

COUNCIL MEETING – 16 JULY 2020-ITEM 13 – NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion from Cllr Theresa Burton - Audio Recording of all Council Committee Meetings as a matter of course

Motivation:

This motion is being brought forward by the Liberal Democrat party to improve the accessibility, openness, transparency and accountability of all Runnymede Borough Council Part 1 committee meetings.

The Council Notes:

This Council recognises the need for accessibility, openness, transparency and accountability in how it transacts its decision making at formal committees.

The recording of audio is extremely easy in today's digital world. Given that currently, Committee meetings are being held using Microsoft Team's, (or any other remote meeting software that may be used in the future), there is no reason not to be recording them at this point in time.

Audio files are easy and inexpensive to record, have a small file size and do not take up excessive storage space making this a practical and economical method.

This Council notes other Councils are already providing audio recordings such as: East Devon District Council, Audio example:

<https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=150&MeetingId=238>

and Westminster Council, Audio Example:

<https://committees.westminster.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=175&MId=4528>

The Council Believes that:

- Recording of audio files, archiving them and providing a link on the Runnymede website should require minimal additional workload given meetings are currently held on Microsoft Teams (or potentially on another remote meeting software).
- Providing audio recordings will demonstrate to the public the commitment of Members to openness and transparency and provide direct evidence of their contributions to Council business.
- Audio recordings will aid residents and anyone reviewing Committee minutes to provide full context and detail of the matters discussed.
- By providing an audio record of meetings the Council will improve its Equality ambitions by making these records available to people who are visually impaired, those with literacy issues and people for whom English is not their primary written language.

The Council Resolves that:

- It will audio record all Part 1 meetings of Council Committees and Full Council.
- It will archive audio recordings for future reference for a minimum of 10 years.
- It will ensure the audio recordings are available to the public on the Runnymede website for a minimum of 10 years.
- It will prepare for audio recordings in the Council Chamber in due course, ready for the resumption of normal attendance at Council Committee Meetings.

LABOUR AND COOP MOTION: HISTORIC MONUMENTS REVIEW AND RACIAL EQUALITY STRATEGY

Motivation:

The majority of the political groups on Runnymede Borough Council recently came together to say that, collectively, we believe that all forms of racism and prejudice are wrong. And that, for all the progress that has been made, there is still a long way to go before we have completely eradicated it within our society. One of the aspects of ensuring structural and cultural racism is addressed consists on having a progressive and honest dialogue about British History and our imperial legacy. Other countries have addressed historical monuments of repression from their fascist and communist history. This is not about deleting history but simply recognising that it is complicated and what is considered appropriate or offensive should evolve with time and be decided proactively and democratically because, if it is not, the chances of people taking matters into their own hands becomes much more likely. Whilst monuments are a current lightning rod in this debate, much larger action is going to be required to get to a racially equal society.

This Council notes:

- A shocking death caught on video in the US sparked protests all over the world including in the UK this has in turn sparked a national debate over Britain's history
- In UK much of the contemporary anger centres around
 - [a review by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2010](#) that found that black people were up to six-times more likely to be stopped by police than white people
 - Stop-and-search rates between 2018 and 2019 show that black people are now nearly 10-times more likely to be stopped and searched by police than white people
 - Freedom of Information (FOI) requests by advocacy group Liberty found that police forces were [seven times more likely to fine Bame people during lockdown](#).
 - White British people have higher than average home ownership rates — nearly double that of black Caribbean people and more than treble that of black African people. These minorities are instead vastly over represented when it comes to private renting and social housing.
 - White British students are more than three times as likely to achieve high grades at A level than black Caribbean students, according to figures from the Department for Education.
 - black people seeing at least double the unemployment levels as white people between 2004 and 2018
 - The UK's Annual Population Survey revealed that black people in employment are also paid less on average than white people.
 - Average hourly pay for black people hovered between £9.91 and £10.80 between 2013 and 2018, while white people saw wages consistently rise from £10.58 to £11.87.
 - At least 34 of the 72 Grenfell victims were of African, Middle Eastern or Asian backgrounds
 - In 2012, under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government, the Hostile Environment policy came into place. The policy aimed to make life as difficult as possible for immigrants living in the UK without leave to remain, hoping that they would leave voluntarily.
 - From 2013, people of the Windrush generation who had the legal right to be here but did not necessary have documentation due to the age they arrived started to receive letters claiming that they had no right to be in the UK. And

were treated as 'illegal immigrants' losing their jobs, homes, benefits and access to the NHS. Some were placed in immigration detention, deported, or being refused the right to return from abroad

- Much of the debate has centred around how historical white supremacy within the British empire and the slave trade has caused many of the structural aspects of racism globally and within the UK today
 - The British Empire at its peak controlled 13,700,000 square miles, nearly a quarter of the land area on earth the majority of that land was taken through conquering war or treaties signed under the threat of war
 - Rebellions, uprisings, and outright revolution against British authority took place throughout the life of the empire, and with the outstanding exception of the thirteen American colonies were put down harshly.
 - During many of these revolts the British dealt with natives in terms which were often unbelievably cruel, rivalling the worst atrocities of the Romans before them, and the Nazis after.
 - In 2012 the British Foreign Office admitted that thousands of records documenting atrocities committed by the British Army and colonial service were deliberately destroyed.
 - Some of the more well known atrocities of the empire are below however they represent just a small sample of the way that white colonists and imperial forces behaved.
 - The Mau Mau Uprising and the Kikuyu: in the 1890s there was resistance to the British opening of the lands and oppression of the natives. British troops stationed in the colony suppressed these uprisings harshly. In 1908 Winston Churchill expressed concern about the violence in East Africa, but not over the nature of the resistance or the harsh methods used by the British to control the natives. Instead he was concerned over the reputation of the British should word of atrocities being committed reach the House of Commons. Churchill did refer to the many victims as "helpless people".
 - In the 1870s while under British rule, India was swept with several famines which led to the deaths of over five million of its people. Simultaneously with these deaths from starvation, malnutrition, and disease India's exports of grain to the rest of the world, ordered and supervised by officials of the British Empire, increased, in some cases to record levels.
 - 1943. Then again, food needed to feed the starving Indian people was exported to other areas, to feed British troops fighting in Europe and Africa, and the supporting Empire troops around the globe.
 - The Boer war concentration camps which were essentially making war with civilians rather than opposing military forces consisted of tents as the only shelter for the prisoners, eventually numbered over 100, with 45 erected for the Boers and over sixty for Africans unfortunate enough to live in the territories "controlled" by the British army.
 - The Nazi regime during the Second World War forever gave the term concentration camp a name symbolic of atrocity, so when the British once again visited the idea of forced relocation of indigenous peoples to isolate them they needed another name for the enclaves. They came up with New Villages. The New Villages were created under the Briggs Plan, which was developed to combat the communist insurgency in Malaya during the 1950 Malayan Emergency.
 - The first British ship to transport slaves was captained by John Hawkins during the reign of Elizabeth I in 1562. There were no English colonies in North America at the time, Hawkins sold the Africans he had captured or purchased to the Spanish colonists in the New World

- By the 1700s specially designed slave ships were being produced by British shipyards. These vessels had maximized deck space and smaller holds, designed to carry human cargo lying on the deck. The voyage from the African coast to the America's or the Caribbean was known as the Middle Passage, and took weeks depending on the winds and weather.
- In 1672 the Royal African Company was chartered and London acquired a monopoly on the British slave trade. The loss of the highly lucrative trade caused Bristol and Liverpool to lobby for the charter to be amended and it was in 1698, allowing smaller British ports to participate.
- More than half of the 80,000 Africans transported across the Atlantic to slavery each year were on British ships
- Some British ship owners realized profits of more than 50% for each voyage.
- Nearly half of the textiles produced by the British city of Manchester was destined to be used as barter for slaves on the African coast.
- The money realized from the slave trade was used to establish the Bank of England by merchants and landowners made wealthy from their involvement
- During the British Empire's participation in the slave trade an estimated 11 – 12 thousand ships departed from British and other Empire ports for the purpose of carrying slaves to the British possessions in North America, as well as to Spanish and Portuguese colonies during times of peace.
- A statue in honour of slave trader [Edward Colston](#) was pulled down by protestors after failed attempts to lobby the local authorities over many years
- Following Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests across the UK, a "hit list" of targets has been drawn up by protesters under the name Topple the Racists, including statues of Sir Francis Drake, William Gladstone and Thomas Guy, the founder of Guy's hospital in London.
- In response, far right forces across the UK including in Runnymede were marshalled under the supposed aim of protecting monuments.
- Councils up and down the country have made commitments to reviewing their monuments

This Council believes that:

- Whilst it is obvious in a racially equal society that all lives are supposed to matter, it is clear the historical and current racism both in the UK and elsewhere means that, right now, all should be reminded that **Black Lives** do in fact **matter**
- There are no quick fixes to historic and complex issues like racism but there is some immediate action that can be taken to reduce community tension and make clear to all the intent to fix the larger problem
- RBC should have a comprehensive racial equality strategy with a specific detailed plan for staff
- Statues should not be pulled down by protestors and nor should the far right be given the opportunity to paint themselves as the protectors of British history and culture
- RBC should take responsibility for racism and imperialism within our cultural history and review monuments within the borough, although it also thinks it unlikely that there will be many monuments that would require action

Therefore, this Council resolves that:

The Corporate Management Committee, with support from any necessary working groups, should form a report and recommendations for full council on a full racial equality strategy fit for the 2020's.

Any strategy should include considerable input from BAME individuals and groups both in the form of consultation and being invited to actively be part of the policy making process.

This strategy should consider the below options but should not be limited by them. These are intended as ideas and examples only.

- Setting up local BAME networks both in and out of the council
- Removing names from job applications
- Setting staff equality KPIs for recruitment and progression (including for senior roles)
- Setting up mentoring opportunities
- Working with local employers to improve opportunities for BAME residents
- Training for staff and members on unconscious bias
- Ensuring that service design has specifically consulted with ethnic minority groups
- Education programmes developed in partnership with schools and the university examining Imperial history and BAME history
- Setting up an all-party BAME cllrs caucus

And, as part of the above plan, the Community Services Committee, with support from any necessary working groups, should be asked to set up an independent panel of historical experts and other community representatives to review monuments as a first step.

- The panel will be selected in such a way that it ensures BAME people are well represented
- This panel will produce a report on all of the statues and monuments that can be publicly accessed in Runnymede
- The report will make recommendations with detailed explanations on any monument that should be removed, altered, or may require additional protection
 - Officers will provide additional guidance on any powers that can be used to do so or, if required to do so, recommend a strategy to influence the owner of any such monument
- They will be asked to identify problematic statues within a modern context rather than historical moral relativist sense, although their recommendations should be proportionate and take account of historical moral relativism within the suggested solution as well as overall historic importance.
- Provide suggestions of historical figures associated with the area who may warrant a statue and who would showcase the diversity of those that can succeed and contribute to the borough