

County Council meeting – 22 March 2011

Statements by Members - The Ecopark proposal.

When Surrey County Council commissioned SITA to supply a thermal waste plant at Charlton Lane, the Council had a duty to confirm that the scheme could in fact be built and operated safely.

Rather late in the day, the Council received a communication from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) which raised serious safety concerns.

It seems that SITA had not supplied the HSE with sufficient information. Instead, it was only the persistence of a resident from my division who, recognising that the HSE had not been advised of the full scope of the project, prompted them to look into it in more detail. The scheme has had from the start a fundamental difficulty: It is not possible to guarantee the safe management of a community recycling centre so close to a thermal treatment plant and this is what the HSE's questions are getting at.

It should never have come to this. While it is SITA's duty to provide a safe scheme, this obligation cannot in any way absolve Surrey County Council of an overriding duty of care – to ensure that schemes, which come before the Planning and Regulatory Committee are, in fact, safe. Had my community not corresponded with the HSE, this scheme might have been passed by this committee on 8 March 2011 with safety matters unresolved.

My community is content to continue to provide a community recycling centre but opposes thermal waste treatment at Charlton Lane.

My community asks for the following support:

- (1) It asks the Cabinet to clarify and to resolve the outstanding PFI issues,
- (2) It asks the Environment and Economy Select Committee to look into the safety of SITA's proposals, and,
- (3) Finally, and I address this to all the councillors here - it needs your communities across Surrey to take their fair share of the waste problem.

Until this happens Surrey County Council in all conscience cannot call itself 'World Class'.

Thank you

Mrs Caroline Nichols, County Councillor for Lower Sunbury and Halliford