

Runnymede Borough Council

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 4 December 2003, at 7.30 p.m.

in the Council Chamber

at the Civic Offices, Addlestone



Members of the Committee

Councillors R.K. Habgood (Chairman), J.R. Furey, P.A. Greenwood, C.J. Norman, Mrs. E.E. Price, Ms. C.M. Simmons, N Thewlis, 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. J. Gurmin, Administration and Leisure Department, Committee Section, Civic Offices, Station Road, Addlestone (Tel. Direct Line: 01932 425624). (Email: john.gurmin@runnymede.gov.uk).**
- 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.

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1. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Conservative Group has notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that Councillor N. Thewlis replaces Councillor J.M. Edwards as a Member of the Committee until further notice.

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

Officers will also advise the Committee of any changes to its membership which will apply for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

As Councillor J.M. Edwards was Vice-Chairman of the Committee, the Committee is requested to appoint a new Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

3. MINUTES

To confirm and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 November 2003 at Appendix 'A' (to follow).

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

5. 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.

6. ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER (CEO)

(Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, December 2002, page 804, para. 459)

The Annual Audit letter (attached at Appendix 'B') is presented by the Audit Commission and reports upon various aspects of corporate governance, performance management and financial regulatory issues. The District Auditor, Peter Arkell and the Audit Manager for Runnymede, Hassan Rohimun, will be present to introduce their report and answer questions from members of the Committee.

(FOR INFORMATION)

Background Papers

None.

7. COUNCIL'S TEN PRIORITY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE - SECOND QUARTER OF 2003/04 (CEO)

(Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, March 2003, page 1096, para 656 and July 2003, page 260, para. 173).

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **This report outlines the second quarter position for 2003/04 in the ten priority indicators of service delivery performance that form the basis of more detailed scrutiny.**

2. Background Information

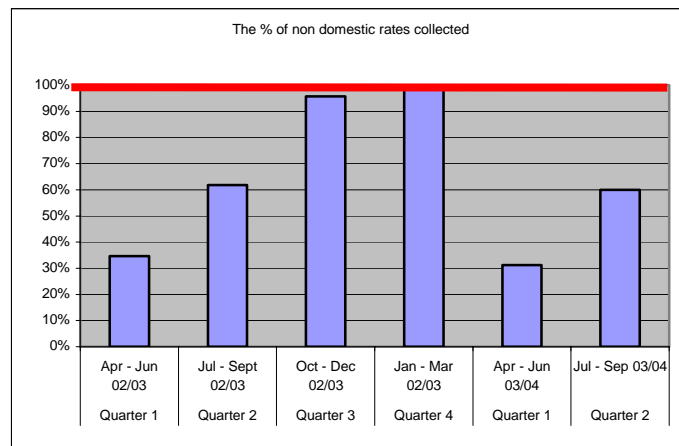
2.1 At the 6 March 2003 Corporate Management Committee, Members received a report outlining new arrangements to improve the Council's performance management system. This was very much a continuing process to increase the efficiency, accountability and

analysis of performance management information, and aid greater ownership of the Council's performance by staff and Members alike.

- 2.2 This already builds on a whole range of management information which consistently analyses the Council's performance across the range of services. A number of government initiatives such as Best Value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) have added to the Council's current strict regime of target setting. Traditionally this has been achieved through the annual Leader's Position Statement and the setting of Aims and Targets, which guide the day-to-day focus of its service priorities and new initiatives.
- 2.3 In recent years, the amount of performance management information collected, measured and monitored, has grown immensely. To ensure that sufficient focus is given to this, a series of Service Plans have been established which aim to collate all the performance management information in one place. This will assist in improving the efficiency of service areas and aid the management of information at Member and Officer level and provide a greater focus on the Council's main priorities. At the 6 March Corporate Management Committee, Members set these measures into action.
- 2.4 The following sections outline the relative performance in these areas for the second quarter of 2003/04, comparing them with past performance. In each graph, the horizontal line illustrates the target for that particular period.

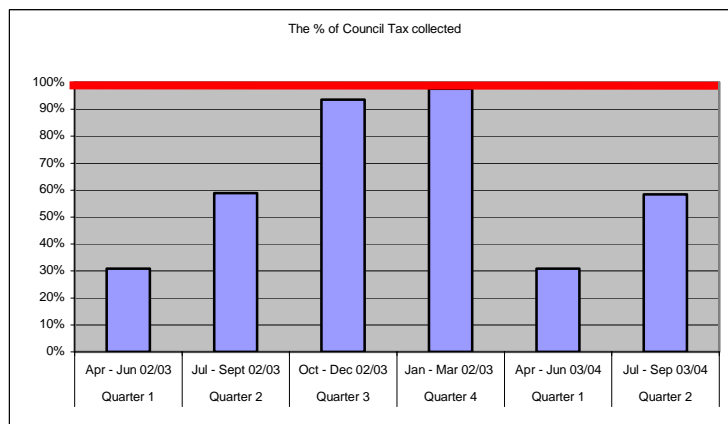
3. Performance Management

3.1 **Council Tax and Business Rate Collection**



3.1.1 The business rate collection performance achieved in 2002/03 was the highest in the country. Although the percentage collected in the second quarter of 2003/04 is slightly down on the same period last year, Officers believe that the current performance is still on course to achieve the target of 99% for the year.

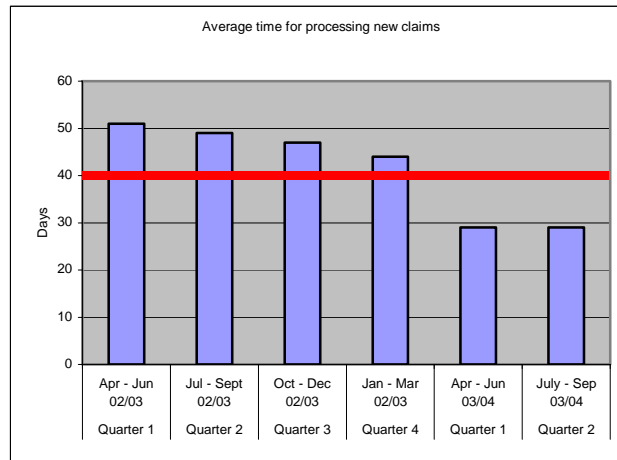
3.1.2 *There was no corrective action sought from the last reporting of this indicator.*



3.1.3 As the graph above illustrates, the percentage of Council Tax collected for the second quarter of 2003/04 is of similar levels to that of the same period for 2002/03. The Council is on course to meet its collection performance target of 98% for the 2003/04 financial year.

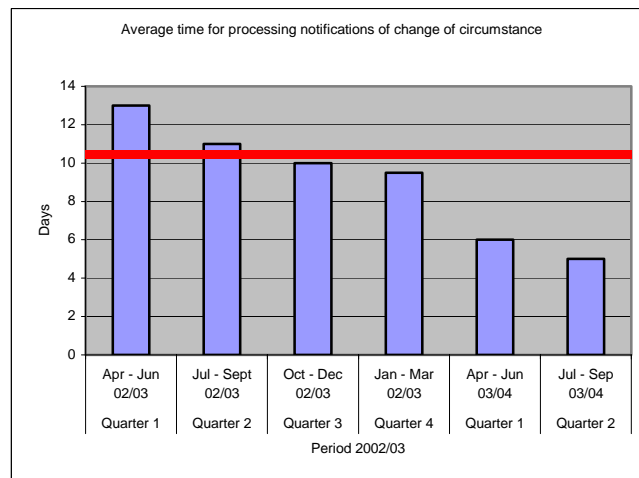
3.1.4 *There was no specific action sought following the last report at the outturn of 2002/03. Again, there is no specific corrective action required at this stage.*

3.2 Benefit Administration



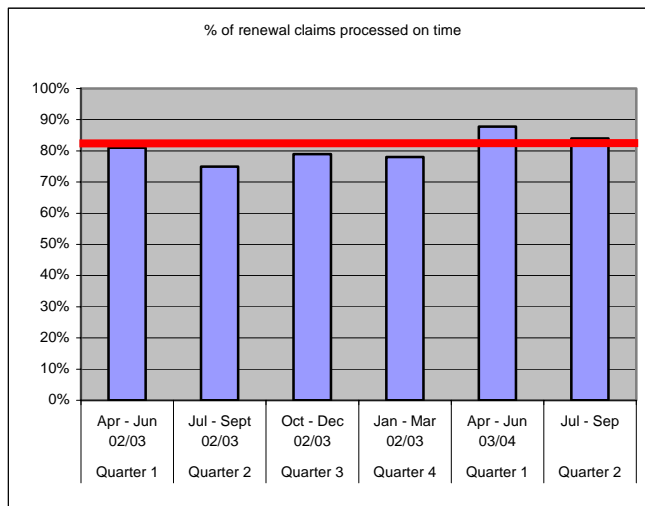
3.2.1 As the graph illustrates, there has been a dramatic improvement in performance over the last two quarters. The time to process new claims has fallen by nearly half (to 29 days) since the same period the previous year. It is clear that the dramatic improvement is currently being maintained and the challenge will be to sustain this throughout the year.

3.2.2 *The corrective actions identified in the outturn report were actioned and have made an obvious impact. Therefore, no further corrective action is required at this stage.*



3.2.3 Again, there has been a dramatic improvement in the time taken to process notifications of change of circumstances in benefit applications. In 2002/03 the first quarter averaged 13 days. It is now down to 5 days which represents a fall of over 50% in a year. The continuous improvement in time taken has been maintained, and the Council is well within the targets it has set itself.

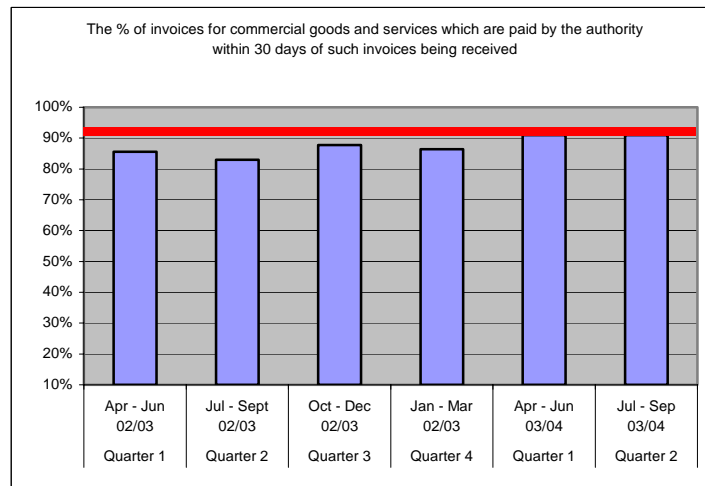
3.2.4 *No further corrective measures are required at this time.*



3.2.5 The Council is again achieving its target. 84% of benefit renewal claims are now being processed on time (according to Government standards). Again, this an improvement on all quarters of 2002/03 and a substantial increase in performance compared to the same period of the previous year. The Council's target is 83%.

3.2.6 *No corrective action is required at this time.*

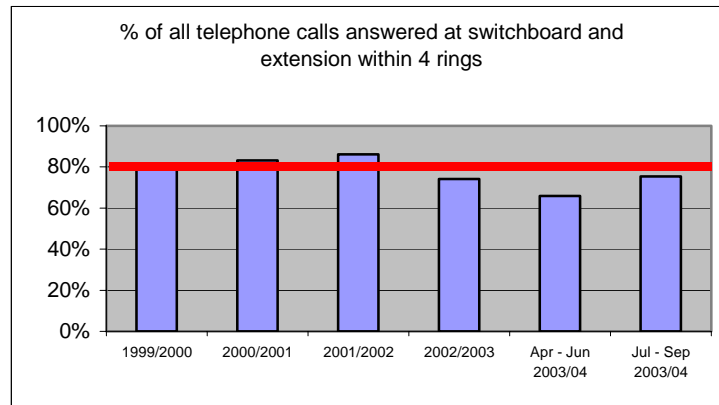
3.3 Payment of Invoices



3.3.1 The Council set itself a more challenging target this year of 92.5%. It is clear from the graph above that there has been some progress, particularly in comparison to the same period in 2002/03.

3.3.2 *As was highlighted in the first quarter report, a recent letter to all staff who had budget responsibilities was distributed by the CEO to remind them of their obligations when passing on invoices. This, along with other managerial measures identified in the outturn report has assisted in improving performance. These corrective measures will be reinforced during the next quarter to ensure that further progress is being made to meet the more challenging target for 2003/04.*

3.4 Customer service



3.4.1 There has been an improvement on the performance compared to the first quarter of the year. It should be noted that the overall score for 'call handling' (which includes the quality of response), reached nearly 82% for the second quarter of the year.

3.4.2 *The corrective measures outlined in the outturn report in July have been undertaken. This has been followed up with a letter to all staff from the CEO reminding them of the service standards that are set for the answering of telephone calls. There is now a steady improvement in the time to answer calls, but the challenge remains to achieve the 80% target by the end of 2003/04.*

3.5 Progress on £1 million net revenue reductions

3.5.1 Annual savings of £327,000 have been achieved up to 2002/03 towards the savings target of £800,000 that was approved in December 2000. The Council has set a new target to achieve annual savings of £1 million commencing in the 2004/05 financial year. The 2003/04 Budget already includes reductions of £163,000 towards this target. This was reported as part of the Financial Forecast in October 2003.

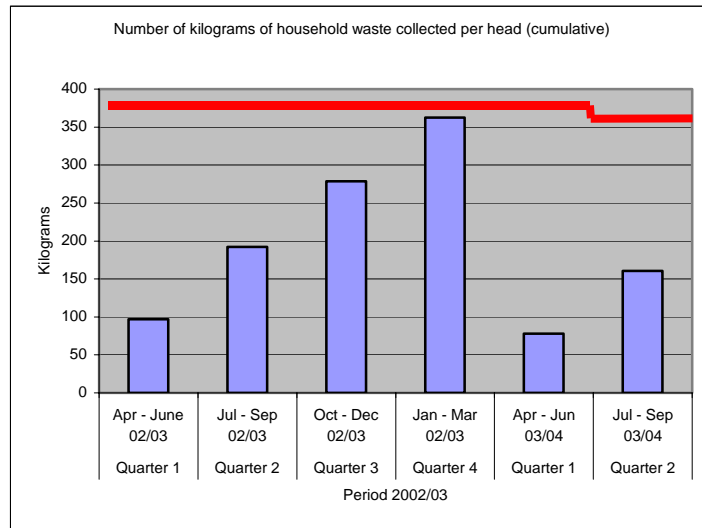
3.5.2 *No corrective action required at this time. Regular reports to Members via the Corporate Management Committee will be made to ensure that progress is maintained over the coming three years.*

3.6 Progress on achieving 750 affordable housing units target

3.6.1 At 30 September 2003, the Council had achieved 353 units against the target of 750. There are also 47 additional units under construction and possible opportunities have been identified to provide a further 162 units.

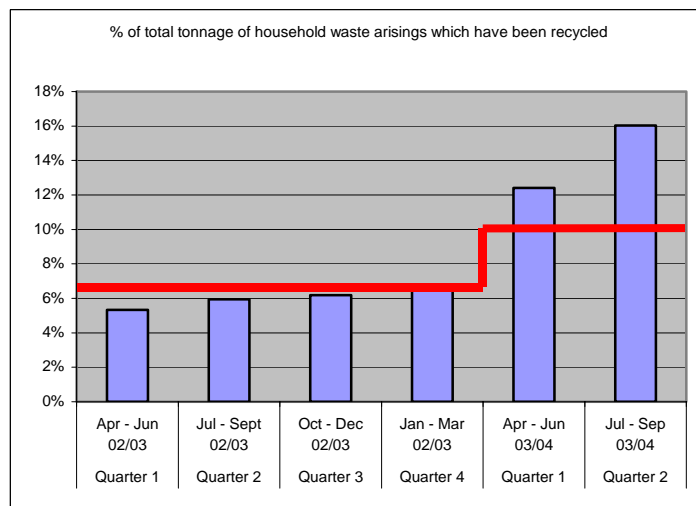
3.6.2 Changes to the grant regime for new housing may impact on future provision. However, it is proposed that Registered Social Landlords will be encouraged to bid to the Housing Corporation to obtain funds to provide new schemes in Runnymede.

3.7 Refuse collection and recycling performance



3.7.1 The Council is now collecting less waste than in the same period last year. This is partly as a result of the new recycling initiative. As the graph shows, the Council set itself an ambitious target to collect 25 kilograms less of waste per head than last year. The Council is well on target to achieve this aim.

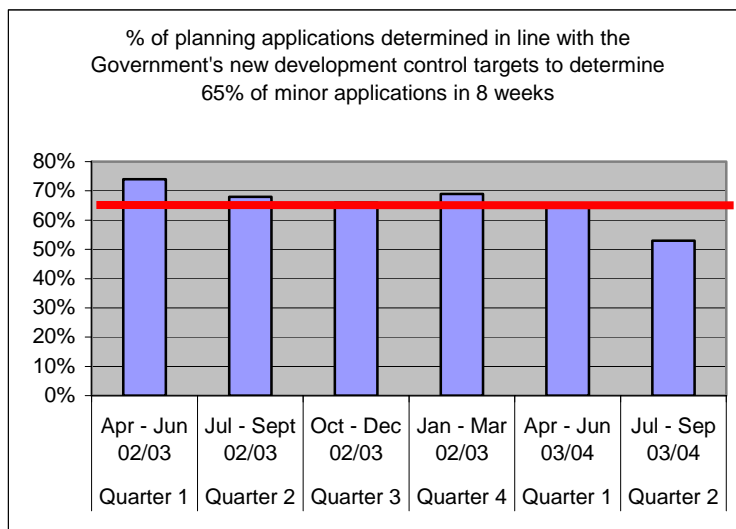
3.7.2 *No corrective action is required.*



3.7.3 The target for 2003/04 was raised to 10%, due to the introduction of the Council's new recycling scheme. Just over 16% of household waste is currently being recycled which exceeds the initial expectations of the scheme's impact by some margin.

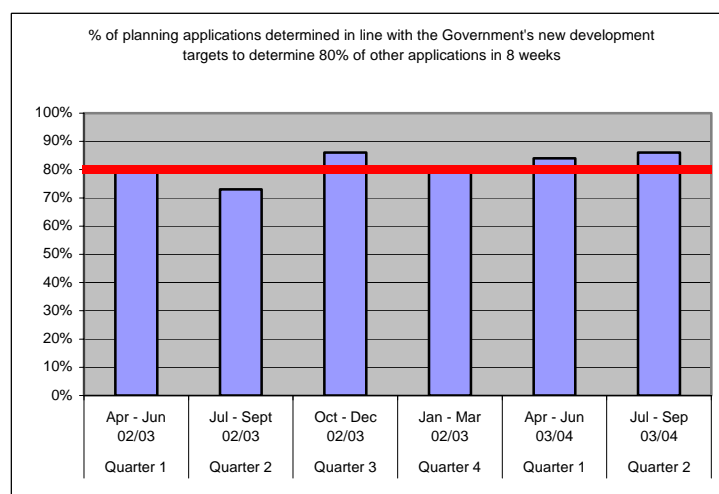
3.7.4 *No corrective action is required.*

3.8 Determination of planning applications within 8 weeks.



3.8.1 53% of minor applications in the last quarter were met in the 8 week time limit. This has fallen below the Government's 65% target. The reasons for this were a combination of factors. During this period a new computer system was being brought on line and there were delays in registering and processing planning applications. This coincided with changed methods of calculating the eight week period starting with date of receipt rather than date of registration. During this quarter, a Principal Planning Officer left the Council and her deputy went on maternity leave.

3.8.2 *In terms of corrective action, the computer system is now fully operational. A new Principal Planning Officer is in post and his deputy's maternity absence is being covered by a consultant planner. A part-time Planning Assistant has also recently returned from maternity leave.*



3.8.3 The Council is currently exceeding its 80% target. This continued good performance will be pursued throughout the year.

3.8.4 *No corrective action required.*

3.9 Progress towards achieving 'decent homes' standard

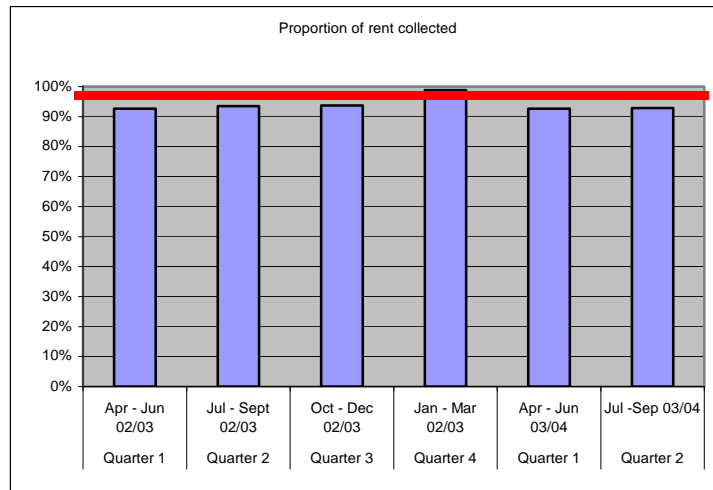
3.9.1 During 2002/3 the Council reduced the number of 'non-decent homes' from 985 to 607 - a reduction of 38%. For 2003/4 the Council has set itself a target to reduce further the number of non-decent homes by 20%, to less than 490 properties by March 2004. By the end of September 2003, a further 80 homes had been made decent. Officers are confident that existing improvement programmes will ensure that the target is met by the end of March. The programme of central heating installation is the main reason for bringing the Council's non-decent homes up to standard. With the central heating programme nearing its end,

future improvements will be met by addressing major repairs failures, mainly ageing electrics. Programmes to upgrade electrics are in place and in addition £60,000 has been set aside for later this year to address individual failures identified by the stock condition survey.

3.9.2 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) required Councils to reduce their 'non-decent homes' by a third by 2004, and deal with all of them by 2010. The third by 2004 has already been achieved, and the Council is on target to meet the 2010 deadline. However, this is dependent on a satisfactory outcome to the projects involving Roakes Avenue and Wapshott Road.

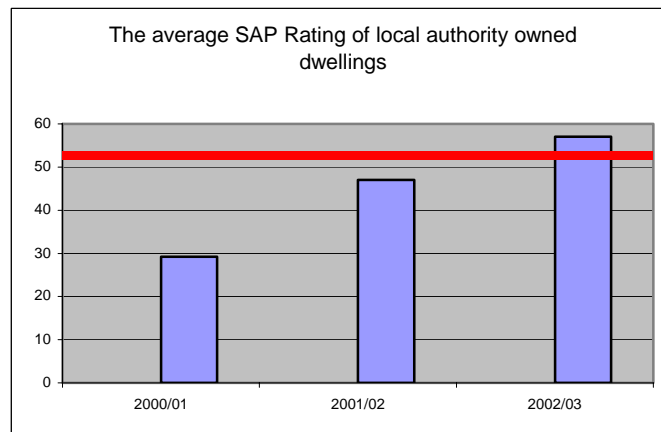
3.9.3 *No corrective action required at present as progress has been good. Reports will continue to be made in the Service Plans.*

3.10 Efficient landlord measures



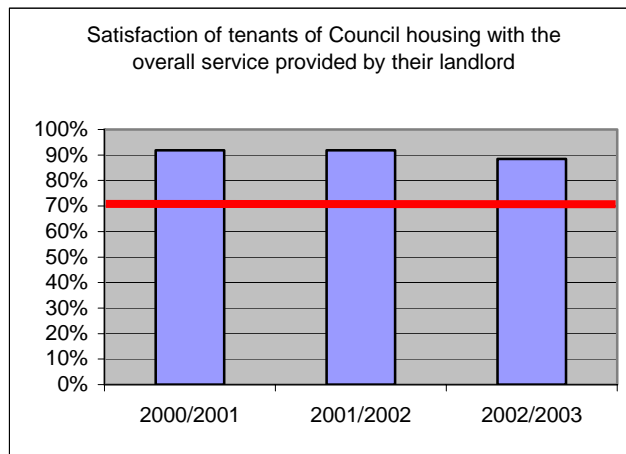
3.10.1 The target for the proportion of rent collected is currently being missed, as tenants come to terms with new rent levels post 1st April. As the previous year illustrates, the target is usually met by the final quarter of the financial year.

3.10.2 *No corrective action required at this time, but this will be reviewed in the next quarter.*



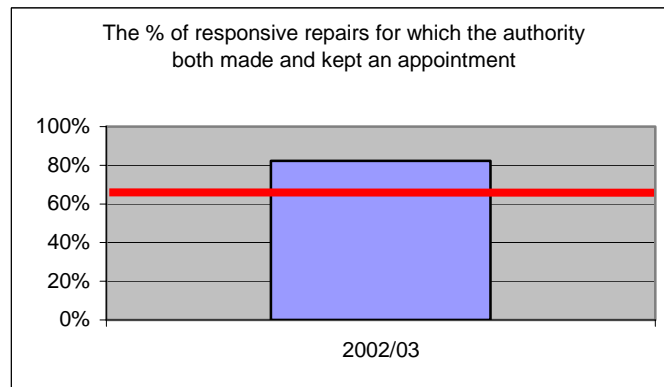
3.10.3 This is an annual figures, so a quarterly update cannot be obtained. The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating is on a 1 - 100 scale and rates a dwelling's energy efficiency where 1 is highly inefficient and 100 highly efficient. The rating therefore takes into account the house's condition, potential for heat loss and the performance of the heating system. It is based on a complex survey. As the graph illustrates, the Council has made substantial progress over the last three years in achieving its target and has now set a challenging aim of improving this further to a rating of 60 in 2003/04.

3.10.4 *No corrective action is required.*



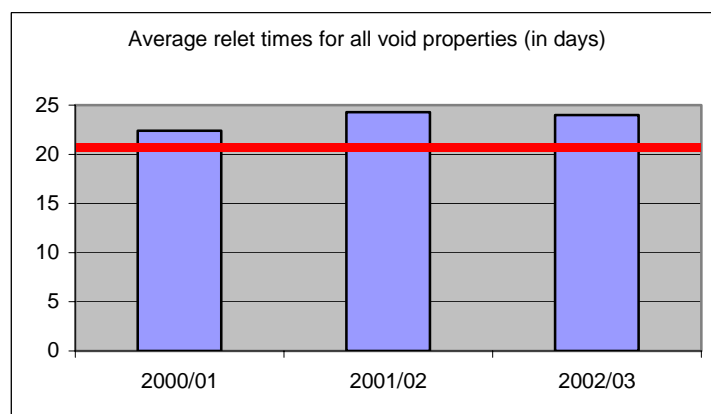
3.10.5 This indicator is reported annually, so a quarterly update cannot be obtained. As the graph illustrates, there has been a slight fall in the satisfaction of tenants with the overall service provided by the Council. However, these views are based on survey results which convey a very high base of satisfaction. In 2001/2002 Runnymede achieved the highest satisfaction rates of all the authorities in Surrey.

3.10.6 *The Council will pursue its current policy and strive to maintain its very high satisfaction rates. These will be monitored by the Housing and Community Services Service Plan and any remedial action will be executed as soon as any negative trends appear.*



3.10.7 Data for the first two quarters is currently unavailable due to the installation of a new computer system. The trial results of the new system are being verified in discussions with the Audit Commission to ensure that accuracy is guaranteed. The percentage of responsive repairs during 2002/03 for which the authority both made and kept an appointment far exceeded its 65% target. With 82.25% achievement, the Council has set itself targets of 85%, 87% and 90% for the next three years.

3.10.8 *No corrective action required. The results should be available for the next quarter's report.*



3.10.9 This indicator is reported annually so a quarterly update cannot be obtained. The average relet time target was narrowly missed for 2002/03. As the Housing and Community Services Service Plan illustrates, there has been a lack of demand for properties in some areas, causing the Authority to exceed the 21 day target.

3.10.10 *The situation will continue to be monitored and the target reassessed for the coming year. This will be particularly challenging for the Authority, but will be dealt with via departmental management teams to ensure that performance improves in 2003/04. Previously, this target was 3 weeks for general needs accommodation and under 6 weeks for sheltered housing. A new overall target will be arrived at to take account of the different circumstances outlined above.*

4. Conclusions

4.1 As can be seen in the graphs and supporting information, the Council has set itself rigorous targets which are very challenging and set a course to achieve consistent improvement in its service delivery.

4.2 There has been significant progress in achieving most of the targets, particularly in benefits administration and refuse and recycling. There has been an improvement in the time to answer telephone calls which had previously been a concern. After some very good performance figures, the percentage of minor planning applications dealt with in eight weeks has fallen. This will be monitored closely over the next quarter.

4.3 The general picture is of sustained and improved performance. This will be pursued throughout the coming year to ensure that the Borough's residents receive the best possible service from their Council.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

the Committee indicate whether it is content with the progress and where appropriate, the proposed corrective action.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None stated

8. SERVICE PLAN 2003/04 – HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE (CEO) (Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, July 2003, page 260, para. 174)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **To update Members on progress with the Corporate Management Service Plan for the half year performance of 2003/04 (April to September) and highlight where corrective action is needed to improve performance.**

2. Background Information

2.1 At its meeting in July 2003 this Committee approved its draft Service Plan, in order to serve as a basis for the monitoring and review of the Committee's objectives.

3. Report

3.1 Members will be aware of the plethora of strategic and planning documents reported to Committee from time to time. Very often these documents interlink and overlap.

3.2 In order to provide a more coherent reporting and monitoring process, both at political and management levels, Officers have drawn the various objectives and targets together into a single document for each Committee. The format has been modified from the "Aims and Targets" approach, which Members will recall flowed from the Leader's Position Statement, to include more detail of timescales, potential barriers and additional resource requirements. The source of each target is, however, clearly identified so as to preserve the place of the original documentation.

- 3.3 The Service Plan attached at Appendix 'C' draws together objectives from the following sources:
- i) The Leader's Position Statement - this is the key political policy statement of the Council. The 2003/04 statement was adopted as Council policy in October 2002.
 - ii) The Best Value Performance Plan - the Council is required to adopt a Best Value Performance Plan annually. The plan must contain its service objectives, various details of its compliance with its Best Value duties, and proposed action to meet performance targets. The current version of the plan was due for adoption earlier this month and, amongst other material, draws on the Leader's Position Statement.
 - iii) Best Value Continuous Improvement Plans - each service will have carried out one or more Best Value Reviews and proposals for service improvement will have been incorporated into Improvement Plans approved by Committee. These are included in the Service Plan, save for targets previously reported as complete.
 - iv) Best Value Performance Indicators - a range of Performance Indicators are prescribed by the Secretary of State for the measurement of local authority performance in various areas. The indicators prescribe what is measured; the target performance is set in some cases nationally and in other cases is left to local discretion.
 - v) Other plans and strategies - the major source material relevant for this Committee is listed above, but there may be a need to refer to other documents such as the Asset Management Plan, the Local Plan (or the Local Development Framework), the Capital Strategy, etc. Where relevant these will be mentioned.
- 3.4 The document draws together the objectives and targets from all these sources. They are grouped in themes rather than by document for ease of assimilation.
- 3.5 Current performance is highlighted throughout the Service Plan and where corrective action is required it is noted accordingly.

(FOR INFORMATION)

Background Papers

None stated

9. QUALITY ACCREDITATION (CEO)

To follow.

10. BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN - DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT (DAL)

(Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, December 2002, page 807, para. 464)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **To consider and approve the Continuous Improvement Plan for Democratic Support Services.**

2. Report

2.1 The following is a summary of the main findings and recommendations of the review of the democratic support services. The Continuous Improvement Plan for the service is contained in the Officers' Recommendation at the end of this report. This final report has been delayed in coming to Committee, and Members will note that Officers have already made progress against the proposed Continuous Improvement Plan.

3. Challenge

3.1 The Scoping and Challenge report was reviewed by the Corporate Management Committee

on 4 December 2002. The objectives of the service were considered to determine whether they continued to reflect the Council's aspirations for the provision of the service. The Scoping and Challenge stages were endorsed and the Committee endorsed eight proposals for examination, as follows:-

- (a) Corporate Governance - health check;
- (b) Review the range of duties undertaken by the Committee Section and the work allocations of Officers to provide a more focussed service and identify those areas of non-core Council activities which receive a higher level of support;
- (c) Reduce the Agenda printing requirement from May 2003 to achieve cost savings;
- (d) Investigate greater use of IT in the future to communicate with Members;
- (e) Review how a scheme of public participation at meetings might be implemented;
- (f) Continue to monitor the levels and scope of legal activity and identify the resources necessary to provide the service;
- (g) Review the level of provision of Members' Services; and
- (h) Review the attendance of Legal Officers at Committee meetings and implications thereof.

4. Compare

4.1 There are currently no National Performance or Best Value Performance Indicators for this service. A benchmarking survey of Committee Sections in Surrey was recently co-ordinated by Guildford Borough Council. Runnymede participated in the survey and the results are expected early in the New Year. Any examples of best practice obtained will be implemented where appropriate.

4.2 Comparisons have been made with all Surrey Authorities Committee Sections on four of the key areas identified for examination, namely,

- a) services provided by Committee Sections;
- b) provision of legal and procedural advice at meetings;
- c) public participation at meetings; and
- d) provision of Member Services.

Details of the responses have been placed in the Members' Room.

The main points arising from the comparisons were:

a) Services Provided by Committee Sections

Runnymede's Committee Section is the only one in Surrey which undertakes work on concessionary bus passes, production and compilation of Annual Report, Street Plan, Tree Preservation Orders, Contract Parking Licensing, Planning Enforcement Notices and Street Trading Consents. It also has in common with only one other Authority the production of the Borough Guide, Information Directory, and responsibility for Press liaison (the latter being undertaken by dedicated Public Relations Officers in the other ten Authorities).

As one would expect, many of the core Committee activities are performed by all the Committee Sections.

The only other notable function performed by other Committee Sections and not by Runnymede is the co-ordination of responses to Ombudsman complaints. In Runnymede this is handled directly by the Chief Executive Officer, or in his absence by the Director of Administration and Leisure.

Discussions are currently in progress with the Community Services Section (Housing) with a view to it taking over the operation of the bus pass scheme from April 2005.

The Communications Strategy will be considered in due course by a Member Working Group and the outcome could have an impact on the way some of the public relations/media work is undertaken by this Section.

b) Procedural Advice at Meetings

In nine of the ten other Surrey Authorities a solicitor attends Council and Committee meetings, and in six Authorities a solicitor attends Sub-Committee and Overview/Scrutiny Committees.

With regard to provision of procedural advice at meetings, the role is shared equally among Committee Administrators and Solicitors in the Authorities consulted. It has been custom and practice for the legal representative at Runnymede to attend and give advice on law and procedure at meetings, and this practice remains the preferred option of the Group Leaders.

c) Public Speaking at Council and Committee Meetings

Of the ten other Surrey Authorities, public questions or speeches at Full Council are allowed in five of them, and public questions or speeches at Committee are allowed in seven of them.

Members approved, from May 2003, the introduction of public speaking and questions at meetings of Council and public speaking at Planning Committee meetings. No members of the public have spoken or asked a question at Council so far, but there have been numerous occasions where the public have spoken at Planning Committee and an informal statistical record is being maintained. To date it is fair to say that public speaking has had an impact on the decision making process. This will continue to be monitored and may be extended to other Committees in due course.

d) Members' Services Provision

The level of provision of Members' Services at Runnymede compares favourably with the other Surrey Authorities. Services provided by a small number of Authorities (which Runnymede does not provide) include secretarial support for Councillors or Party Groups, and provision of a room for the Leader of the Council, and rooms for Leaders of Political Groups. The provision of rooms is an issue which could more usefully be examined in connection with the new Civic Offices re-provision.

4.3 Comparisons have also been made in relation to some matters specifically affecting legal services:

a) Volume of work

Information as to the activities undertaken was collated by Runnymede and three other Surrey district authorities (Surrey Heath, Elmbridge, and Mole Valley). It is apparent that even in a survey such as this different authorities have understood the questions in a different way, but the following conclusions are probably fair:

- Runnymede's overall level of contract and conveyancing activity is comparable;
- There is a wide variation of legal Officers' time devoted to Committee meetings with Runnymede about in the middle (albeit with the lowest number of staff);
- Runnymede Officers undertake more litigation than the other authorities in the sample, except for debts;

- Planning is a relatively heavy area of commitment for all authorities.

Unfortunately a survey such as this shows little about the value and complexity of work – whether authorities are undertaking major initiatives in town centre redevelopment; whether they regularly fight complex inquiries and court cases; whether the bulk of the contract and conveyancing work is complex “one-off” commercial transactions, or routine. Thus absolute comparisons are difficult.

b) Numbers of staff

Seven of the ten other Surrey districts responded to a simple questionnaire on legal section staffing in November 2003. This indicated that Runnymede is operating with the joint lowest number of solicitors/barristers in the legal division, and the second smallest legal department overall. The only Authority with a smaller legal department has sold off its housing stock and also uses outside solicitors to supplement the in house resource.

Of those authorities in the survey who have retained their housing stock, Runnymede serves the highest head of population per legal staff member.

5. Consult

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with Group Leaders, Chief Officers and others with significant interaction with the Democratic Support Service. The consultation identified a number of issues relating to the provision of the service and these have, where possible, been addressed. There is a general level of satisfaction with the service provided and therefore no radical change is proposed.

Agenda Printing and Use of IT

- 5.2 With regard to reduction of Agenda printing requirements, all Members were asked in May 2003 to determine their Agenda requirements. As a result it was agreed that only those Members of a Committee and other Members who specifically requested it, would receive a hard copy of the Agenda. A reduction in the hard copy print-run of 30% has been achieved, at a saving of approximately £4,000 - £5,000. The Agenda and Appendices are now placed on the Council's website, Councillors' website, Intranet and Extranet. The agenda printing requirements will continue to be monitored and a review of departmental requirements has also been undertaken. It is hoped that this will reduce the hard copies printed and produce further savings. In addition, since May 2003 the Members' Bulletin has been transmitted electronically. Action Sheets are also distributed to Members electronically.

Monitoring of Legal Activity

- 5.3 A simplified case management system has been implemented to assist in monitoring the progress of significant matters being processed in the Legal Section as well as general levels of work in such matters as contracts and Right to Buy sales. Planning enforcement matters and Section 106 Agreements are also the subject of periodic review meetings with Officers from the relevant departments in order to monitor progress.
- 5.4 The pressure on legal services identified in the Annual Report on Personnel 2002/2003 is increasing, particularly as a result of the new legislation set out in the report to the Corporate Management Committee on 4 September 2003, and may increase further with initiatives such as decriminalised parking enforcement. The last Annual Report on Personnel recommended the appointment of an additional Assistant Solicitor. The Committee deferred the issue to this Review. However, as the next Personnel Report is now near, it is intended to raise the matter again within that Report together with the available background data. The view of Officers is that an additional Assistant Solicitor post is required and is the most cost-effective way of addressing the resources needed.

6. Compete

- 6.1 Democratic support services are presently provided in-house and located centrally, with specialist legal advice and advocacy provided externally when required. The review has considered other methods of provision but concluded that the service, which is one of the closest to the democratic process and corporate core, is easier and cheaper to administer

from the centre. There are no apparent external providers of a committee administration service. While other Local Authority Committee Sections would have the expertise to undertake the work, they would have to recruit more staff to do so and would, in any case, be unfamiliar with the Runnymede quality culture, working practices and procedures. Officers have not been able to trace any instance of committee servicing being externalised.

6.2 Similarly, decentralisation of Committee servicing (whereby the work is undertaken in the service departments) is uncommon and would have major implications for the Council's departmental and management structure. In practice, such a service is easier to administer from the centre so as to enhance consistency, avoid duplication of process and allow staff to provide cover for each other and share information and best practice. Previous experience, supported by Audit Commission findings, suggested that Committee administration is ideally located close to or alongside the legal service to ensure that legal advice is readily available on the many legal and procedural points which arise on Committee reports.

6.3 The Legal Section provides the full range of legal services to the Council and maintains a degree of flexibility by supplementing its resources with external providers where necessary. The cost of private sector service providers is monitored and indicates that the cost of the service is significantly below that which might be expected from the private sector.

7. Continuous Improvement Plan

7.1 The proposed Continuous Improvement Plan targets and timescales for their completion are set out in the recommendation below.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

i) the Continuous Improvement Plan set out below be approved:

Targets to be implemented at Officer level

Timescale

a) Corporate Governance - health check

Substantially reviewed in CPA process. May need revisiting in 3-5 years. No undue issues identified.

b) Where opportunities arise, investigate alternative provision of some services identified in this report currently provided by the Committee Section so as to enable the Section to provide services more related to democratic core.

Ongoing. Bus Passes - 2005. Awaiting outcome of Best Value review of Community Services.

c) Continue to monitor agenda requirements from existing and any new Members and Departments so as to achieve further cost savings.

Implemented and ongoing.

d) Electronically transmit Members Bulletin to Members from new Municipal Year 2003/04.

May 2003 - implemented.

e) Review operation of public participation at meetings and consider extension to other Committees.

By May 2004.

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| f) | Introduce Case Management System to monitor legal activity. | Implemented. |
| g) | Consider the provision of rooms for the Council Leader and Leaders of political groups as part of proposed new Civic Offices reprovision. | Prior to move to new Civic Offices. |
- ii) **the Director of Administration and Leisure report to a future meeting of the Committee regarding implementation and monitoring of the Continuous Improvement Plan; and**
- iii) **the question of legal section staffing be considered with the Annual Personnel Report.**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Survey responses from Surrey Local Authorities.

11. CAPITAL STRATEGY (DF)
(Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, July 2002, page 317, para. 157).

1. **Purpose of Report**

1.1 **To approve a revised Capital Strategy.**

2. **Background Information**

2.1 The Council approved its last Capital Strategy in July 2002. It was required to submit this to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) which awarded the strategy a "good" rating. As a result of this assessment, the Council received additional credit approval of £50,000 in 2003/04 and was not required to make a further submission to GOSE in future years.

2.2 GOSE still require the Council to submit background information on its capital strategy (a "context sheet") each year. This information was submitted in August.

3. **Report**

3.1 Although the Council is not required to submit a Capital Strategy to GOSE, it is sensible to update the previous document to take account of the new Leader's Position Paper. The proposed strategy is reproduced at Appendix 'D'.

3.2 The format of the document is similar to last year, retaining the elements that attracted the "good" assessment from GOSE. The main changes are to Section 2, which identifies those elements of the Leader's Position Paper that are of particular relevance to the Capital Strategy.

3.3 The Capital Strategy is consistent with the capital programme that was approved as part of the Financial Forecast at the last meeting of Council in October. It will inform future considerations of the capital programme.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

the Capital Strategy be approved.

(TO RECOMMEND)

Background Papers

None stated.

12. DETERMINATION OF THE COUNCIL'S TAX BASE FOR 2004/05 (DF)
(Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, December 2002, page 812, para. 469).

To recommend the Council's Tax base for the 2004/05 financial year, as set out in Appendix 'E' (to follow).

(TO RECOMMEND)

Background Papers

None stated.

13. EARLY RETIREMENT – PENSION FUND IMPLICATIONS (DF)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To report the advice of the Actuary to the Surrey Pension Fund that future payments for early retirement should increase by 40%.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The employer's contribution to the Surrey Pension Fund takes no account of early retirement costs, with the exception of retirement on medical grounds. Runnymede, along with the other employing organisations in Surrey, makes additional contributions at the time any decision is made to retire staff early so that there is no impact on future contribution rates. Failure to do this would increase the Fund deficit and increase contributions in future.
- 2.2 The cost of the additional contribution to the Fund to pay for the costs of early retirement has been included in the calculations reported to Committee in the past when authority has been sought to retire staff early.
- 2.3 Up to September 2003 the Actuary to the Surrey Pension Fund was Watson Wyatt. They gave notice of their intention to withdraw from Local Authority business and the County Council has recently appointed Hymans Robertson as the new Actuary to the Fund.
- 2.4 Although the actuarial advice reported in paragraph 2.3 was produced by Watson Wyatt, it reflects the views of the Local Government Committee of the Association of Consulting Actuaries. A change in Actuaries should therefore make no difference to this advice about early retirement costs.

3. Report

- 3.1 The calculation of early retirement costs is based on actuarial tables produced by the Government Actuary's Department. These have remained unchanged for several years and the Actuary has reported that they no longer reflect the true cost of early retirement. The Actuary has calculated that the results from the actuarial tables need to be increased by 40%. The main reasons for this are "improvements in pensioner mortality" (sic) and "changes in market conditions". The Actuary has therefore recommended that all employing organisations should be asked to increase their contributions voluntarily for all early retirees to cover their liabilities properly. Failure to do so will mean that:

- the cost will be understated when the Council evaluates the financial case for approving an early retirement;
- the cost will be picked up during the next actuarial valuation and will result in an increase in liabilities, which will be reflected in an increase in contribution rates from April 2005;
- The Council will not comply with the Audit Commission's recommendations in "Retiring Nature".

- 3.2 In the event of any early retirements, it is therefore proposed to adopt the Actuary's recommendations and increase the calculation by 40%. Contributions to the Pension Fund to pay for early retirement decisions will continue to be paid either in one instalment, or over three years in line with current practice.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 When staff retire early, there is an additional cost to the Pension Fund unless their pensions are actuarially reduced because past contributions have been calculated on the basis that staff will retire at their normal retirement age. The Council cannot escape these costs. As stated in paragraph 3.1, if they are not funded at the point of retirement, they will add to the deficit at the next actuarial valuation.
- 4.2 The main effect of increasing early retirement costs by 40% will be to make it more difficult to make a business case for early retirement when contemplating staff restructuring.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

the calculation of early retirement costs be increased by 40% in line with the advice from the Actuary to the Surrey Pension Fund.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Letter from Watson Wyatt to Surrey County Council dated 20 March 2003.

Letter from Surrey County Council dated 16 November 1998 detailing the guidance on and calculation of early retirement liabilities.

14. SERVICES FOR POTENTIAL INCLUSION IN A SURREY-WIDE PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT (CEO)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **To seek Members' approval for participation from specific service areas in a Surrey-wide Public Service Agreement (PSA).**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The detailed background and principles of Public Service Agreements (PSA) was the subject of a detailed report considered by the Committee at its March meeting this year. Its purpose is to permit formal agreements to be entered into by an authority to encourage and support sustained improvement by way of stretching targets in performance for designated areas of service. The intention is that the targets should be well defined and capable of measurement over the three years of the PSA Agreement.
- 2.2 Individual District Councils cannot bid for inclusion in PSAs on their own account, but must do them in consultation with the County Council and two or more other Boroughs/Districts. These "second generation" PSAs are co-ordinated by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) bringing together other Government Departments (Department of Transport, Home Office, Health, etc.) to agree particular improvement targets in particular areas of public service.
- 2.3 The benefits should include some negotiated freedoms and flexibilities by the Government Department(s) concerned, as well as the payment of pump priming monies for any start up costs for the individual schemes and Reward Grant, which should amount to up to 2.5% of individual authorities' net revenue budgets.

3. Report

- 3.1 At the March 2003 meeting the Committee agreed in principle to participate in a Surrey-wide PSA and Officers were asked to report further on the specific areas to be chosen for the Borough Council's participation.

3.2 A further discussion has continued during the summer with senior Civil Servants of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and a Countywide Project Team. A range of service areas had been examined and are summarised at Appendix 'F'. Work is still being carried out to ensure that the initiatives meet the disciplines required of the PSA process, have effective pre and post scheme data collection potential and can achieve a high level of performance relative to that which has gone before and so meet the "stretching target" criteria at the heart of the PSA regime.

3.3 Officers consider that, having regard to the Council's priorities and the policy framework that Members have set for consideration by service areas for potential inclusion in PSAs, the following should be pursued:

- i) To remove all abandoned vehicles, either of value or no value, within two days of the vehicle being reported by introducing new processes.
- ii) Business/organisation recycling: working with recycling companies and organisations to increase the level of commercial recycling in the County.
- iii) To reduce speeding traffic and accidents resulting from speed related factors.

The following areas should be considered for inclusion if the ODPM and Treasury signal that sufficient freedoms and flexibilities will be available:

"Tackle significant Key Worker housing issues in Surrey through partnership between statutory authorities and major employers in the County."

3.4 For each of these areas there will be a base performance figure and a target figure agreed to be achieved at the end of three years.

3.5 The outlined timetable reported to Members in March has slipped somewhat as a result of the need for further dialogue with the ODPM and discussion within and between the Government Departments concerned. However, the detailed negotiations with the Government Departments on the individual PSA targets must commence within the next four to six weeks and be settled by February or March 2004, with a view to the commencement of the Agreement in the Spring of 2004.

4. Policy Implications

4.1 Both this year's and next year's Leader's Position Statement include the following policy aim:

"We will pursue the opportunity to participate with the County Council, other Boroughs and Districts in a Public Service Agreement, provided that the targets are in accordance with the Borough's objectives and are beneficial to Runnymede."

5. Resource Implications

5.1 The three service areas suggested for Runnymede's participation (together with the conditional one relating to Key Worker/Affordable Housing) are all mainstream activities of the Council and will not require the Authority to strike out in new policy areas. They will require an effective focus and good discipline if they are to be successful in securing some or all of the PSA Reward Grant.

5.2 Each of the ten to twelve service areas that must make up the Countywide PSA bid to OPDM will attract approximately £150,000 of pump priming monies, which should enable the necessary set up costs, purchase of equipment, software or consultancy input. As has been said already, the Reward Grant is up to 2.5% of the individual authority's net revenue budget, assuming all its three or four targets are met. Success will not be measured on an all or nothing basis, and graduated rewards are available for partial achievement, where 60% or more of the targets are achieved.

6. Summary

6.1 The opportunity for Partnering in a PSA provides a practical opportunity for the Council to demonstrate its ability to achieve stated outcomes, improve with others in Surrey key areas of service already important to the Council and benefit financially from a Reward Grant. In

addition, negotiations with the various Government Departments may produce some beneficial freedoms and flexibilities where at the moment there are constraints in achieving some of these policy/service goals of the Council.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

- i) subject to the satisfactory outcome of negotiations with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Council agrees to participate in targets for the service areas identified in paragraph 3.3 of this report; and**
- ii) Officers report regularly on the progress of this Surrey-wide PSA initiative.**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

CEO's PSA File No 72.21.12

15. FURTHER CENSUS ANALYSIS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION ISSUES (CEO)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 **To take forward the emerging material from the 2001 Census and to update Members on the various issues, actions and initiatives being pursued as part of the Social Inclusion agenda.**

2. Background Information

- 2.1 Successive Leaders' Position Statements have outlined Core Values (2003/04) and Corporate Standards (2004/05) for the delivery of Council services:

"Valuing, supporting, encouraging and acknowledging the many organisations, groups and individuals who voluntarily provide a wide range of services of benefit to our community."

"Exercising policies that are non-discriminatory in our dealings with and services to our customers and also in our employment practices."

"Committed to provide community leadership."

(2003/04)

The Corporate Management Committee section includes:

"We will revise the Council's Race Equality scheme in the light of the Best Value Performance Indicator requirements and pursue Level 2 of the Equality Standard."

(2003/04)

- 2.2 The Government has defined social exclusion as:

"a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown".

- 2.3 Previous work has been done with Surrey County Council and the West Surrey Health Authority (as it was then constituted) to examine the implications of deprivation data. In addition, the Runnymede Borough Council/Surrey County Council Partnership Advisory Committee (set up in the mid 1990's with regular meetings between Borough and County Member representatives discussing matters of common interest and concern), considered in 1997 the detailed analysis from the deprivation scores identified in the publication "Surrey Profile". Education under-attainment emerged as a particular issue in the then Chertsey St Ann's Ward. These were subsequently reported to the then Policy & Resources Committee.

- 2.4 This Committee, at its December 2001 meeting, considered the report on the requirement of the Best Value Performance Indicators generally and specifically (Best Value Indicator 2) in

relation to the achievement of Level 1 of the Commission for Racial Equality's (CRE) Standard for Local Government. A broader based "Equality Standard" for Local Government was proposed, bringing together a range of equality policies.

- 2.5 The implications of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 were considered by this Committee at its meeting in May 2002 and a revised Policy Statement and incorporated Equality Scheme were considered and the recommendations were subsequently approved by Council on 18 May 2002.
- 2.6 Compliance was subsequently achieved for 2002/03 for the Equality Standard (Level 1) to the satisfaction of the District Auditor.
- 2.7 The Council has had a long standing commitment to disability related issues and in 1991 sponsored and continues to service the Runnymede Access Liaison Group, which undertakes audits on Council facilities and premises to ensure satisfactory access and usage by disabled people. It also offers advice on any new schemes during the design stage and other related matters.
- 2.8 Disability awareness training has been undertaken for approximately 100 relevant staff and some Members. 220 managers and front line staff have also recently gone through a current corporate programme of customer care training, which includes equal opportunity training and awareness.
- 2.9 The Council is on track to achieve compliance in relation to its buildings for the disabled and associated access requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act by 2005.
- 2.10 The Council's Grant Criteria requires the following conditions from organisations in receipt of Grant Aid:
- "It must be set up for the purposes of community benefit, culture, education, sport or recreation. (Applications are specifically encouraged from voluntary youth groups).
- It must make the benefit of its activities available without inappropriate discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religious or philosophical conviction or any other grounds which the Council considers unreasonable. Groups which apply maximum or minimum age limits to their membership, or to certain activities, will not be disqualified provided that the Council is satisfied there are reasonable grounds for such requirements."
- In addition, the purposes for which grant may be considered include:
- "The Council makes grant aid available to support recreational, sporting, welfare, advisory, educational, cultural and environment projects of community benefit which are consistent with its priorities and objectives but undertaken more effectively by independent, voluntary or charitable groups. Priority will be given to those initiatives which meet the needs of people with disabilities, the vulnerable or disadvantaged, young people and older persons.
- 2.11 For 2002/3 the Housing Department met BVPI 164 which required the authority to follow the Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice in rented housing. Since April 2003, BVPI 164 has been changed, and the Housing Department is required not only to meet the CRE's code of practice, but also the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's good practice standards for social landlords on tackling racial harassment. These are considerably more onerous, and currently the Council does not meet all of the new standards.
- 2.12 Progress has been made in several areas. The Housing Department has adopted the definition of racist incidents recommended in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. The conditions of tenancy have been changed to prohibit racial harassment. The Home Office code of practice on reporting and recording racist incidents has been adopted, and these are now reported to Members through the Bulletin. The Council has developed a protocol for sharing information with the police, and has worked closely with the police to bring about a satisfactory conclusion to a particular incident.
- 2.13 Housing Officers are looking at areas where the Council currently falls short of the ODPM's new standards, and will endeavour to ensure compliance by the end of March 2004 so that the revised BVPI target can be met.

3. Report

- 3.1 Members received a detailed report at their last meeting on the information now emerging from the Office of National Statistics in relation to data from the 2001 Census. Analyses of previous Census show that deprivation and ethnicity issues have not been significant at the Ward level but analysis has been most beneficial at the sub Ward/enumeration district. The relevant headline material can be summarised as follows, together with comparative data in 1991:
- 26.2% of households have at least one person with a limiting long term illness (26% in Surrey and 34% in England and Wales)
- 13.5% of the population said they had a "limiting long term illness" (14% in Surrey and 18% in England and Wales)
- Numbers unemployed and seeking benefit were 0.9% in Runnymede (1.0% in Surrey and 2.6% in UK)
- 0.5% of households were without use of bath or WC (0.4% in Surrey and 0.5% in England and Wales)
- 6.1% of households were considered overcrowded (5.5% in Surrey and 6.9% in England and Wales)
- 5% were ethnic minorities (3% 1991)
- The largest local ethnic group was in Englefield Green East (3% Indian)
- 15.2% of households have no car (18.8% in 1991)
- 1.5% of the population of Runnymede were born outside the UK and Ireland (10% in Surrey and 8% in England and Wales)
- Largest religious minority was 1% (Muslim) - (1.3% in Surrey and 3% in England and Wales)
- 6.3% of the population stated that their health was poor (6% in Surrey and 9% in England and Wales)
- 3.2 The Indices of Deprivation 2000 are a measure of deprivation for every Ward and local authority area in England. It combines a number of indicators covering a range of domains (income, employment, health deprivation and disability, education skills and training, housing and geographical access to services) into a single deprivation score for each area.
- 3.3 There are 8,414 Wards in England and the score for each indicator (of deprivation) provides the relative ranking for each ward in relation to the whole family of Wards. These rankings establish a benchmark to provide a guide to the 'health' of a Ward relative to those in the rest of the Borough, County and England. With this in mind it is worth noting that the IDM2000 ranking for Runnymede (collating all the indicators) places it at 253 out of 352 in England, where 1 is the most deprived local authority of a total of 365. Whilst this shows a relatively 'healthy' position, it does hide several localised areas of deprivation.
- 3.4 The data for the Wards (based on the ward boundaries as of 1 April 1998) reveals that the Chertsey St Ann's Ward scores poorly, within a Surrey context, on the education (ranked 1150 out of 8414 wards), child poverty (ranked 4061), income (ranked 4639) and housing indicators (ranked 1230). On the housing indicator there is quirk in the scoring system that marks down mobile homes (on Penton Hook) despite the actual quality of these properties. However, the other indicators do give rise to issues that need to be considered.
- 3.5 The indicators for the Wards are fairly blunt instruments and it is possible to use complementary data to provide an analysis of the poor scores. The 2001 census data at the enumeration district level has recently been made available and it will be possible to identify particular characteristics within a Ward. Similarly it will also be possible to draw upon more focused data for the indicators of child poverty and income from other sources. This will enable action to be targeted into specific geographical areas and types of issues.

- 3.6 The enumeration data identifies groups of roads within the Ward which have the highest number of people with no qualifications, not only in Chertsey St Ann's, but also the whole Borough.
- 3.7 In the detailed work done with County colleagues in 1997, it was apparent that educational under-attainment was a particular factor in four of the enumeration districts within the then Chertsey St Ann's Ward. Detailed analysis showed that there were actually very few children in the age groups concerned and indeed that the figure may be as small as 5% in each of the enumeration districts. Surrey County Council Officers felt that the variations from the Surrey average may be due to low parental expectations or perhaps poor educational attainment at local schools, but it was concerning that regardless of the number, 50% decided not to continue with full time education beyond 16 years of age. Borough Officers have sought to urge progress on County colleagues and have been involved in considerable discussion. The then County Assistant Director of Partnerships pursued these matters. There were, however, sensitivities as to teaching standards and other issues in certain of the schools which prevented substantial progress being made.
- 3.8 More recent consultation with service managers for Surrey County Council and Partnership Officers, confirm that issues highlighted in the original research remain within the Chertsey St Ann's Ward. These issues are demonstrated in such fields as adult literacy and numeracy needs, particularly a low level of numeracy and literacy on entry to school among young children and anti-social behaviour among youths. An initiative entitled "Raising the Bar" is being developed within the County Council with the objectives of reducing anti-social behaviour, addressing health inequalities, building community capacity, promoting aspiration and self-esteem, facilitating self-reliance and supporting the changes to formal education.
- 3.9 This initiative is geographically specific to the Chertsey St Ann's area, with the target population as parents and carers, school leavers in low skilled, low paid employment or without employment and socially excluded young people and school children.
- 3.10 A programme of engaging these target groups via a strong learning bias is proposed with the potential to demonstrate positive personal outcomes and pathways to further social inclusion and learning opportunities. A key requirement is that these facilities should be provided locally, in accessible community orientated locations. The County Council Runnymede Local Director, with Social Services, Youth Education and Borough colleagues is presently firming up proposals and the Borough Council will be asked to assist in kind (e.g. accommodation).
- 3.11 There are three further areas which the Officers wish to pursue in detail. The first relates to the apparently large increase (approximately 10%) in ethnic minorities within the Englefield Green East Ward. Whilst it is uncertain whether the underlying numbers have changed, the counting regime adopted by the Office for National Statistics in relation to the 2001 Census is different from that employed in 1991, particularly as it relates to the residency status of university students. Further information from Royal Holloway - University of London confirms the current student roll of some 5,500. 612 (25%) of the 2,500 in the enumeration district of the campus are from ethnic minorities. These clearly have a major distorting effect on total numbers. The College itself, as with many other learning institutions, has actively sought students from abroad and this has proved successful as it is an attractive and well regarded institution, with high academic scores. The needs of ethnic minority students from abroad, attending perhaps a three year course, will be different from permanent residents of the Borough. However, discussions are planned to identify what, if any, particular needs may be unmet, for example, the initiative presently being pursued by the Housing & Community Services Committee to improve the conditions of student accommodation in the private rented sector in Englefield Green & Egham.
- 3.12 As previously approved, Officers are continuing to develop and meet the Equality Standard for Local Government (Level 2), the requirements of which are detailed at Appendix 'G'.
- 3.13 Adequacy of household income is inevitably a factor in deprivation. As part of the recently settled improvement plan for the Benefits Service, a "take up" campaign, to augment the Advice Surgeries regularly held at the Council's five Day Centres, will be pursued with priority to particular Wards.

4. Other Initiatives

- 4.1 The principal aim of the Runnymede Business Partnership School Travel initiative has been to reduce peak hour traffic congestion by providing a range of safe and attractive non-car options for pupils and parents. However, it does have a useful social inclusion dimension in that it provides a practical opportunity for lower income families to exercise parental school choice that would otherwise be closed to them (by settling only for the local school regardless of quality and suitability) because of travel and cost considerations. Recent research undertaken by consultants on behalf of the Sutton Trust also reveals that the provision of a dedicated school bus service helps improve attendance and punctuality by providing a safe, reliable and secure journey to school. Taken together, these factors have the potential to improve educational attainment.
- 4.2 "The Community Strategy for Runnymede" assists in discharging the Council's "well-being" powers that were brought forward from the Local Government Act 2000. The issues outlined in the Strategy collectively tackle some of the issues of Social Exclusion.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 Those aspects dealing with the pursuit of Level 2 of the Equality Policy for Local Government, the benefit "take up" campaign, the school travel and Yellow Bus project are provided for within existing approved estimates. Any additional resource implications that may arise from initiatives with Royal Holloway - University of London and the "Raising the Bar" initiative will be reported further before any additional commitments are entered into.

6. The Next Steps

- 6.1 The Council recognises that, although it is heavily involved in tackling Social Exclusion, that the initiatives are not based in a framework strategy.
- 6.2 The Council's Action Plan (2003/06) as part of its Self-Assessment for CPA, has committed itself to draw on the good work already achieved and focus tightly on the whole agenda for Social Inclusion. The Community Strategy and particularly the Corporate Equality Policy (to be developed in conjunction with Level 2 of the Equality Standard) will be key in rolling this out.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

- i) the actions identified in paragraph 3 of the report be endorsed; and**
- ii) Officers be instructed to report back on progress, both directly and that achieved with other partners.**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

2001 Census Data - Office of National Statistics
Preventing Social Exclusion - Report by the Social Exclusion Unit - March 2001
Tackling Social Exclusion; achievements, lessons learnt and the way forward.
Making the Connections; Transport & Social Exclusion - interim findings from the Social Exclusion Unit.
The Smith Institute - Report "Travelling to School" - November 2003
SCC Paper - Chertsey St Ann's "Raising the Bar", scoping report - July 2003
CEO's File No 72.11.28

16. MONITORING OFFICER PROTOCOL (DAL)

The Council has designated the Director of Administration and Leisure as its Monitoring Officer under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Monitoring Officer's basic functions are to "blow the whistle" if the Council, its Committees, or Officers are trespassing into illegality or maladministration, and to carry out a range of functions supporting the role of the Standards and Audit Committee in maintaining ethics and probity within the authority. Runnymede, like a number of other authorities, has also allocated some constitutional functions to the role.

It is considered helpful to have a document setting out the functions of the Monitoring Officer and the understandings which will apply to his exercise of them. This indeed is advised as best practice by the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors. A document with similar objectives was recently approved for the Internal Audit function. A draft protocol is set out at Appendix 'H'.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

the Monitoring Officer protocol at Appendix 'H' be adopted by the Council.

(TO RECOMMEND)

Background Papers

Council Constitution; model protocol circulated by Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors.

17. BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT (DF)

A budget monitoring and summary forecast statement plus a projected outturn for the General Fund is attached at Appendix 'I'.

(FOR INFORMATION)

Background Papers

None stated.

18. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS (DAL)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. **To consider and recommend to Council the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2004/2005.**

2. Report

2.1 Copies of the Calendar have been previously circulated to Chief Officers, Group Leaders and the Committee/Sub Committee Chairmen. The calendar attached at Appendix 'J' is the one that was circulated. No comments were received thereon.

2.2 As Members are aware, the Government proposes that Borough Council Elections will be held on the same day as the European Election, namely Thursday 10 June 2004 and consequently this has implications for the Calendar of Meetings in May, June and July.

For information, the main changes compared to previous years are as follows:-

- The full Committee cycle normally held in June will be held in May so as to avoid holding the normal number of meetings in the month of the elections.
- The Council Meeting will be held in July as usual in order to approve recommendations from Committees held in the May cycle.
- In order to consider any urgent business, Corporate Management Committee will meet in May, June and twice in July (the latter of the two meetings in July will approve the Statement of Accounts in accordance with the new legislative requirements).
- Annual Council will be held on 24 June in order to elect the Mayor and appoint Committees for the new Municipal Year.
- Meetings of the new Licensing Committee have been scheduled for the next Municipal Year but its sub committees have not as yet been scheduled, as the new Regulations are still awaited.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

the Calendar of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2004/2005 be approved.

(TO RECOMMEND)

Background Papers

Letter dated 3 November 2003 sent to Group Leaders and Chairmen.

19. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES (DAL)

(a) Mary Drew Almshouses

1. The Council has the right to appoint three Nominated Trustees to help administer the Mary Drew Almshouses. These Trustees need not be Members of the Council, and their term of office is four years. If a Member is appointed his/her position is unaffected if he/she ceases to be a Member.
2. Although the Trust Deed does not specify any geographical requirement, the Almshouses are located in Englefield Green and the practice has been to appoint people who live either in Englefield Green or Egham. Before 1974 appointments were in the gift of Egham Urban District Council.
3. Former Councillor T.A. Stones (whose term of office was due to expire in 2004) has resigned. Mr. G.M. Martin (whose term of office was also due to expire in 2004) has unfortunately died recently. Mrs. M. Gibbon is the third trustee, and her trusteeship does not expire until 2006.
4. The Chairman of the Trustees has subsequently asked the Council to nominate County Councillor Miss S.M. Bruce and Borough Councillor H.W.V. Meares to the vacancies. Apparently both are willing to accept the position of Nominated Trustee.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

two Nominated Trustees be appointed to the Mary Drew Almshouses charity, (neither of which need to be a Member of this Council), each for a four-year period.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Letter from Secretary of Mary Drew Almshouses dated 18 September 2003 and subsequent correspondence.

b) Vacancies

The late Councillor A.G. (Tony) Collins represented the Council on the following outside bodies:-

Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee (J.M.C.)
Local Authorities M25 Consortium
Runnymede Citizens Advice Bureau (C.A.B.) Management Committee
Surrey Access Forum.

He was the sole representative on the Basingstoke Canal J.M.C. He was also the sole representative on the Surrey Access Forum, although Councillor Mrs Price is the nominated deputy. Councillor Tuley remains as the Council representative on the Runnymede C.A.B. Management Committee and Councillors Davis and Mrs Price remain on the Local Authorities M25 Consortium. All these appointments are annual (i.e. until May 2004).

The Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to replace Councillor Collins on these vacancies.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

the Committee considers replacing Councillor Collins on the four outside bodies mentioned above.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None

20. CONSULTATION ON COMBINED EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS – PROPOSED REGULATIONS (CEO)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 **To request Members to consider a response to the proposed regulations for the Combined European Parliamentary and Local Authority Elections 2004.**

2. Background Information

2.1 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs have published a joint consultation paper seeking views on Draft Statutory Instruments published for the Combined European Parliamentary and Local Authority Elections 2004.

2.2 Responses to the paper should be sent to the Office of The Deputy Prime Minister, by no later than 11 December 2003.

2.3 Following consultation, the Government intends to lay the final drafts of these Statutory Instruments before Parliament by the end of this year and, subject to Parliamentary approval, to make these Instruments before the end of January 2004.

3. Report

3.1 The consultation paper seeks views on draft statutory instruments that make provision for

- The conduct of European Parliamentary elections in Great Britain and Gibraltar in 2004;
- The combination of polls of these elections and certain other elections in England and Wales in 2004; and
- The Government's announced intention to move the date of the English Local Council and Greater London Authority elections in 2004, so that they can take place at the same time as the European Parliamentary Elections.

3.2 Responses to this paper may be made public. However, responses will be kept confidential if specific requests to do so are made.

3.3 The paper is a significant document consisting of procedural and technical drafts of Statutory Instruments. These give effect to the Governments intention, as expressed on 6 May 2003, to move the date of the Local Elections in 2004 to Thursday 10 June 2004. In addition provision is made for the conduct of the European Election and for the combination of the two polls.

3.4 In addition to the change of date and significant administrative amendments, the drafts make provision for the following **key** changes affecting the local elections:

- The administration area for the combined polls will change from the Parliamentary Boundary to the Local Authority District area.
- Where a European Region is counting electronically, Returning Officers will have the discretion locally, subject to conditions, to also count electronically. The decision as to which Regions will be piloting will be made by the ODPM subject to

recommendation by the Electoral Commission.

- The terms of office of Councillors affected by the postponement are to be extended.
- The terms of office of those newly elected Councillors will be reduced to account for the change of date i.e. the Local Elections in 2005 will revert to May.
- No mention is made of the Mayor's term of office but this will run from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting as now.
- No amendment is made to the law regarding the holding of the Annual Council meeting. This must be held within 21 days after the election and a date of 24 June 2004 has been provisionally set.
- The issue and receipt of postal ballot papers must be combined – 2004 only.
- Representatives of the Electoral Commission will be granted access to all future European Parliamentary and Local Elections.
- The combined polling hours will be 0700 – 2200.
- The result of the Local European Count will not be made available to the public, including candidates etc. until after the close of polls across Europe at 9 p.m. on Sunday 13 June 2004. However, it will be possible for counting to commence before then.

3.5 Issues affecting the administration of the European Election will be responded to by the Returning Officer for the South East Region, Mr S Lake of South Oxfordshire Borough Council. Consequences of that response will be advised to the Chief Executive Officer as Local Returning Officer in due course.

3.6 A copy of the full consultation paper has been placed in the Members' Room and extra copies can be downloaded from the ODPM web site <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/>.

THE COMMITTEE IS ASKED -

to consider, as part of the public consultation, whether it wishes to make a response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs joint paper "Combined European Parliamentary and Local Authority Elections 2004 - Proposed Regulations".

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Combined European Parliamentary and Local Authority Elections 2004 - Proposed Regulations

21. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES (DAL)

a) HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE - 12 NOVEMBER 2003

Bowes Road/Wapshott Road Redevelopment - Provision of Additional Heating

At its meeting on 12 November 2003 the Housing and Community Services Committee was advised that the redevelopment of the Bowes Road/Wapshott Road estate would, regrettably, be subject to further delays and it was agreed that additional heating should be provided to the existing flats on this estate as an interim measure.

In order for the redevelopment of the estate to proceed, the Apex Housing Group needed to submit detailed plans to the Environment Agency (EA) demonstrating that the development would incorporate the flood mitigation measures required by the Agency. Officers had since been advised that the EA was redrawing the flood plain map in the light of the January 2003 flooding. Until the new map was available, the Flood Risk Consultants employed by Apex

were unable to submit their proposals to the EA. The Committee was advised that this would hold up the process by approximately three months.

Members noted that, even if the redevelopment of the estate were to commence in 2004, some tenants living in the flats which were due to be demolished would not be able to move into newly built homes for three years. As the existing properties were the only Council homes without some form of central heating, the Committee resolved that the 84 Council owned flats on the Bowes Road/Wapshott Road estate should be provided with additional heating as an interim measure. It was agreed that two "Dimplex" type electric radiators should be provided for each of the 84 flats at a total cost of £23,520.

This Committee is accordingly asked to approve a supplementary estimate for this amount, to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account reserves, to finance the purchase of these electric radiators.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

a supplementary estimate in the sum of £23,520 be approved for the purchase of "Dimplex" type electric radiators for Council owned flats on the Bowes Road/ Wapshott Road estate, to be financed from Housing Revenue Account reserves.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None stated

b) LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - 20 NOVEMBER 2003

Summer 'Splash' Scheme 2003 and 2004

At its meeting on 20 November 2003, the Leisure and Environment Committee approved the virement of £10,000 from the Splash scheme to supplement the existing capital provision of £10,000 for the purchase of a new booking system. This would bring the total funding available for the booking system up to £20,000.

Owing to a combination of savings and increased income, the budget for the 2003/04 Splash scheme was anticipated to be underspent in the sum of £13,800. Therefore the Committee considered it would be sensible to utilise part of this money for the booking system for play and youth activities.

Accordingly, this Committee is asked to approve the virement as set out in the Recommendation below.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

a virement of £10,000 from the Splash revenue budget in 2003/04 to supplement the capital provision for a new booking system be approved.

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

None

22. WRITE-OFFS (BT)

i) Rent

Set out at Appendix 'K' is a schedule containing 4 cases that are in excess of £1,000, totalling £7,976.26 that have proven to be irrecoverable for the reasons shown. Authority is sought to have the debts written off. Items 1, 2 and 3 will then be passed to Credit G Ltd to recover on the Council's behalf.

ii) Council Tax

Set out at Appendix 'L' is a schedule containing 1 case, totalling £1,540.21 that has proven to be irrecoverable for the reasons shown. Authority is sought to have the debt written off.

iii) Non-Domestic Rates

Set out at Appendix 'M' is a schedule containing 1 case that is in excess of £1,000, totalling £2,682.35 that has proven to be irrecoverable for the reasons shown. Authority is sought to have the debt written off.

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that -

- i) the Rent arrears, totalling £7,976.26 as detailed in Appendix 'K', be written off as irrecoverable;**
- ii) the Council Tax arrears, totalling £1,540.21 as detailed in Appendix 'L' be written off as irrecoverable; and**
- iii) the non-domestic rate arrears, totalling £2,682.35 as detailed in Appendix 'M' be written off as irrecoverable.**

(TO RESOLVE)

Background Papers

Borough Treasurer's Rent, Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates write-off files (all exempt).

23. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 MEMBER WORKING GROUP - MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Local Government Act 2000 Member Working Group held on 22 September 2003 are attached at Appendix 'N'.

(FOR INFORMATION)

Background Papers

None

24. INFORMATION STRATEGY MEMBER WORKING GROUP - MINUTES

The Minutes of the Information Strategy Member Working Group held on 28 October 2003 are attached at Appendix 'O'.

(FOR INFORMATION)

Background Papers

None

25. 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 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

(TO RESOLVE)