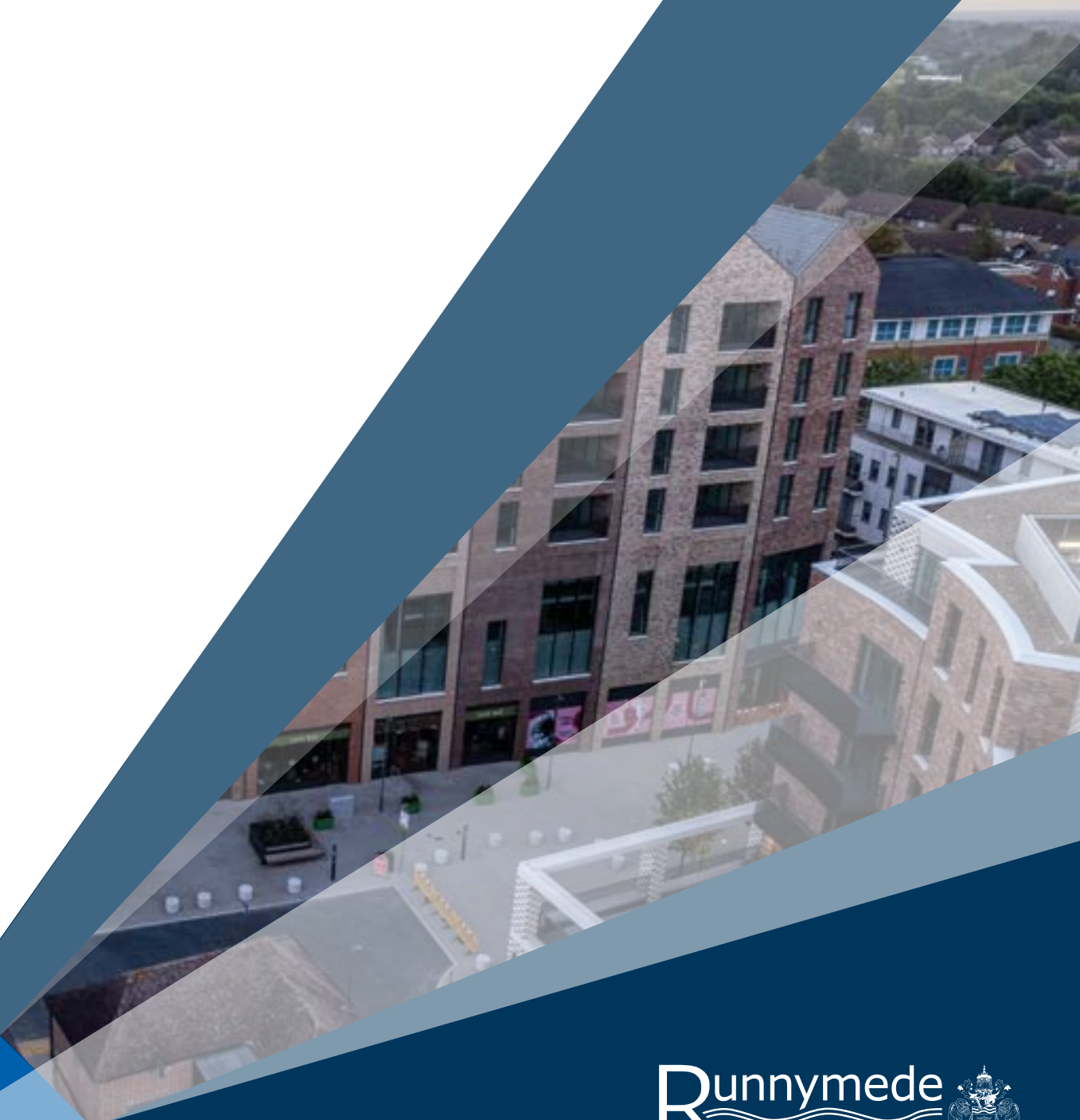


# Runnymede Borough Council

## Annual Review

April 2022 - March 2023





**Front cover:** The regeneration of the top of Egham High Street was completed this year with the opening of our brand new Magna Square development of homes, student accommodation, leisure and retail businesses.

**Inside cover:** Our CCTV hub's service grew to provide support to two areas of Hampshire, which in turn brought in income to support the delivery of cameras and monitoring locally.

**Back cover:** As a responsible landlord, we removed the cladding from apartment buildings at Addlestone One, and replaced it with materials which fully meet current safety legislation. This was done at no cost to people living in the buildings.

# Introduction

## Leader of the Council's message



**Cllr Tom Gracey,  
Leader.**

I am proud to say your local council has continued to deliver, despite another challenging year: together we saw off Covid-19 only to be confronted with a cost of living crisis.

The commitment of councillors and staff across the Council continues to impress me, and I thank everyone for their considerable efforts.

We have delivered new homes, administered grants totalling nearly £1m to support the cost of living, processed hundreds of

planning submissions, carried out more bin collections than I could mention and continued to run important services like meals at home, CCTV and environmental health inspections.

The launch of our Civic Awards was a wonderful occasion, demonstrating the immense range of activity, support and culture which exists in Runnymede.

The publication of our Corporate Business Plan was significant step setting out our direction of travel and priorities as we look to realise the ambition that Runnymede is considered the best borough in the country to live, work, visit or study. It brings structure and vision to how we will respond to climate change and support the health and wellbeing of our residents, their ability to effect change locally and the economic prosperity of our Borough.

As we draw the 2022-23 year to a close, I would like to thank Paul Turrell, our retiring Chief Executive, for his 14 years of dedicated service to Runnymede, which has been greatly valued. His support has been behind every significant initiative this Council has delivered as well as resolving many issues which allow us to continue operating smoothly and efficiently.

When you look at your Council Tax bill and see how much of it is kept by Runnymede, it is worth remembering that everything in this review was delivered for around £3.50 per week. This is exceptional service without a doubt.

**Cllr Tom Gracey,**  
Leader of the Council

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# How the Council works

To improve life in Runnymede, we carry out a wide range of services, or work in partnership with other councils and areas of the public sector.

## Our services and how they are paid for

Services we provide include licensing, environmental health inspections, anti-fraud work, managing parks and running elections. These are in addition to more recognised functions like providing social housing, processing planning applications and collecting refuse and recycling.

Our spending is split into revenue and capital accounts. In general terms, revenue spending pays for day-to-day services and operations and capital spending is to buy or improve an asset. In 2022-23:

- ▶ Revenue spending was around **£70m**.
- ▶ Capital spending was around **£36m**.

Our revenue account spending is funded through multiple income streams, including: (Percentage figures are approximate)

- ▶ Rents and leases: **40%**.
- ▶ Housing rents: **26%**.
- ▶ Fees and charges: **10%**.
- ▶ Council Tax: **9%**.
- ▶ Grants and contributions: **4%**.
- ▶ Investment income: **4%**.
- ▶ Other: **3%**.
- ▶ Business Rates: **2%**.
- ▶ Government grants: **2%**.

All capital account spending, unless funded by selling other assets, or a capital grant or contribution from other organisations, must be funded from our annual revenue stream.

Borrowing is only undertaken for specific purposes, such as regeneration, and the revenue income generated from previous purchases of commercial property goes to support the General Fund services the Council provides.

This contributes to the primary regeneration

objective of improving the wellbeing and economic prosperity of the Borough.

## Decision making

Our 41 councillors make strategic decisions about programmes of work at committee meetings which cover Environment and Sustainability, Community Services, Planning, Housing and Licensing.

Our Corporate Management Committee is our most senior committee and deals with corporate policy, finance, staffing, elections, economic development, administration, digital services, property management, non-housing regeneration schemes and urgent business.

All members of the Council meet seven times per year to make decisions on the most significant issues. These include our budget, Council Tax rates and items referred from committees.

These decisions are based on detailed reports provided by senior staff, which are debated and a vote held to decide whether they are approved or not.

## Service delivery

Our staff are split into public facing services, broadly aligned to our committees, and professional services such as human resources, legal and finance.

We employ around 450 people, many of whom live in Surrey, including gardeners, refuse collectors, meals at home delivery drivers, CCTV operators, environmental health and licensing staff, enforcement officers, leisure and sports staff, homelessness advisors, planning officers, day centre workers, community transport drivers and parking wardens.

We also employ HR, communications, project management, procurement, digital and finance specialists and lawyers.

# Performance snapshot

As a publicly funded organisation, we keep detailed statistics on our performance over time. Here we give an indication of how we judge our performance and the work we do to support local people and to meet statutory duties.

## Statistics snapshot

Topic	Target	Achieved
'Major' planning submissions processed to deadline.	60%	95.2%
'Non-major' planning submissions processed to deadline.	80%	91.1%
'Other' planning submissions processed to deadline.	85%	90.2%
Bins collected on schedule.	99.9%	99.9%
Street cleansing requests.	500	290
Invoices paid in 30 days.	98.0%	95%
FOI requests processed within timeframe.	99.0%	92.4%
Satisfaction with Housing reactive repairs service.	95.0%	96.4%
Households in B&B accommodation, over two weeks per quarter.	16	16
Community meals served.	39,700	40,721
Staff sickness (average).	4.6 days	4.4 days
Phone calls received by Customer Services.	No target	128,049
Visitors to Civic Centre reception.	No target	7,839
Penalty Charge Notices issued.	No target	7,557

► Our Revenues Team collected 97.9 per cent of Council Tax payments and 98.6 per cent of Business Rates payments.

► Colleagues in our Housing Benefits Team processed 3,024 new claims, and 37,696 changes to existing claimants' circumstances.

► Our Communications Team's work delivered a 68 per cent increase in reach and 247 per cent increase in visits to our Facebook page.

► Posts, videos and photos published by the team were seen 208,836 times and 33,980 people visited our Facebook page. In addition, 1,178 new people followed the Council's Facebook page, allowing our content to display in their news feeds. This compares to 1,016 new followers the previous year.

► The Council's residents e-newsletter was relaunched and a campaign initiated to increase the audience by at least 300 people.

# Projects portfolio review

**We track a portfolio of projects to monitor progress, delivery, spending and use of resources. This is carried out using a recognised project management methodology to ensure clarity and is reported to councillors quarterly for accountability.**

During 2022-23, 17 projects were completed:

## Upgrading of telephone system

We upgraded our telephone system for the first time since 2008 and 300 staff now use an app on their laptop to make phone calls, supporting our move to agile working. We have also integrated the telephone and customer relationship management system.

## Vulnerable people data

Processes and a database have been developed to gather data which will be used in an emergency.

## CCTV monitoring expansion

Our CCTV control centre now monitors cameras in Rushmoor and Hart, Hampshire. This creates a valuable income for us, which supports continued delivery of the service. Extra staff were recruited to manage the increased monitoring.

## Careline monitoring

We have agreed to provide Careline services for residents in the Woking area, made possible by a Safer Runnymede upgrade.

## Council Tax Support Scheme review

We updated our Council Tax Support Scheme so it is affordable, fair and keeps pace with the expansion of Universal Credit.

## Energy rebate schemes

We distributed two Government cost of living support packages; and dealt with around £3.2m of payments to thousands of homes through these two programmes, in addition to our usual work.

## Ukraine refugees local discount

We have given a range of support to Ukrainian families, and hosts in Runnymede.

This included a project to amend the single person discount rule for Council Tax payments for people who took in a Ukrainian person so the discount was not lost.

## Covid Business Rates grants

We distributed Covid grants to hundreds of businesses on top of our usual work.

## National Living Wage increase

To meet the increase and ensure sensible differentials between posts with more and less responsibility, the three lowest levels of our staff pay structure were re-modelled.

## Quality Management System

A new Quality Management System has been introduced into our Housing Maintenance team.

As well as these projects, several others are described elsewhere in this Annual Review:

- ▶ Publication of Corporate Business Plan and supporting strategies.
- ▶ Publication of the Economic Development Strategy.
- ▶ Completion of Magna Square.
- ▶ Completion of new affordable housing.
- ▶ Insourcing of grounds maintenance service.
- ▶ Launch of Flexible Working Policy.
- ▶ Pay and benefits review.

Other projects within our portfolio remained ongoing throughout the year in accordance with their individual project charters.

## Corporate theme: Climate Change

**Responding to climate change will permeate all of the Council's actions, and part of our role will be to encourage behaviour change in our communities and partners.**

- ▶ We have secured funding for a joint research project with the London Borough of Hounslow, City Science and Heathrow Airport Limited into ways decarbonisation methods in areas which are geographically close to the airport. This is a high profile study which could benefit other areas of the country close to similar transport hubs
- ▶ Following grants secured under the Government's Green Homes Grant schemes during 2021-22, in 2022-23 work was carried out to fit appropriate measures to homes across the Borough. Further grants were also secured from the scheme during the year by the Council, as part of a consortium led by Surrey County Council.
- ▶ A substantial research project was launched to ascertain our Carbon emissions baseline. Alongside this, a methodology is being developed to help the Council accurately measure, report and monitor its carbon emissions over time.
- ▶ We brought in software to improve the quality of information we can gather about the energy performance of our Council homes. This will highlight potential areas for improvement, in addition to those identified in our Housing Asset Management Plan.
- ▶ Many desks in the Council's Civic Centre had two computer monitors; these have now been reduced to one per desk, cutting energy use of monitors by 50 per cent. During the year, we also contracted Stone Group, which has a zero landfill policy to dispose of all our outdated IT equipment.
- ▶ We promoted the LoCASE programme, which supports businesses to protect the environment and work towards low carbon solutions. There have been 69 enquiries from Runnymede businesses to the programme team.
- ▶ Our Building Control team make sure that all construction work in the Borough meets national regulations. During the year this included responding to new Government regulations which took effect from June 2022 requiring a 31 per cent reduction in Carbon emissions for new homes and 27 per cent for non-residential buildings.
- ▶ We launched a review of our Depot in Chertsey, where many of our on-street services are based, including our refuse trucks. This review will include: assessing the viability of electric vehicle charging, the systems used to heat and ventilate buildings and a replacement of our fuel tank with one which could use hydrogenated vegetable oil as fuel instead of diesel.
- ▶ In November 2022 we launched our sustainable planting policy. This is one way our parks and open spaces can respond to climate change. Use of native plants



**Sustainable planting - Addlestone**

and greater support for biodiversity and wildflower meadows are among its features.

- ▶ Following the introduction of our new hybrid mail arrangements, our Finance team has increased the number of invoices it sends by email by 70 per cent, reducing

## Corporate theme: Health and Wellbeing

**Our Health and Wellbeing Strategy focusses on how we can improve a range of conditions and environments locally to promote good health and reduce health inequalities. These examples demonstrate how we are achieving our aims.**

▶ In April 2022 we held a Pets in the Park day for Council tenants. This brought the community together and gave a chance for us to talk to people about their needs and ideas for improving our work.



A visitor to our Pets in the Park day.

▶ We added to our social housing in May 2022, by opening nine affordable housing apartments in Addlestone. They have a shared garden and provide modern homes for families from our housing register.

▶ In July 2022 we announced that more rough sleepers with complex needs would be found homes after we bought three one-bed flats.

▶ In September 2022, councillors approved plans to re-launch Heathervale Rec's skate park, with a £210,000 investment. The outdated facilities were to be replaced with brand new equipment like ramps, rails and jumps. It will create a completely upgraded space suitable for all ages to use skateboards, bikes and scooters.

▶ A game, set and match partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association secured £179,000 in funding to refurbish local tennis courts in September 2022. We also invested £37,000 ourselves. Improvements were to be made to the playing surface, fencing, nets,

and the installation of new access gates at Gogmore Farm Park, Ottershaw Memorial Fields, Victory Park, Chertsey Recreation Ground and Heathervale Recreation Ground.

▶ In January 2023, the Regulator of Social Housing lifted a regulatory notice on the Council in relation to the management of social housing. In 2019 the regulator said we were not compliant with its Home Standard. Since then all issues have been addressed and we met its expectations.

The regulator said: "I wanted to record my sincere thanks to the Council... for the positive and constructive engagement we have had throughout the period of our engagement and for their transparency and openness."

▶ Councillors agreed in February 2023 to extend for three years Runnymede's part of a scheme which uses social housing to free up hospital beds. When a patient is medically ready to leave hospital, they can live in one of our supported living flats for six weeks with a range of assistance to prepare them to live at home again. Doing so frees up a ward bed allowing other patients to be treated quicker.

▶ Throughout the year we carried out a substantial tender process to recruit a new firm to carry out repairs across our nearly-3,000 council homes. MCP Property Services began work on 1 April 2023. The new arrangement will mean issues at people's homes which could affect their health and wellbeing are dealt with quickly.

▶ Following suspension of food hygiene inspections during the pandemic our Environmental Health team implemented a robust recovery plan to address the backlog in inspections. As at March 2023 we were one of the top two Surrey local authorities to be in a fully recovered position.



## Corporate theme: Empowering our Communities

Runnymede has an energetic community with many voluntary groups. There is an enormous amount of pride and commitment to our historic area. Our empowering communities work aims to enable communities to develop and grow.

Runnymede Civic Awards presentation evening - Foxhills, Ottershaw.



- 1 **Alex Zhurba** - Young Artist of the year.
- 2 **HeBrews Cafe** - Volunteer Group of the Year.
- 3 **Lorna Chinyani** - Young Performer of the Year.

### Inaugural Runnymede Civic Awards

We launched the first Runnymede Civic Awards which were attended by more than 100 local people. The awards celebrated the hard work and contribution to local life which many individuals and volunteer groups make every year. Awards were presented by the Lord Lieutenant, the High Sheriff of Surrey, the Mayor of Runnymede, and the Borough's MP.

### Englefield Green Neighbourhood Plan

Residents in Englefield Green have developed a plan which will help shape development in the area. Following consultation with the community during the course of the year, the Neighbourhood Plan is now being independently examined.

- 4 **Egham Rangers** - Service to the Community.
- 5 **Core Judo** - Club of the Year.

### Voluntary sector grants

We launched a review of all our voluntary sector grants, in order to standardise the processes of distributing them and ensure the recipients' aims are in line with our corporate strategies. The intention is also to make funding available to a wider range of voluntary organisations.

### Council house survey

The biggest ever survey of people living in Council houses was carried out. The data gathered will help to inform our housing service about its work and future direction of travel. The survey used innovative online technology and was carried out with funding from the Government's Proptech programme.

## Corporate theme: Economic Development

Our economic development work aims to ensure Runnymede remains a leading economy in the south east whilst acknowledging that the impacts of Covid, Brexit and the cost of living crisis is yet to be fully felt.



Magna Square aerial view - Egham.

### Grants

A £1m grant from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was secured from the Government and will be invested in communities, supporting businesses and developing people and skills.

### Town centre regeneration

Magna Square, our new £90m town centre regeneration programme in the centre of Egham was officially opened. The development includes a new town square, apartments, a cinema and business units.

### Infrastructure plans

Working with Surrey County Council, we appointed consultants to create a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for the Borough. This is part of a 10-year investment and sets out initial options for improving walking and cycling.

### Local economy

To support businesses in Addlestone, we held our third Festive Fayre in and around Addlestone One, another of our regeneration programmes. This event brought local families into the town centre, encouraging shopping and dining out. We also arranged for new Christmas lights to be displayed in other areas of Runnymede.

To highlight the great work of local businesses, during the year we created and prepared for the launch the Runnymede Business Awards. More than 70 entries were received in categories ranging from business growth, start ups, sustainability and best town centre and neighbourhood business.

## Corporate theme: Organisational Development

**Our people and systems are key to the delivery of services to our residents and businesses. Our Organisational Development strategy lays out how we will adapt to a changing landscape to ensure we are considered an employer of choice and have systems in place to deliver first class services.**

### Corporate Business Plan

- ▶ Throughout 2022-23 we developed our new Corporate Business Plan and the five strategies which underpin it. The Plan sets the direction of travel for the entire Council in the medium term.
- ▶ We increased the number of holiday days staff are given each year, from a starting point of 23 to 28 days, with employees who have worked with us for more than two years seeing an increase to 31 days. This was to improve recruitment by offering a better work/life balance.
- ▶ An agile working policy was launched, which sets out how managers and staff are expected to operate now many colleagues work at home up to three days a week.

### Human Resources

- ▶ We have developed a graduate recruitment programme, working alongside the Local Government Association.

We hosted our first National Management Trainee, Will Marshall during the year.



**Will Marshall, National Management Trainee.**

- ▶ Our first Talent Management Strategy was approved by councillors, and will see three employees a year work through a specific programme.
- ▶ A management development programme was delivered for senior managers to ensure colleagues are appropriately skilled to lead their teams.
- ▶ Through a substantial tendering processes we have procured a brand new combined Human Resources and payroll online platform. This will remove the need for staff to use paper forms, modernise the employee experience and provide a much greater level of management information.
- ▶ New policies on wellbeing, health and safety were developed and stress management guidelines created.

### Digital systems

- ▶ The breadth of functions available in our new website and back office computer systems means we have been able to launch a Direct Debit option for residents to pay for garden waste collection subscriptions.
- ▶ New technology was installed in six of our Civic Centre meeting rooms enabling staff and people outside the Council to take part in fully functional hybrid meetings.

### In-house services

- ▶ We restructured and insourced our entire grounds maintenance service, after many years of using contractors to carry out this work. The change means we will directly employ 14 gardeners, and fine turf and horticulture specialists. The decision is expected to lead to an increase in quality and local control.

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