

Questions to Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 2 April 2014

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Dorking Hills

- I. Members were informed on 14 February that the Runnymede Centre had been handed to the Army to help with the response to flooding. Has the situation changed?**

This did occur and the site was fully vacated of SCC staff (except facilities staff). The Army took overall responsibility and management of the site. The Army fully vacated at the end of February.

- II. If the Army have departed from the Runnymede Centre, why has it remained closed, when and how were members informed, and who made the decision to do so?**

The Runnymede Centre reopened on Monday 10 March to staff for hotdesking, training and meeting space. Tenants, some of whom may have been displaced, were also encouraged to return from 10 March. It is not closed.

During the period from 28 February to 10 March the site was closed to SCC staff (except facilities staff). This was to enable a clean-up and repair programme to happen.

- III. When will the Runnymede Centre reopen and what are the preconditions required for it to do so?**

Please see above

- IV. Is it accurate that 150 members of staff have been relocated from their normal place of work at the Runnymede Centre to other County Council locations? If so, which other locations?**

From mid-February a number of staff who had Runnymede as their primary-base was moved to work from other sites. The bulk of staff were from Children's services and their roles (in the main) includes peripatetic working. The majority of these staff were moved to Quadrant Court to work with colleagues in that office building. A team of Adults Social Care staff were also relocated to Quadrant Court. Other staff continued to hotdesk from other sites including District and Borough locations.

- V. Is it accurate that staff formerly based at the Runnymede Centre have been refused access and that in some cases locks have been changed on their office doors, preventing them from accessing files and collecting personal**

belongings? If this is accurate, what is the legal position of denying staff access to their personal belongings?

Staff were refused access by the Army to the building for the period that the Army commissioned the site. In addition from end of February to 10 March, whilst clear-up was undertaken they were not able to access the buildings. During these periods, essential filing, equipment and personal belongings were moved upon request.

We are not aware of any code or lock changes on office doors. Two main side doors accessing the centre have been closed to staff entry meaning that staff now have to walk through the main front doors, through the reception area to get onto site. Staff have not been prevented from getting their personal belongings since 10 March.

VI. Which services previously based at the Runnymede Centre are being based elsewhere and what is the impact on service users?

Runnymede is part of the corporate office portfolio not an “operational” service-user site. In terms of staff and the impact of general service provision on customers; An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been produced as part of the Making A Difference Programme which includes Runnymede. Furthermore, this is being re-evaluated as part of a new staff consultation period specific to Runnymede which commences 2 April – 30 April.

VII. What are the medium to long term plans for the use of the Runnymede Centre, such as a decision to permanently close it?

The medium term plans are for the site to continue as a corporate building for hotdesking, training and meeting space. There will be no teams permanently based there in the future which was recommended as part of the original Making a Difference Programme.

The longer term plan for the site is to become part of SCC secondary school provision, meeting a need for additional school places in the area. The new school would open in 2017 and as such the site will be required to be developed from 2015.

VIII. How much money is being saved by Surrey County Council while the Runnymede Centre is closed, noting the following extracts from the Budget Monitoring Report to Cabinet 25 March 2014:

45. Business Services (BUS) projects a -£6.2m full year underspend. BUS has delivered this year's efficiency savings, brought forward some of next year's and is also achieving one-off revenue savings. The underspend is an increase of -£0.6m compared to last month. The increased underspend reflects utility costs savings and the impact of rescheduling training courses due to take place at the Runnymede Centre.

51. *HR and Organisational Development forecasts -£0.5m year end underspend, a change of -£0.2m compared to last month. This is caused by several factors including delays to delivering training courses as a result of not being able to use the Runnymede Centre*

The Runnymede Centre was only closed for a two week period from when the Army vacated the site to it reopening following clear-up and repairs on 10 March. There are no buildings savings associated with this period as the site was still staffed, and all utilities continued; heat, light, security etc.

The extracts above relate to cancellation of a number of training courses for which a new venue could not be found at short notice to host the event. This amounts to approximately £30K over a period of up to 4 weeks (February-10 March). Training commenced again at Runnymede on 10th March. The other underspends due to staffing, occupational health and other training give rise to the additional £0.2m within HR.

Nick Skellett, CBE
Chairman of Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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