

MINUTES: of the meeting of the Runnymede Local Committee held at 6.00 on Friday 12 March 2004 at the Runnymede Centre, Chertsey

Surrey County Council Members

*Mrs Elise S Whiteley - Chairman
*Mrs Moira James – Vice Chairman
*Mr R A N Lowther
*Mr Terry Dicks
*Miss Susan Bruce

*= present

PART ONE - IN PUBLIC

[All references to Items refer to the Agenda for the meeting]

01/04 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]

There were no apologies for absence

02/04 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed as a true record and signed

03/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

Elise Whiteley made a declaration of personal interest in respect of Item 7 –Members Allocations in that she is a governor of the Hythe School

04/04 PETITIONS [Item 4]

No petitions had been received since the last Committee meeting.

05/04 PUBLIC QUESTIONS [Item 5]

An informal public question time had taken place prior to the formal meeting. The minutes of this session are at **Annex 1**

A formal public question was taken from Cllr Judith Norman, Conservative Group Secretary, on behalf of the Runnymede Borough Council Conservative Group regarding the siting of traveller sites on green belt land in Runnymede.

The question and its response are attached as **Annex 2**.

06/04 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS [Item 6]

Cllrs Moira James and Terry Dicks had submitted member's questions. The questions and responses are attached in **Annexe 3** to these minutes.

07/04 MEMBERS ALLOCATIONS [Item 7]

Carolyn Rowe Surrey County Council Local Director introduced the report outlining items awaiting Committee decision for funding.

RESOLVED

The Committee

- (i) Agreed the projects outlined in Appendix 1 version 2

08/04 THE RUNNYMEDE CENTRE – FUTURE PLANS [Item 8]

Peter Langham, Executive Member, Sandy Munn, Head of Property, and Ian Creswell, Head of Asset Management were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr Creswell introduced the report; saying that the future of the Runnymede Centre was linked to the Office Project as the facility is due to transfer to the successful contractor on the satisfactory provision of area and local office solutions.

He iterated that the opportunity existed to achieve early closure of the Runnymede Centre, and there was the strategy to close in line with the Working aspect of the project.

Mrs Whiteley emphasised the need for a fine office building with suitable accommodation of the type the members had already asked for at an earlier meeting.

Mr Creswell assured the Committee that their view was an important factor in considering the relocation. Their views, he said, would be taken to the Member Asset panel, from that the recommendations would go to the Executive.

It was reported that there was no decision taken at this time as to where the new location would be.

The Committee Members felt they had not been kept in the loop regarding the office project, but made it clear that they did not wish to be moved twice, with an interim move to a temporary location.

Members were also clear that realistic car parking needed to be included in any venue.

Mr Dicks couldn't understand the decision not to move to the Aviator Park facility.

Mr Lowther made it clear that local people wanted the services at the Runnymede Centre to remain local, and that originally Members had been told there would be five area offices, one of which would be in Runnymede, but that we now appeared to be starting from scratch.

Mr Lowther told the Committee he had given Mr Creswell a contact with a list of vacant properties in the area.

Mrs Whiteley reiterated the need for car parking, and Mr Dicks said he required the Surrey County Council and Union Jack flagpoles to be relocated also.

Mrs James said it was important for the public to be able to reach the Local Committee offices, and that accessibility by public transportation was a key issue for any proposed facility for the services currently offered at the Runnymede centre.

Also it was important to have adequate accommodation for SCC staff to be able to do their jobs well.

Mrs James said there was a need to be realistic about the needs of Adult and Community Learning. There was a need to be able to deliver all the sessions currently available, not just room to house their officers, and that there was a limit as to what could be accommodated in libraries, and although schools had previously been mentioned, schools were tied up in education young people in the day and therefore could not offer day time learning opportunities.

Mrs James said that that just as value for money is important, there was a need to be fair to staff and to ensure they are well consulted, as well as the Members having a full say in the matter.

There was a brief discussion about the possible areas within Runnymede, which could be considered.

Peter Langham said there was a need to be realistic, and saw no reason why all the members could not be invited to the asset panel when this was on the agenda.

Mr Cresswell reassured Members that the plan would be to find a permanent solution, not a series of temporary moves.

RESOLVED

The Committee

- (i) NOTED the impact of the Office Project on the Runnymede Centre
- (ii) INDICATED its preference for the location and building choice for the proposed new local office in Runnymede
- (iii) COMMENTED on a proposed strategy for the Runnymede centre

09/04 LOCAL EDUCATION ATTAINMENT REPORT 2002/2003 ACADEMIC YEAR [Item 9]

Mr Michell and Local Education Officer, Mr John Ambrose presented the local education attainment report prepared by Dr Rowan Swan to the committee.

Mr Michell reported that the strengths of education in Runnymede showed most clearly through local value added measures. It was also reported that recruitment and retention of teachers and school management, although improved over the last year, was still an issue with a turnover rate still acute at 1 in 5 schools.

The Committee asked whether in terms of truancy patrols, were the children of travelling families going to be treated in the same way as others, Paula Evans, Multi-professional team manager, Children and Young People Directorate, replied that traveller education is still managed centrally rather than locally, and iterated that the service works hard to ensure those children have the same attendance as children who are not travellers.

The Committee expressed concern about the difficulty in recruiting and cited a school trying to recruit a deputy headteacher, Mr Michell said schools in the South East of England are finding this particularly acute, and that here in the north of Surrey, it is difficult due to the fact that there was significant financial gain by teachers moving into the London areas.

The committee asked whether pressure could be brought to bear to get affordable housing for teachers in Surrey, and whether teachers were given the same allowance

increases as the Fire and the Police services, Mr Ambrose reported that where planning for affordable housing is given, they work closely with the Borough Councils regarding affordable housing, and cited one secondary school with a high staff turnover who maintain a complex deal with a local rental agency to attract teaching staff, but that these solutions were in the domain of school governing bodies rather than the statutory agency.

The Committee asked about reported percentages of pupils taught in special schools and about lowered KS 3 results, to which Mr Michell reported that performance of schools in Surrey is above the national average and that Runnymede does better than boroughs with similar socio economic factors.

There were debates over the need for schools to balance their books at the end of year, and the problem of managing affordable housing linked to a teacher staying in the profession.

Mr Michell warned this was a serious issue, as there currently didn't appear to be enough teachers to replace those who would leave in the next few years.

RESOLVED

The Local Committee

- (i) AGREED –The Local Committee Members will use the discussion to identify strategies to further facilitate the improvement of education within Runnymede through their support of schools and/or pupil groups. Feedback on key issues if necessary would be taken to the Children & Young Peoples' Select Committee for consideration in the next Educational Development Plan
- (ii) AGREED –The Local Committee would consider whether schools would welcome further contact from Local Members to discuss issues that need to be addressed during the coming year and which the members can help with.

10/04 CHILDREN'S' SERVICES REPORT ON EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT [Item 10]

Paula Evans, Multi-professional team manager, Children and Young People, described the organisation of the Multi- Professional teams in Surrey, and their links with the Traveller Support Service, and the Physical and Sensory Support Service, both of which she reported on the work of.

The Committee iterated concerns over the "Not School" government initiative where excluded pupils are expected to learn on a computer at home, and it left these children able to roam about in the school day and get into further trouble.

Mrs Evans reported that, and although there were not pupils in Runnymede accessing this project, she would take Members concerns back. She also reported that this was currently being monitored.

RESOLVED

That the Committee:

- (i) AGREED – The Local Committee provided comment and feedback on the content of the report and the operation of the service
- (ii) AGREED- The Local Committee commented on the information in the report and how future reports might be presented

11/04 STATION ROAD, ADDLESTONE, ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT SCHEME
[Item 11)

Plans of the Station Road scheme were made available to the public at the Committee Meeting, where Mr Mitchell, Principle Engineer, Transportation Department reported on the progress of the scheme. The committee asked that parking in adjacent residential roads be closely monitored for any impact locally.

RESOLVED

The Committee

- (i) AGREED- the detailed design of the Station Road, Addlestone Environmental Enhancement Scheme as indicated in drawings 3257-03 and 3257-04 is approved including the additional feature set out in paragraph 2.10
- (ii) AGREED - a contribution of £40,000 is made towards essential street lighting replacement from the Local Transport Plan funding for 2004/2005.

12/04 GREEN LANE CYCLEWAY PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESULTS (ITEM 12]

Mr Rhys Mander, transportation engineer, informed the Local Committee of the consultation process and its results. He reported that there had been a 49% response rate (35 questionnaires) with 20 people being in favour, 4 having no view and 11 opposed to the scheme.

It was reported that 10 of the 11 objections received came from residents on the southern side of Green Lane, who would be directly affected by the scheme.

The Committee raised the concern of people backing out of driveways and subsequent hazards, also the expense of the scheme in relation to low numbers of respondents.

Mr Ward, Transportation Director reported that the investment in cycling was for the health of schoolchildren, as something that concerned the County, also that his team would do some work in local schools to educate children about safe cycling.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

- (i) AGREED - That the Green Lane Cycleway Scheme be progressed to detailed design and construction.

13/04 UPDATE OF THE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMME [Item 13]

Will Ward, Local Transportation Director, introduced this regular report demonstrating progress in delivering the transportation programme for this financial year and progress of works planned and underway by the Local Transportation team.

Under section 1, Mr Ward appraised the Committee of the Surrey Local Transport Plan 2001-2006 and of the proposed expenditure of the LTP 2004-05 settlement.

Under section 2, Mr Ward , reported that following a request from Cllr Lowther, the transportation department would consider the feasibility of closing a public footpath off

Riverdale Close in Chertsey. This would involve looking closely at legal issues and antisocial behaviour legislation.

Members reported that an alternative path needed to be constructed if the recently constructed fence was to remain.

Under section 3, Mr David Mitchell explained the development of a map in Runnymede to promote cycling for information purposes.

Under section 4, Mr Mitchell explained the reasons why the experimental order prohibiting a right turn into Station Road from Crouch Oak lane was seen as being successful, and asked the committee to introduce a permanent traffic order to that effect. The committee asked that there be a process in place within the decriminalised parking enforcement process to take number plates of those flouting the order. Mr Mitchell reported that there had been a dialogue with the Borough council and the police to make that happen.

Under section 5, Mr Mitchell updated the Committee on the progress of implementing the Decriminalised Parking Enforcement in Runnymede. It was reported on 15th January, Runnymede Borough Council approved the agency agreement in principle, and it was therefore hoped to have the process in place by November this year.

Under section 6, Mr Mitchell reported that this item was included at the request of Cllr Lowther, Member for Chertsey. The Committee were informed that London Street had been due for quiet resurfacing in the next financial year, and it was proposed to review the residents issues post this resurfacing and take any action forward from that point.

Mr Lowther moved that a motion be put:

“That a full investigation of London Street be undertaken that should include:

1. The possibility of a 20mph speed limit buttressed by the fact that London Street is an important arm of Chertsey’s conservation area containing several of its oldest buildings, and that it this would make it the same as Guildford Street which is also has a 20mph speed limit.
2. The need for a pedestrian crossing bearing in mind its pedestrian usage by school children attending Stepgates and St Ann’s schools, senior citizens from nearby flats, attendees at an Osteopaths in the street and the Chertsey Family Health Centre in Stepgates, and parishioners of St Peters church.
3. Parking on pavements, especially in the vicinity of Blacksmiths Lane.
4. Manhole covers needing better setting because of the crunch when cars go over them.
5. The demand for speed activated signs and cameras. Cllr Chris Norman who had been present at the meeting was going to speak with David Dodd, manager, Safer Runnymede to see if it was possible to have a camera in Runnymede.
6. Double yellow lines at the entrance into Drill Hall Road leading from London Street. At present there is a single yellow line, quite inadequate, at that point with double yellow lines half way along Drill Hall Road by its junction with Galsworthy Road.
7. The assertion that something needs to be done at the London Street, Bridge Road, Pound Road area.”

Cllr Lowther proposed the motion, which was seconded by Cllr Dicks, when put to the vote all members were in favour : CARRIED

Under Section 7, Mr Ward apprised the Committee of the proposal to widen the Woodham Lock to Selsdon Road footpath and requested Members support the principal of the project.

Under section 8, Mr Ward brought to Committee the report on progress in delivering the transportation programme for this financial year. He added that London Street would be added to the list to reflect the recent committee decision to investigate it. Mr Mitchell agreed

with committee members that highlighting the bend at Trumps Green Road and Kitsmead Lane would be helpful.

RESOLVED

The Local Committee;

- (i) AGREED – (from Section 1-SURREY LOCAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2001 – 2006 SETTLEMENT 2004) - that the local allocation of £135,000 be utilised as detailed
- (ii) AGREED – (from Section 2-RIVERSDELL CLOSE, CHERTSEY) that the feasibility and likely costs of closing a public footpath be considered for further investigation and consultation
- (iii) AGREED – (from Section 4- CROUCH OAK LANE, ADDLESTONE) to the advertising of a Traffic Regulation Order to introduce the “No Right Turn” on Crouch Oak Lane at the junction with Station Road.
- (iv) AGREED – (from Section 4- CROUCH OAK LANE, ADDLESTONE) that the Local Transportation Director be authorised to consider any objections received in consultation with the Chairman and the local County Councillor.
- (v) AGREED- (from Section 6-LONDON STREET, CHERTSEY) –to a full investigation of London Street irrespective of the surfacing scheme, these being, the need for a pedestrian crossing, parking on pavements in the vicinity of Blacksmiths Lane, the resetting of manhole covers, the demand for speed activated signs and cameras, double yellow lines at the entrance to Drill Hall Road leading from London Street, and the assertion that something needs to be done at the London Street, Bridge Road, Pound Road area.
- (vi) AGREED- (from Section 7- WOODHAM LOCK TO SELSDON ROAD (FOOTPATH 16) PROPOSED WIDENING) -to support the principle of the project and authorise the Local Transportation Director in consultation with the Chairman and Divisional Member to agree terms
- (vii) AGREED- (from Section 8-UPDATE OF LOCAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMME) - to the updated programme of transportation schemes

[Meeting ended 8.10 p.m.]

Chairman's signature

Record of open public question time

Question 1. - Mr Peter Anderson

Mr Anderson said there were two items on this agenda that required the co-operation of Surrey County Council and Runnymede Borough Council, the item regarding Gogmore Farm Park and The item regarding the future of The Runnymede Centre. Mr Anderson asked when were the two organisations going to have a proper partnership Committee as in other areas, with both partners at the table for Committee.

Response

The Borough could come and join us to discuss highway matters, and we wait to hear from them. We are having informal meetings with the Borough council on some issues.

Question 2. - Mr Crazy Crab

1. Why do schools in Runnymede celebrate Mothers Day, but not Fathers day?
2. What exactly is "Affordable Housing", how much is it and whom is it going to be allocated to?
3. There are a lot of buildings going up locally, but is there any provision, such as workshops, for the small businessman?

Responses

It is not within the power of the Local Committee to determine whether schools celebrate Fathers Day.

The Committee are very concerned about the question of affordable housing and where this is in discussion, those decisions are not yet taken. Affordability is very complex problem when properties in Surrey are so expensive.

The availability of properties was the business of the Borough Council, and it was suggested Mr Crab ask for their advice.

Question 3. -Cllr Tony Davis, Runnymede Borough Councillor for Chertsey South and Rowtown.

Raised the continuing matter of the fire station reorganisation in Chertsey. He stated that he felt the consultation to be very low key.

One of the concerns was that where Runnymede is said to have one of the lowest fire records in Surrey, it has one of the highest road traffic accidents, presumably affected by the fact the M3 and M25 run through it. With a loss of one fire appliance, it was a concern that more people may die in car accidents as they cant get out of their vehicles. Mr Davis wanted more done to raise public awareness of the situation.

Response

Members of the committee had some concerns also, particularly with regard to road traffic accidents. They agreed to take on board Mr Davis' comments.

Question 4. - Cllr John Furey, Runnymede Borough Councillor

Understood there had been a best value review of local committees, and asked for a copy of the public report.

Response

Mr Fury was told there had been a review taken, when Local Committees had been in operation for one year. A copy of the report would be sent to Mr Fury.

Question 5. - Cllr Edwards- Runnymede Borough Councillor

Asked if the Local Committee kept an eye on the position of the central Railway proposals

Response

Mr Edwards was informed of the outcome of a meeting Cllr James had with Mr McNulty, where it seemed an answer would not be forthcoming in a short timescale, potentially due to the regional referenda coming up in Northern England.

Mr Ward offered to seek an up to date situation and send it to Mr Edwards.

Question 6. - Cllr Habgood -Leader, Runnymede Borough Councillor

Thanked members for changing the time of the meeting to allow so many more people to attend. He voiced that relations between RBC and SCC were as good now as they have always been, but that there were difficulties in the way each of the organisations were differently modelled that made joining for transportation items at Local Committee difficult.

Mr Habgood raised the issue over a recent decision to allow traveller groups to be sited on Green Belt land within Runnymede (Walnut Tree Farm).

His concerns were based on the fact that he considered it set a dangerous precedent to other groups to flout planning application laws by claiming special reasons.

Response

Mr Habgood was thanked for his feedback over the timing of the meeting, but as there was a formal question on the agenda over the issue of traveller sites, he was asked to wait for the outcome of that.

Runnymede Local Committee, Friday 12 March 2004.

Annexe. 2. To minutes- Public Questions

Question 1.

From Cllr Judith Norman, Conservative Group Secretary, on behalf of the Runnymede Borough Council Conservative Group:

We assume that the Surrey County Council Members and Officers are aware of the Inspector's recent decision on Walnut Tree Farm, Almers Road, Lyne (APP/Q3630/C/02/1103640 and APP/Q3630/C/03/1118321), which has allowed the siting of 40 gypsy caravans and associated lorries under 3.5 tonnes on Metropolitan Green Belt land. This will have serious consequences for Runnymede as nearly 70% of the area is designated Green Belt land, which if purchased by gypsies in small parcels will become more vulnerable to further illegal encampments.

May we draw your attention to paragraphs 54 to 58 and paragraph 61 of the Inspector's report. The main thrust of these paragraphs is that there is a Surrey-wide shortage of pitches for gypsies. During designation, Runnymede fulfilled its obligation and provided 30 pitches within the Borough (Elm Farm and The Paddocks), and subsequent to designation a number of further sites have been allowed on appeal.

This cannot be a Runnymede problem alone. We would ask that the Local Area Committee ensure that Surrey County Council devise a more equitable way of providing the number of gypsy sites that are obviously required throughout Surrey.

Response by Mr Steve Evans, Principle Surveyor, Property, Surrey County Council

It can be confirmed that Surrey County Council officers who are responsible for Green Belt and traveller issues, are aware of the Inspector's recent decision at Walnut Tree Farm, Almers Road, Lyne. As a result of similar decisions within the County, the County Council has initiated a Strategic Review into Traveller Issues, an element of which is currently being taken forward based on a need survey for traveller accommodation. Discussions with partner organisations have already taken place as part of this strategic review and this includes Runnymede Borough Council (Head of Planning).

This needs assessment will be completed by the end of April, the consequences of which will be discussed with partner organisation to arrive at a common strategy.

It should be noted that Central Government have commissioned and now received, the Report relating to the twice yearly counts of gypsy caravans throughout the Country. The key findings of the Report relate to concerns over the accuracy of the counts, the context and purpose of the counts and the lack of involvement of traveller representatives. The conclusions of the Report and the work carried out by the County through the needs assessment, will inform current and future Local Plans when dealing with policies on traveller issue.

Cllr Mr Ray Lowther stated that a letter should be sent to the Executive to raise the concern that as Runnymede has more than its fair share of traveller sites compared to other areas in Surrey, there should be no further requirements for future sites in the area. It was agreed by the Committee to forward this letter.

Runnymede Local Committee, Friday 12 March 2004.

Annexe. 3. To minutes-Members Questions

Question 1. From Councillor Moira James regarding traffic congestion:

Having been approached by local residents with their concerns about traffic congestion at the junction of Mayfield Avenue and Woodham Lane, New Haw, I would ask the Surrey County Council Transport Manager for Runnymede:

Can I have a report on the situation and advice on any appropriate action that could be taken to improve the position at that junction?

Response from the SCC Local Transportation Service - Runnymede

Officers from the Local Transportation Service have been working with the builder of a housing development in Mayfield Avenue to minimize the disruption to the highway. On a limited number of occasions each week the builder requires access to the site for long vehicles. When vehicles not connected to the redevelopment are parked near to the junction with Woodham Lane it becomes difficult for the builder's vehicles to manoeuvre this then creates the congestion, which is experienced for limited periods. Officers will be making contact with the owners of the parked vehicles to make them aware of the difficulty they are causing. It is suggested that this is the appropriate action to be taking bearing in mind the occasional nature of the problem.

The injury accident record at the junction has been examined for the last full three years for which records are available. There was a single accident 20m south west of the junction along Woodham Lane. Whilst a cyclist was seriously injured the circumstances were unrelated to the congestion at the junction.

Supplementary question from Councillor Moira James:

Do you feel this could be an issue over any longer term?

Response from Mr Mitchell, Local Transportation Service - Runnymede

It is limited occasions during the week. It is possible, during the short term to do something about the parking using the registration numbers.

Mr Ward, Local Transportation Director described to Local Committee the issues of increasing car ownership and the difficulty of people parking at residential junctions.

Question 2. From Councillor Terry Dicks regarding Addlestone library:

Could the area library manager provide a full update regarding the current closure of Addlestone library?

Response by Rose Wilson, Library Service Manager, North West Surrey:

In January some library staff expressed concerns about the air quality in the building and experts from outside the authority were asked to carry out tests. Initial results were received by telephone on 3 February. The tests showed above average levels of a fungal spore, aspergillus, which is usually associated with damp conditions. Aspergillus is a common fungus that can grow in the outside environment and also inside buildings. It was decided as a precaution to close the library on the 4 February pending the arrival of the full report and its recommendations.

The report recommended a range of work to be carried out on the air re-circulating system in the library including cleaning ductwork and introducing filters. To address the damp problem

repairs are being carried out to the guttering and walls waterproofed .All the carpets in the library have also been replaced and the building given a thorough clean.

Medical advice was sought from a variety of sources including the Surrey Health Protection Unit. Their view is that the fungus is unlikely to have an effect on healthy people but it can cause allergic reactions in some people and lung disease if people who have seriously low immune systems are exposed to it. They advised us that people should ring NHS direct if they wanted more information about aspergillus. As an employer it would be wrong for us to discuss publicly the health or other personal details of members of staff at the library but we will offer whatever support we can to any members of staff who may be concerned about the effect of this on their health. None of the staff are currently on sick leave but are doing relief work at other libraries.

The work to the heating and ventilating systems and treating the damp is almost completed and further tests are being carried out to make sure the aspergillus spores are at a normal level. We are unable to say for certain when the library will re-open but we hope it will be during the week beginning 15 March.

Supplementary question from Councillor Terry Dicks

Thanked Mrs Wilson for all the hard work she had done, and asked for an assurance that the library would not be open before the report gave clearance, also that Mr Dicks could see the report when it was completed.

Response from Mrs Rose Wilson

The results of the second test were due on Monday (15 March). The preliminary report recommended the library would be able to open as normal. The report would be looked at in detail, and a copy would be sent to Mr Dicks for reassurance.