10
- 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 27 July 2004, 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. LEGISLATION AFFECTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT - UPDATE (DAL)

(Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, September 2003, page 426, para. 271)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to inform Members of legislation enacted or proposed since the previous such report in September 2003, that will affect powers and duties of local authorities. Any predictable resource implications are also discussed.**

1.2 The report deals with both private Members' Bills and Government Bills, although far fewer private Members' Bills become law. Government Bills and recent Acts are shown by headings in bold type.

2. Children Bill

2.1 This Bill, together with other non legislative measures also being taken by Government, aims to bring better focus and co-ordination to agencies charged with the protection of children. The Bill is expected to become law in November 2004, with guidance being issued in spring 2005.

2.2 District Councils have limited powers and duties in this area at present, although clearly they co-operate with other statutory agencies. The Act will impose a new duty to co-operate with the Children's Services Authority (which will be the County Council) to improve the well-being of children. The exact form of this co-operation will depend on dialogue between the Children's Services Authority and other authorities and is likely to involve building on existing partnership arrangements. There will be a power to pool funds with the Children's Services Authority for the purposes of improving children's well-being.

2.3 District Councils will have a new duty to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This is a similar concept to other general duties such as those arising under the community safety legislation and the Race Relations Act. It is difficult to define any specific operational resource implications, but clearly both staff and Members will need to bear the duty in mind when making relevant decisions, and certain procedures may need review.

2.4 There will be increased powers to share information relevant to child protection with other authorities. There will also be a new inspection regime for children's services, which is likely to have some impact on Housing and Leisure services.

2.5 Some staff time is likely to be necessary in reviewing the implications of the new Act against the Council's existing policies and procedures. Further reports will be brought as necessary.

3. Christmas Day (Trading) Bill

3.1 The purpose of this Bill is to prohibit trading by large stores on Christmas Day. It will be enforceable by district and unitary authorities. It is unlikely that it will carry major resource implications.

4. Civil Contingencies Bill

4.1 This Bill has been mentioned in previous reports. Its purpose is to define and rationalise the duties of local authorities and other agencies for dealing with civil emergencies.

4.2 The Bill defines an emergency as an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare, the environment, or national or local security. There are more detailed provisions as to what this means. District Councils, amongst others, must periodically assess the risks, and maintain plans to enable them to continue to perform their functions. They must also maintain plans to ensure that so far as possible they can take action to prevent a likely emergency, mitigate the effects of an emergency, and take associated action. They must maintain suitable public information arrangements.

4.3 There will be further detailed reports on this legislation in due course. As already indicated, although this Council expends significant resources in responding to emergencies as they occur (e.g. flooding), and in maintaining suitable plans, this is at the moment very largely a matter of discretion. Existing plans and arrangements will have to be reassessed against the new duties and there will undoubtedly be some additional resource implications in assimilating and maintaining the new requirements.

5. Housing Bill

5.1 This Bill has been and will continue to be the subject of reports as required to Housing and Community Services Committee. It is a major piece of legislation which:

- i) replaces the existing Housing Fitness Standard with a new Housing, Health and Safety rating system (HHSRS), and extends the powers of local housing authorities to tackle poor housing conditions.
- ii) introduces a new scheme for the licensing of larger, higher risk houses in multiple occupation (three storeys or more with at least five residents). At the discretion of the local housing authority, and subject to consultations, the licensing regime may be extended to other houses in multiple occupation where there is a need to improve standards of management and amenity.
- iii) introduces a power for local housing authorities to introduce selective licensing of other residential accommodation to deal with particular local problems, such as unprofessional landlords, particularly in areas of low housing demand, and/or anti-social behaviour.
- iv) proposes a new duty for the vendors of residential property to make available a home information pack of standard documents, including title matters and searches, including the local land charges search.
- v) provides additional powers for local housing authorities to deal with anti-social behaviour in social housing.
- vi) introduces changes to the Right to Buy Scheme with a view to tackling exploitation by property developers and tenants, improves protection for mobile home occupiers and makes detailed amendments to legislation regarding social housing.

5.2 There are resource implications, particularly in relation to training on the new legislation and in implementing the new licensing regime. Implementation of the discretionary components will increase the resources required. Some additional demand on the local search service is likely as all properties placed on the market will require a search and there may be some more repeat searches than hitherto if a property remains on the market a long time.

6. Local Land Charges (Fees) Bill

- 6.1 This Bill proposes to give local land charges authorities the power to set their own fees, except for personal searches. It is a Private Members' Bill but has the support of the Government.
- 6.2. Local autonomy in this area would be welcome, but there are signs that local authority search fees are already sufficiently high to push a number of customers towards the personal search companies. The Bill is intended to limit the fee to cost recovery level, rather than the generation of a return. The most likely consequence is therefore likely to be an adjustment of the anomalous imbalance between the fee for the official search, which is artificially low, and the fee for the additional enquiries commonly raised by searchers.

7. **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004**

- 7.1 This Act has been reported on previously both to this Committee and the Planning Committee. It significantly updates the law relating to the Planning Policy Framework by providing for regional spatial strategies, local development schemes, and the surrounding procedural and regulatory framework.
- 7.2 It amends the law on compulsory purchase for planning purposes, and compensation.
- 7.3 The amendments to the Planning Policy Framework are considerable but their implications and any associated resourcing issues have already been reported.

8. **Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003**

- 8.1 This has been previously reported. Some of the provisions remain to be brought into force, including the provisions regarding high hedges. The Government has not yet decided whether or when to implement these.

9. Other Proposals

- 9.1 The Local Government Association believes that the Government is considering legislation in the following areas affecting local government:

- disability discrimination
- identity cards
- gambling
- regional assemblies
- school transport (doubtful)
- cleaner neighbourhoods
- charities
- housing benefit
- animal welfare
- mental health
- single equalities body
- education (OFSTED)
- social care
- public health
- gender equality
- police reform
- prostitution

- 9.2 This will be clearer following the Queen's speech in the autumn, and further reports will be brought as necessary.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The range of potential new legislation is not quite as much as at the last report, but two of the most substantial proposals anticipated then (the Civil Contingencies Bill and the Housing Bill) have now come forward. Members will be advised further as required.

**(FOR INFORMATION)**

## Background Papers

List of Public Bills before Parliament on Parliamentary website.  
Local Government Association Parliamentary Updates.

### 6. CASH RECEIPTING SYSTEM - ON-LINE PAYMENTS (CEO/DF)

#### 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the requirement to enhance the Council's ability to take secure payments on-line for any service and recommend an upgrade of the present facilities to achieve this objective.**

#### 2. Background Information

2.1 All income received by the Council is processed through the Cash Receipting system provided by ICT, part of the Anite Group of companies.

2.2 The present software has the ability to accept credit and debit card payments through an internet interface. A member of the public can fill out a form on-screen to make a payment. This information is then transmitted to the bank who verify that the credit card is valid or, in the case of a debit card, that the account has the funds to make the payment. A message is then returned to the user either confirming that the payment has gone ahead or has been rejected.

2.3 This method of operation can also be used by staff to accept payments from the public either in person or over the phone.

2.4 During the 2003/4 financial year the Council received 1,866 payments over the internet for payment in the following areas:

Council Tax	1,825
Business Rates	1
Rents	48
Sundry Debtors	12

2.5 At present the public can use the system to pay for any bill they have received but they cannot pay for a service for which they have not yet been invoiced. This means that if a member of the public wants to book a Council facility, the process cannot be completed on the internet in one visit.

#### 3. Report

3.1 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) states in "Defining e-Government Outcomes for 2005" that it is a priority area "*to support service improvement and collection efficiency by providing for all payments to the Council for goods and services to be made online or by telephone*". In particular it is a required e-Government Outcome (R10) that online facilities be available to allow "*payments to be made to the Council in ways that engender public trust and confidence in local government electronic payment solutions*"

3.2 The table in Appendix 'B' gives an overall picture of the Council's income volumes during the 2003/4 financial year together with comparative figures for 1999/2000. As can be seen, Council Tax payments account for slightly more than two thirds of the number of transactions and it is highly desirable that the 70% of transactions carried out by direct debit in this area be maintained or even increased as this is the most efficient means of collection from the Council's point of view. It is anticipated that in the areas where payments are made at the Cash Office or through the Post Office, for example for booking leisure facilities, children's schemes such as Splash or payment of Council House Rent, efficiencies can be gained by converting a proportion of these transactions to internet payments thus achieving a dual objective of improving the efficiency of collection and fulfilling the eGovernment R10 Outcome target.

3.3 It is recognised that the success of this initiative is to some extent dependant on the effectiveness of the national scheme sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to

give all members of the public access to the internet and to turn payment for goods and services over the internet into a preferred method of working. It will of course lead to changes in procedures in service delivery sections and the impact of changes in booking and payment methods will be closely monitored to ensure that no groups are disadvantaged by the changes being made.

3.4 The current Cash Receipting application now has a module available that has been designed specifically to achieve the objective of enabling full integrated on-line payments. Payment types can be readily set up by the Cash Office staff to accept payments for any goods or services provided by the Council. Standard interfaces are provided to enable information to be fed back to feeder systems so that those providing services are kept up-to-date with payments being made. No other similar products are available which are compatible with the cash receipting system.

3.5 A capital project appraisal form is attached at Appendix 'C'.

4. Council Policy

4.1 Enabling this facility would permit the Council to conform to the ODPM's outcome R10 described above.

5. Resource Implications

5.1 The Cash Receipting mode that would achieve this result is called the .NET module. This consists of a number of elements itemised below which can be purchased, installed and tested for a total cost of £17,050.

	Cost
PARIS.net framework	£1,250
PARIS Web Services	3,000
PARIS Card Payments	3,500
PARIS Online Reporting	1,500
Implementation Services (12 days)	7,800
TOTAL	£17,050

5.2 Support and maintenance of the module would cost £1,573 per annum. The capital charge for this project will be £3,800 per annum.

5.3 As this is a capital cost that will permit the Council to achieve one of its IEG objectives this is an appropriate charge to the IEG3 grant of £350,000 for 2003/4 received from the ODPM.

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –**

- i) capital programme provision and a capital estimate of £17,050 be approved for the purchase, configuration and installation of Paris .NET, to be funded from the IEG3 grant; and**
- ii) a supplementary revenue estimate of £5,400 be approved to meet the associated support and maintenance costs and capital charge.**

**(TO RECOMMEND)**

Background Papers

None stated.

7. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES (DAL)

1. The following appointments to outside bodies were deferred at the meeting of the External Appointments Sub-Committee on 13 July 2004;

- (a) A substitute Member for the Surrey Museums Consultative Committee. Councillor Moore was the previous substitute, but did not wish to be considered this year. The actual representative for 2004/2005 is Councillor Ray.
- (b) The suggestion of a Community Governor to the Englefield Green Infant School for a four year term.
- (c) The appointment of a Minority Authority Governor to the Grange Community Infant School, the term of office to be until such time as the school reconstitutes under the Education Act 2002.

**THE COMMITTEE IS ASKED TO –**

**make appointments to the Surrey Museums Consultative Committee (substitute representative) and the Grange Community Infant School, and a suggestion for Community Governor to the Englefield Green Infant School.**

**(TO RESOLVE)**

Background Papers

None

8. INFORMATION STRATEGY MEMBER WORKING GROUP - MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Information Strategy Member Working Group held on 27 July 2004 are attached at Appendix 'D'.

**(FOR INFORMATION)**

Background Papers

None

9. PERSONNEL SERVICES MEMBER WORKING GROUP – MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Services Member Working Group held on 29 July 2004 are attached at Appendix 'E'.

**(FOR INFORMATION)**

Background Papers

None

10. URGENT ACTION - STANDING ORDER 42 (DAL)

The following action has been taken after consultation with the Chairman of this Committee under Standing Order 42:

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Action Taken</u>	<u>Central Index No.</u>
Director of Technical Services	Purchase of an ex contract hire Ford Transit van cab tipper vehicle for use by the Partnership Team at a cost of £5,500 plus VAT and approval of a supplementary estimate of £1,500 in respect of the acquisition.	549

**(FOR INFORMATION)**

Background Papers

11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

**OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -**

**the press and public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following report under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the report in question would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 7 of Part I 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**

<b>a) <u>Exempt Information</u></b>	<b><u>Paras</u></b>
12. WRITE OFFS	7

**b) Confidential Information**

(No reports to be considered under this heading)

