

# COUNCIL

TUESDAY, 27TH OCTOBER, 2020

At 6.15 pm

in a

VIRTUAL MEETING - ONLINE ACCESS,

## SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

### PART I

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**a) Councillor Davey asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning, Environmental Services and Maidenhead:**

With reports of thousands of plots of land across the UK with existing planning permission but no activity by builders, could you tell us how many homes have been given planning permission in RBWM that haven't started building yet?

*Written response: The planning regime has very limited influence over the rate at which developers choose to build out planning permissions. However, The Council publishes annually an Authority Monitoring Report which sets out this information. In 2018/19 there were 785 net new dwellings granted planning permission which was a significant increase from the previous year when 344 net new dwellings were granted permission. As of 31 March 2019 there were 1,558 outstanding, unimplemented housing commitments. This figure can vary year on year due to it taking into account large permissions which may have only recently been granted permission.*

*The net completions figures for each year show a more realistic picture of the rate of dwelling completions within the Borough. Over the last ten years there has been a marked increase in the rate of housing completions each year in the Borough. In 2010/11 there were only 190 net completions. There was a significant rise in 2014/15 when 514 dwellings were completed and the upward trend continued to 2018/19 when 705 net dwellings were completed.*

**b) Councillor Larcombe asked the following question of Councillor Cannon, Lead Member for Public Protection and Parking:**

Residents and businesses in my Ward have been seriously affected by flooding three times since the Jubilee River opened in 2002. You announced in August that the River Thames Scheme Channel 1 was stalled due to lack of funding. Furthermore maintenance of the local land drainage infrastructure is almost non-existent. Can you explain precisely how we got into this position?

*Written response:* Council considered a report on 26th September 2017 and resolved the following:

- £10m, split over four years, is added to the capital programme commencing 2020/21 (subject to delivery of the full scheme).
- There is an agreement in principle of paying a flood levy of up to £500,000 per annum to the Environment Agency as a contribution to the operating and maintenance costs (subject to new legislation being enacted to make provision for this)
- A delegation to the Head of Finance in conjunction with the Lead Member for Finance to develop and introduce a flood levy be approved

In the period from September 2017 to date, scheme development has continued and costs / funding sources have altered. The project is a multi-agency project led by the Environment Agency who are responsible for commissioning the design, development, construction, maintenance and management of the project. There are a range of funding sources, including financial contributions from Central Government;

Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee; Thames Water and partner Local Authorities.

The contribution required from the Royal Borough is £52.7m. Contributions have been paid since 2015/16 and a further contribution of £10m approved from 2020/21 onwards - the balance to be funded is £41.275m.

The financial position of many Local Authorities (including the Royal Borough) has altered significantly since 2017. However, the Council decision was made openly and transparently in September 2017 with due consideration of the prevailing financial situation at that point in time.

The current position is that borrowing a further £41.275m is unaffordable and the borrowing costs are considered unacceptable. This position may be reconsidered if a secure mechanism was in place to increase income to fund the borrowing costs. Whilst other mechanisms may be considered, reliance on the change in legislation to apply a flood levy over and above core Council Tax is considered the only viable route to provide confidence that income can be secured.

With respect to securing the change in legislation, despite a verbal commitment and lobbying, the legislative change has not been enacted.

The Royal Borough remains committed to the River Thames Scheme, subject to securing a suitable mechanism to fund the borrowing costs. At council on 27th February 2020, *'... the Leader repeated the position...that we support the scheme, have committed £10M and will precept the balance if allowed...'*

In parallel with the above we continue to work with the Environment Agency on alternative local solutions. In addition, approved revenue and capital funding is in place to deliver local improvements and essential maintenance to local infrastructure.