

# Runnymede Borough Council

## Corporate Business Plan 2026-27



*Our wild flower meadows policy is a signature statement of support for our climate and environment. Areas across the borough including Homewood Park will be allowed to grow naturally to increase biodiversity. Picture: Andi Roy*



# Co-leaders' foreword

## Cllr Linda Gillham

## Cllr Robert King

## Cllr Steve Ringham

## Cllr Don Whyte

Runnymede continues to be the best-ranked borough outside of London according to the UK Competitiveness Index.

It is testament to the hard work of our officers, staff and members, in conjunction with the enterprise of local businesses and institutions that the Borough has been able to maintain this enviable position.

As a result, our residents recognise Runnymede is still a great place to live, work, raise a family and enjoy a fantastic quality of life.

But local politics rarely stand still. The 2024 local elections saw control of Runnymede Borough Council pass over to a new administration; one with different perspectives, priorities and ambitions.

Some goals have carried over - making Runnymede cleaner,

safer and more accessible, and of course, our resolve for Net Zero by 2030. Others expanded - our Meadow Management Policy underlines a greater commitment to nature and biodiversity recovery. And some were new - live streaming our public meetings improves accountability and engagement with our residents.

But now, thanks to the imminent Local Government Reorganisation, this Council is at the most pivotal moment in its history since it was born out of the merger of the Chertsey and Egham urban districts in 1974.

Come April 2027, Runnymede Borough Council will no longer exist and the reins will be handed over to a new unitary council.

So we have reappraised our intentions. As we continue to create savings and efficiencies through standardisation, optimisation and modernisation, we will hand over the statutory operations of Runnymede in as robust a shape as possible,

delivering value as well as service.

Our discretionary services are enjoyed by many residents and positively contribute to our community.

This plan also outlines our commitment to ensuring that community assets, sports clubs etc, are able to secure their own futures past the demise of this council.

Ultimately, this Corporate Business Plan is different in ambition and scope to what has gone before. Instead of the usual four years, it has a shelf-life of less than two, and this plan will be our last. Instead of growth and development, this one looks at preparation for transition.

It outlines how this Council, as the current custodians of the past and present of Runnymede, intends to preserve our sense of community and pass the baton on to the future caretakers and servants of our towns and villages, residents and businesses.





# Chief Executive's foreword

## Andrew Pritchard

Runnymede is a fabulous place where we care about the here and now, conscious that we also want to ensure future generations look kindly on our time as custodians. It's our duty to make sure we look to the future and create a positive legacy.

This Corporate Business Plan should be viewed in context; on the 31 March 2027 Runnymede Borough Council will cease to exist. However, the vital services we provide, and the dedicated staff delivering them will endure.

A new council will come into being with a different name, and offer a wider range of services, but at its core much of Runnymede's spirit will endure.

That is why this plan is as important, if not more important, than those that have come before. As a council we must set the conditions for success for the future unitary council.

We need to ensure the why to what we do is clear, to prioritise our work in the time we have left.

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This plan should be viewed through two complementary lenses:

First setting the strategic framework and priorities for Runnymede Borough Council.

Second, bringing clarity around the things that matter to Runnymede that we need to deliver now, ahead of local government reorganisation.

This plan is the top of a golden thread running through the Council. It sets our strategic context.

From here, detailed

plans flow, setting out activities we commit to that turn our strategic intent into results we can see.

They form the basis of our budget so we can allocate resource to enable delivery.

Individual activities are developed in detail through reports which councillors vote on in committee meetings, when political ambitions of the administration become the democratically agreed activities of the Council.

The final piece in the jigsaw is the who. Our staff are critical to delivering the services and functions people rely on.

Through a focus on culture, betterment, and organisational design, we have looked to our people to help define the type of organisation we all want Runnymede to be.

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As we look to the future, we do so in the knowledge that we are well prepared from an

organisational perspective, thanks to significant work in our recent history.

In December 2023 Government issued us with a Non-Statutory Best Value Notice.

In responding to this we completed a huge amount of organisational learning and development. This will be vital as we prepare to hand over to a new council.

Our engagement with the Government over the notice is on the record and ministers were reassured to the point that they did not renew that notice when it lapsed in December 2024.

As a learning organisation, we opened our doors to a Local Government Association Peer Challenge in late 2024. That positive external scrutiny has reaffirmed our commitment to transparency and betterment.

Again, the detailed work we carried out to meet the stringent expectations of this review means we are very self aware as we go into a time of change.

This Corporate Business Plan underpinned by our commitment to continual improvement sets the conditions for success in the future, whatever that future holds.





# Our organisational framework

## Our mission

To lead with purpose and in partnership, delivering sustainable services that protect our environment, promote health and wellbeing, empower communities through change, and foster a thriving, inclusive economy. In turn this will ensure Runnymede remains a place where everyone can live well, contribute, and succeed.



## Our values

The foundation on which we perform our work and conduct ourselves. We aim to be:

**Customer-focused:** We put our customers at the heart of what we do and they will be able to interact with us in the way they want.

**Performance driven:** We strive for excellence in all we do.

**Innovative:** We aim to creatively improve our services.

**Passionate:** We empower staff to be passionate about all we do.

**Promoting equality and diversity:** We believe in fairness and creating a diverse workforce so we can draw upon a range of views and experiences to meet our customers' changing needs.

**Delivering excellent value for money:** We strive to be as efficient and effective as possible.

## Our goals

These are our overarching principles as an organisation:

- ▶ Cost effective services.
- ▶ Financial stability.
- ▶ Very satisfied customers.
- ▶ A range of channels for people to interact with us.
- ▶ Sound leadership and governance.
- ▶ Trained, developed and motivated staff.
- ▶ A clear performance management system.
- ▶ A more agile organisation responsive to changing circumstances.



# Tackling the climate emergency and enhancing nature

**We're taking practical local action to reduce emissions, increase adaptive resilience and improve biodiversity — investing in greener spaces and more sustainable services.**

We take tackling climate change seriously, and we recognise the role we have in creating positive change.

As part of our Climate Change Strategy, we have committed to reducing carbon emissions from our operations to net zero by 2030 and further cemented this commitment through our declaration of a climate emergency in 2023.

Our commitments and bold action were recognised in the results of the 2025 Climate Action Scorecards, created by Climate Emergency UK. These assess local authorities' progress toward net zero, and Runnymede ranked as the top authority in Surrey during this assessment.

## Biodiversity

There is a separate but linked biodiversity crisis. We are playing our part in combatting ongoing loss of biodiversity by improving land management and delivering habitat enhancements, with a focus on the most ecologically valuable areas.

For instance, at Chertsey Meads we will boost biodiversity with:

- ▶ Increasing our hedgerows,
- ▶ positive management to reduce scrub encroachment, and
- ▶ Restoration of five hectares of reed beds to good condition.

Areas like Homewood Park are being managed in wildlife friendly ways through our 2024 Meadow Management Policy.

## Objectives

**1 Reduce Carbon emissions from Council operations to Net Zero by 2030.**

**2 Positively influence our environment by embedding climate change avoidance and mitigation, sustainability and promotion of biodiversity and conservation in all Council decisions and actions.**

**3 Positively engage with residents, businesses, community groups, national and local government and universities to share information and encourage positive behavioural change to adapt to or mitigate climate change.**

to date, homes have undergone energy efficiency upgrades, including solar panels, wall and loft insulation, and the introduction of energy efficient lighting.

Further Council-owned homes will have energy efficiency measures and renewable technologies installed by March 2027 saving tenants money on their bills and reducing carbon emissions.

We are committed to improving our other buildings like halls and day centres where feasible to reduce their emissions and running costs.

We are also committed to supporting energy efficiency improvements for privately-owned homes. We are part of a group of councils that has secured £13.9 million of Government funding which will allow for the installation of energy efficiency upgrades and low-carbon heating in low income homes at no cost to property owners. This provides healthier, more comfortable homes and reduced energy.

## Alternative vehicle fuels

In 2024, we became the first authority in Surrey to change our vehicles from diesel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), a bio-fuel made from waste fats and cooking oil.

This reduced emissions from these vehicles by over 90 per cent and halved the total emissions within our direct control.

We have changed a number





of small vans (pictured) to electric power and will electrify more vehicles when we can. We will also focus on working with partners to provide electric vehicle charging points in our car parks where feasible.

## Improving processes

We have put sustainability and social value at the heart of our procurement processes.

This helps protect natural ecosystems, and set a leadership example in the transition to a greener economy.

This new approach has led to positive outcomes. For example panels in some of our recently-upgraded play areas were made from recycled waste collected from the maritime industry, such as fishing nets and ropes. New

posts were made from more than 95 per cent recycled textile and plastic waste, reducing carbon emissions by 74 per cent. We are committed to continuing our efforts in this area.

## Community engagement

During the last two years, we have significantly increased our engagement with communities on climate change and nature.

Over the period of our Corporate Business Plan we will continue this through initiatives such as our Environment Champions Network, the Great Big Green Week, Junior Citizen, Junior Rangers and other local activities.

All of these aim to help communities adapt and become more resilient to the impacts of climate change as well as

## Our strategy in action

Our approach to supporting our climate and precious bio-diverse landscape is based on engaging people and supporting places.

Engaging young people with the environment is key to encouraging families to care for our planet.

For primary school pupils, we run interactive environmental workshops as part of Great Big Green Week. Pupils create eco-friendly buildings and learn about the importance of reducing the impact on the environment.

Our Junior Rangers programme provides direct experience of looking after nature and wildlife, plus training in skills for a career in the environmental sector for teenagers.

In 2024, we adopted a new policy to better manage existing meadows and stated our desire for further meadows to be created. We manage 75 hectares of meadows and another four were designated in 2025 and management was adjusted to allow wild flowers and wildlife to thrive.

reducing borough emissions.

We will continue to seek further opportunities to progress work in this area, including through sourcing and applying for appropriate funding opportunities to help reduce our emissions and enhance nature.

## River Thames Scheme

We continue to support the River Thames Scheme. A review is currently taking place which is outside of our control.

However strategic flood risk interventions such as this scheme remain vital in Runnymede given the number of homes and businesses at risk.

We will engage with partners to deliver such initiatives wherever possible.



# Improving health and wellbeing for all

**We work with the NHS, care services, and community organisations to help people stay well, live independently, and access the support they need when they need it.**

Runnymede is a great place to live, with a thriving local economy and an abundance of parks and open spaces. The council is committed to providing easy access to managed open spaces for local people, recognising the positive contribution this makes to the health and wellbeing of the borough.

This is an affluent area too, which brings its own benefits. Yet there remain pockets of significant deprivation, in which relative poverty is more acutely felt due to local disparity. The council's mission is to work in partnership to develop effective support for people who may otherwise feel left behind.

To achieve this, we will continue our proactive work with other community leaders and with system partners, to find new and innovative ways to deliver effective services, both that are required of us in law, but also, discretionary services that make such a positive difference to people's lives; securing positive health and wellbeing outcomes, while diverting higher upstream costs to public services through early intervention.

We will prioritise support for those most in need, and we will listen. We will ensure we are fostering and encouraging whole system responses to make the best of local resources. All of this, with an ongoing commitment to ensuring services are accessible.

We will work hard to support the positive development of children and young people in our area, providing and enabling the provision of recreational facilities,

school holiday camps, and youth programmes. This is because young people are important to this council, and wherever we can, we want to create the right conditions for young people to thrive.

As part of our local contribution, the council is a social landlord, owning and managing 2,800 homes, let at reduced rents, to households in need. The health and wellbeing of our tenants is of paramount importance to us, and we are actively working to engage them to ensure they have a voice when decisions are made about the way we deliver our landlord functions in future.

Alongside our own housing stock, we know this is a high-cost housing market area and we understand the challenge this poses for local people, particularly those working hard on low incomes. To meet locally identified needs, we actively plan for future housing, and we will do so with an unwavering commitment to affordable housing delivery. We work with local registered providers (also known as housing associations) and with private rented sector landlords and letting agents, to offer good quality homes alongside our own housing stock.

Wherever it occurs in the borough, we want to prevent and relieve homelessness quickly and effectively and provide good quality homes. Poor housing conditions and homelessness have an incredibly negative impact on people's lives and in particular, their health and wellbeing. We know everyone; individuals, households and



communities have aspirations. They have unique strengths and talents. We understand our role in creating the conditions for people to succeed.

For people with mobility needs, targeted use of disabled facilities grant funding facilitates more suitable homes, enabling people to live in their homes as their needs change.

For older people locally, we provide a range of vital yet discretionary services including community alarms, technology-enabled care, meals at home and day centres. These services



recognise the contribution our older generation has made locally, and reduce demand for health and social care services, while helping to tackle loneliness and isolation in Runnymede.

For those who may be struggling financially, our support extends beyond housing need. Financial concerns have a huge impact on health and wellbeing, and with the cost of living rises in recent years, we are committed to combating this. We provide financial inclusion support, welfare benefits advice and signposting, alongside other financial advice and support to enable people to maximise

## Our strategy in action

Our open spaces encapsulate many of the priorities we have under the health and wellbeing for all banner.

They provide attractive open space for people of all ages to play sports and meet together.

Several parks have outdoor gym equipment which promotes free exercise for adults, while play areas are a great relationship building and exercise space for children.

Some parks have privately-run businesses in them like the Minus-Five Pre-School at Victory Park or the cafe and Runnymede Pleasure Grounds, demonstrating our support for the local economy.

Refurbished tennis courts and other sports, exercise or club facilities further enhance social and health benefits.

Organisations regularly use our parks, a great example of the community working together and using our facilities.

Some of our locations are covered by CCTV, others are near social housing we provide, or near shopping areas we own.

New planting and maintenance arrangements have contributed to reducing our impact on the climate and the way we support nature.

incomes and to manage their finances sustainably.

We take our safeguarding responsibilities very seriously too, working with partners to protect both children from adverse childhood experiences, and vulnerable adults from abuse, exploitation and neglect. Our shared commitment to community safety in collaboration with Surrey Police contributes to making Runnymede a safe place to live and work, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in partnership.

Supporting residents throughout their whole lives is a core council commitment. We recognise this cannot be achieved by the council acting alone.

We will continue to embrace our role, not only in service delivery, but importantly, in enabling others to make a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of the area.

Our priority to improve health and wellbeing for everyone, is complemented by our commitments to tackling climate change and enhancing nature, growing a fair and sustainable economy, and supporting our communities through transition.

## Objectives

**1 Champion Health & Wellbeing:** **1 Work with partners to deliver accessible, preventative services that improve physical and mental health, reduce inequalities, and support independent living.**

**2 Deliver Quality, Affordable Housing:** **Provide and enable good quality affordable homes, prevent homelessness, and ensure tenant voices shape future housing services.**

**3 Enable Communities & Young People:** **Create opportunities for all to thrive through inclusive programmes, recreational spaces, and community engagement.**

**4 Support Financial Resilience:** **Help residents manage rising living costs by offering financial advice, benefits support and help to make the most of their money.**

**5 Foster Safe, Inclusive Environments:** **Safeguard vulnerable people, promote community safety, community engagement, and protect open spaces that support wellbeing, nature, and local enterprise.**

# Supporting our communities through change

**We will support increasing resilience for individuals, communities and community groups as we move towards Local Government Reorganisation in Surrey — to ensure communities can shape their futures and thrive.**

Recent events, from the Covid-19 pandemic to the cost-of-living crisis, and ongoing challenges associated with climate change and extreme weather have had a profound impact on our residents and on our communities.

Local services, both statutory and voluntary, continue to receive increasing demand from people seeking support, and it is more important than ever for public services to work together as a system to respond.

Whilst these challenges may have been unprecedented, they have also generated opportunities.

## Local resilience

We recognise our communities have come together to face challenges like incidents of flooding and a global pandemic, and in so doing, they have developed local resilience and understanding about what our local places need.

As we move towards local government reorganisation in Surrey, and the potential changes in how communities and local organisations are supported, it's vital that we harness their resilience,

## Objectives

- 1 Help communities to shape their future by listening, building resilience and supporting local leadership through change.**
- 2 Amplify local voices via inclusive engagement, ensuring residents influence decisions ahead of the new unitary council in 2027.**
- 3 Strengthen the voluntary and community sector with funding, practical support, and help for local groups to develop resilience, grow and thrive long-term.**
- 4 Unlock community ownership by enabling local groups to manage assets and lead neighbourhood planning initiatives.**
- 5 Champion collaboration across public services to respond to rising demand and harness local strengths in tackling shared challenges.**

knowledge and experience, and actively support communities to face the future.

We will build on local strengths and ensure that our towns and villages continue to achieve - and stretch - their potential.

To help us to understand how our communities want to be engaged in local decisions, we have established a Citizen's Engagement Panel that seeks views from a representative group of local people.

## Empowering people

This is part of our commitment to listening and doing everything we can to support local people to influence the future, and to take ownership of local solutions.

We want to ensure that Runnymede's communities have a strong voice as we move towards the formation of a new unitary council in April 2027.

We celebrate our communities every year at our annual Civic Awards. In 2025 the team at White Lodge, pictured, won the Service to the Community award.

## Building capacity

We will support local capacity building in the voluntary and community sector. This will be achieved not only through the provision of financial support framed by our new grant aid policy and





## Our strategy in action

Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne plays a vital role in supporting local people through life's challenges, from debt and housing issues to benefits advice and crisis support.

In recent years, the demand for its services has grown sharply, reflecting the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis and wider social change.

Recognising the essential contribution of Citizens Advice, we have strengthened our partnership with the organisation. Through targeted grant funding, shared training opportunities, and regular strategic dialogue, we have enabled Citizens Advice to expand its reach and impact.

This partnership has delivered tangible benefits for residents. In 2024–25 alone, Citizens Advice supported over 2,000 local people, helping them to secure vital benefits, manage debt, and access housing support. Our staff work closely with Citizens Advice advisers,

ensuring that residents in crisis are referred quickly and receive joined-up support. We have also provided practical assistance, such as access to community venues for outreach sessions and help with digital inclusion initiatives.

One resident, facing eviction and mounting debt, was referred by our housing team to Citizens Advice. Through coordinated action, the resident received emergency financial support, expert advice, and ongoing casework, enabling them to remain in their home and regain financial stability.

This case exemplifies the power of partnership in Runnymede: a community where support is available to all, and where the Council and voluntary sector work hand in hand to support residents through change. In recognition of the work they do, in September 2025, Citizens Advice won the Outstanding Contribution to Business Award at the Runnymede Business Awards.

our approach to the Community Infrastructure Levy, but also through a dedicated officer resource geared to assisting local groups to review their governance and establish themselves sustainably beyond the life of this Council.

We will introduce new guidance on our corporate asset management policy, that makes

clear how local organisations can apply to manage community assets, putting the future in the hands of local groups where there is appetite and capacity to do so.

We will work with communities ready to advance their own plans and proposals, to implement Community Governance Reviews, and elsewhere, to establish and deliver Neighbourhood Plans.

Whilst reorganisation means the life of this Council may be limited, we remain ambitious and committed to investing in community resilience, harnessing local strengths, and making voices heard.

We will foster a climate in which our communities can take ownership of their futures and influence local decisions.



# Growing a fair and sustainable economy

**We support local businesses and institutions, attract investment, and create good-quality opportunities and housing for residents — especially young people and those facing barriers to work.**

Runnymede is home to many national and international companies and is an important centre for business within the south east of England.

Runnymede is among the top 10 most competitive locations for business, according to the latest edition of the UK Competitiveness Index report, and was listed as the only area outside London that features in the top 10.

The borough's locational advantages and excellent connectivity combined with its skills base and high-quality environment, make it an attractive location for business.

## Leading economy

Our Economic Development Strategy lays out a clear vision for how we will seek to continue to be a leading economy in Surrey and the wider sub-region and how Runnymede will be a place where businesses grow and succeed while ensuring that the benefits are shared across our community.

At its heart, the strategy is about creating an environment where businesses, residents, and visitors all thrive together.

By offering an attractive proposition to investors and visitors alike, we aim to build a borough that is dynamic, resilient, and full of opportunity.

We are committed to encouraging businesses to invest, expand, and stay within the borough. By promoting the area as a premier business location, working with partners to attract

## Objectives

- 1 Encouraging businesses to invest and expand in the borough. Encouraging the retention of existing business and the inward relocation of new businesses.**
- 2 Maintain competitive advantage through engagement and networking.**
- 3 Developing the vibrancy and vitality of our town centres, ensure effective use of assets, and growing the tourism and leisure sector.**
- 4 A dynamic workforce for a high-tech, creative economy**

By supporting businesses in achieving their growth ambitions, fostering innovation, and focusing on emerging sectors such as CreaTech and Cyber Security, we will help accelerate the development of industries that are shaping the future.

Alongside this, we will seek to develop our thriving film sector and where possible encourage the development and growth of film studio spaces within the borough.

We will ensure businesses seeking assistance have access to appropriate support to achieve their growth ambitions. We will look to continue engaging with businesses and encourage networking between businesses of all sizes.

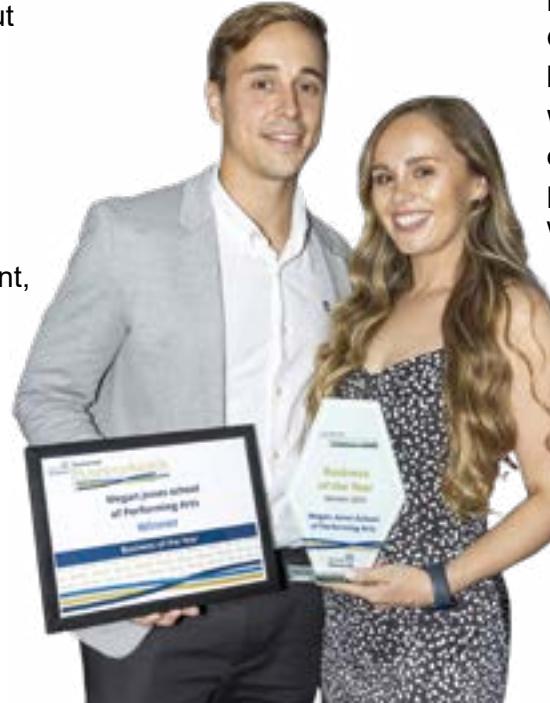
## Networking

The success of Business Runnymede and the Runnymede Business Awards (Business of the Year 2025 winners pictured) has also demonstrated the value in bringing businesses together, celebrating success and best practice.

We will enhance the vibrancy of our town centres, making them places where people want to live, work, and spend time.

By strengthening partnerships between businesses, residents, and stakeholders, and by focusing on heritage, tourism, and leisure, we will create destinations that combine culture, commerce, and community.

We will seek to use our assets





## Our strategy in action

Runnymede is among the top 10 most competitive locations for business, according to newly published research from two respected universities.

The latest edition of the UK Competitiveness Index, compiled by professors at Cardiff University and Nottingham Trent University lists Runnymede as the only area outside London that features in the top 10.

This achievement reflects a strategy of playing to local strengths. The report shows that the strong presence of technology and service-led businesses has been central to maintaining Runnymede's prominent position, re-enforcing its reputation as a thriving hub for modern industries. For existing business, relocating firms and new sectors, the findings send a clear message that opportunities for success are not confined to London.

An area in recent years where the borough has had significant success is in attracting the film industry to Runnymede.

In recent years a growing film sector has been developed with two film studios, Netflix Longcross (pictured) and Longcross Studios South established in the borough. These have brought exciting productions to the area and created significant numbers of jobs in supporting industries and supply chain.

where appropriate to unlock opportunities for regeneration and development.

Our strategy seeks to build a dynamic workforce in the borough that supports a high-tech, creative economy.

### Wider influences

This means helping employers access the skills they need, while enabling residents to gain qualifications and experience that open doors to quality employment.

We will work to ensure

affordable housing and inclusive opportunities for young people and diverse communities.

Employers will be encouraged to invest in training, particularly in digital skills, while close working with educational institutions including Royal Holloway and local colleges will seek to strengthen pathways for talent development.

### Pro-business environment

We will create the right environment for sustainable growth through forward-thinking

economic and planning policies.

Planning policies and decisions will look to deliver the jobs, housing, and infrastructure needed to help meet the needs of our current and future residents, ensuring that our borough remains a place where people can prosper.

Together, these priorities form a strategy that helps to create the conditions for economic performance. As a package they also build a stronger, more inclusive community and fairer economy.



This map demonstrates how we're making change happen in every area of our borough. As well as these local activities and improvements many of the services we provide are borough-wide, like our programme to install new energy efficiency

measures in 140 Council houses across the area or our work to support community resilience. Other actions include improving how we operate as an organisation to support the borough's population as a whole.



*Chertsey town centre. We aim to support the growth of a borough which is self-sustaining, with genuine communities where people want to spend time and businesses want to operate. Picture: Stewart Turkington*

**Runnymede Borough Council**

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