

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

TUESDAY 19 JULY 2011

**QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED UNDER THE PROVISIONS
OF STANDING ORDER 10.1**

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHANGE AND EFFICIENCY

(1) MR EBER KINGTON (EPSOM AND EWELL NORTH) TO ASK:

On 6 April, I emailed the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health asking him if he would confirm or deny a newspaper report that SCC is spending over £200,000 a month on unoccupied adult care beds. Despite repeated requests for that information, including a question at the Council Meeting in May, the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health refused to supply the relevant data, stating that the information was confidential and commercially sensitive.

As a result of his refusal to provide the data, I submitted a Freedom of Information request on 25 May seeking that financial information.

On 3 June, the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health finally sent me the financial data stating that it was commercially sensitive and should be treated as confidential.

On 23 June, the Freedom of Information Officer sent me the same financial data as the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, minus nine words of information relating to care home providers – information that I had never requested. I have since confirmed with this Council's Legal Department that the financial information provided under the Freedom of Information Act is neither confidential nor commercially sensitive.

- (1) As the Cabinet Member designated with responsibility for open government does he agree with me that adding unrequested information to non-confidential financial data that results in that financial data being kept from the public domain is an unacceptable practice as a means of avoiding public scrutiny?
- (2) Will he investigate why the financial information, which shows that last year SCC spent over £2.6 million of council taxpayers money on unoccupied and unused beds, was continually and persistently labelled confidential when quite clearly it is not?
- (3) Will he publish the findings of his enquiry into this matter?
- (4) Will he further remind his Cabinet colleagues that SCC has a commitment to openness and disclosure even if the data and

statistics make uncomfortable reading for the relevant Cabinet Member?

Reply:

There has been no intention at any time to withhold information from yourself or any Member of this Council. My colleague the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health offered to you and to the whole of the council a full briefing on these contacts which would have included not only financial data but the history of the contracts, the way in which the contract partners have worked and are working with council officers to address the issues that have arisen since the contracts were initiated. Much progress has been made and is being made in this respect.

It is of course your right to initiate a freedom of information request. The data supplied to you by my colleague prior to the response you received in this manner covered fully your wishes. The covering note with his reply was drafted with the assistance of the council's legal officers.

Contractual information is always subject to confidentiality. Within the full context there are items that could be shared but it is the responsibility of county Members who represent their residents to act I believe in a responsible manner. First by fully informing themselves regarding the context and then using this information responsibly.

Your next two points I will take together. As you well know there is no need for an inquiry because right from the outset full disclosure was offered. You might well want to explain to Members why you chose not to participate in a briefing. As my colleague has offered to disclose all information there is no reason for him to feel uncomfortable.

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT

(2) MRS JAN MASON (EPSOM AND EWELL WEST) TO ASK:

I read with interest the council's press release dated 28 June, which was headlined 'County Council gets firm to re-do botched road repairs.'

This highlighted the good news for people using a stretch of road in Woking.

Will the Cabinet Member for Transport extend this approach to all other areas in Surrey and could I ask that he put Chessington Road in Epsom from Longmead Road to Hook Road Arena roundabout at the top of the list?

Reply:

The poor quality referred to within the press article related to sub-standard work undertaken by Southern Gas Network to fix part of Boundary Rd in Woking, after they had completed alterations to their pipes. The repairs were poor quality, so to ensure the road was put back to a good condition the County Council intervened and the utility company agreed to finance additional resurfacing and footway repairs worth approximately £40,000.

Similarly, officers have already identified some failings in the work done by Sutton and East Surrey Water on Chessington Road. The company has been formally notified and will return to site shortly to redo the work.

We have a dedicated in-house team who undertake inspections of work by utility companies. If it is found not to be of a satisfactory standard, in certain circumstances legislation permits the council to impose a financial penalty and request the work be re-instated.

If you notice any specific concerns please do report them through to the contact centre and they will be dealt with.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

(3) MR GRAHAM ELLWOOD (GUILDFORD EAST) TO ASK:

Whilst I fully endorse the introduction of on-street parking charges throughout the County and indeed positively welcome their introduction in Guildford East, I seek the Leader's reassurance on the following issue of concern:

Guildford Borough is virtually the only Borough Council in Surrey that manages parking charges effectively and profitably. Most Boroughs, I understand, make a loss and, indeed not all even levy parking charges themselves!!

The Leader's reassurance is sought that the County Council is not seeking to appropriate the £500k plus profit that Guildford makes and uses to support our excellent Park and Ride service.

Reply:

The County Council is working to ensure that our on-street parking enforcement service is fair, helps to minimise inconsiderate or dangerous parking, encourages turnover of vehicles to aid business and is not a financial risk to the council taxpayer. Equally any Park and Ride service should be at minimum burden to the council taxpayer.

The net cost of the parking service varies between districts within the county. Excellent progress has been made in all areas and these costs have been

substantially reduced. Work is on going with our partners to ensure this continues with new operational arrangements planned from April 2012. If, as a result of good parking management there is a financial surplus within an area, under the current agreements this is to be shared between the County Council and relevant participating District on a 65 / 35 ratio. Guildford Borough Council are at liberty to use their share as they deem appropriate (subject to complying with the appropriate legislation).

Further to a Cabinet commitment last year, a Park and Ride task group has been established between the two authorities (attended by the Cabinet Member for Transport and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development), which is considering a number of options to reduce the financial impact of the service. Recommendations for ensuring an efficient continued service should be finalised this autumn.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

(4) MRS HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK:

In the most recent edition of Conservative News for Dorking, Mrs Helyn Clack states "I am delighted with the fight [in the elections] put up by the Dorking Branch and would encourage [residents] to make contact through the office if you would like to help our efforts."

The Leaflet also states, "Dorking Conservatives oppose on-street parking charges in market towns and villages. These charges would: increase public sector employee numbers to collect money and manage the system; damage small shops and private sector employment; require hundreds of unsightly meters; and hit everyone's pocket to no advantage."

Will any or all of the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council, or the Cabinet Member for Transport be following up Mrs Clack's requests to help Dorking Conservatives in their efforts campaigning on this issue and, if not, will they give reasons as to why they will not assist their colleagues in their campaigning?

Reply:

I will answer this question verbally at the meeting.

CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH

(5) MR WILL FORSTER (WOKING SOUTH) TO ASK:

The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Dr Vince Cable MP previously raised concerns about the activities of News International, which led to his removal from overseeing the proposed sale of BSkyB to the company. Dr Cable has clearly turned out to be right.

Dr Cable also raised concerns about the ownership of care homes following the initial announcement of financial problems at Southern Cross. His statement met with much unrest in Whitehall. Southern Cross have now announced they are trying to transfer all Southern Cross, Ashbourne Senior Living and Active Care Partnership homes to new operators. It looks as though Dr Cable has turned out to be right again.

- (1) Could the Cabinet Member update the Council on the progress of this transfer of those care homes based in Surrey?
- (2) Would the Cabinet Member also confirm that assessments have been made to establish that all providers of adult social care in Surrey are sound, stable and financially viable businesses to ensure this cannot happen again?

Reply:

Response to Question 1.

Further to a briefing from the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADASS) on Monday 11 July, further contact has been made with our three Southern Cross homes in Surrey. Our Quality Assurance team has been in contact with local home managers, and at present the message is “business as usual.” You may have seen the latest reports in the media that Southern Cross Health Care is ceasing to run its care homes, and that their care homes will be taken over by other providers. Members of the public are understandably concerned as to the future of the homes, both in relation to current residents and to moving into Southern Cross homes in the near future. This is impacting on decision making with people choosing not to move into current Southern Cross owned homes.

In addressing the concerns of residents and their families, we need to offer some reassurance as to the current media reports, responding to the concerns and questions.

Is Southern Cross closing?

The current intention is that Southern Cross will stop running homes over the coming months but this does not mean that the homes will close. They are working with a number of other parties to ensure the continued running of their homes by other providers. Councils are in support of this and continue to buy care from them. Some of their landlords are companies who also run care homes and these are likely to take over the homes they already own; they and other providers will be looking at the other homes with the landlords to determine who will take them on.

What if Southern Cross fails before the homes are taken over?

Should Southern Cross go into administration the homes will continue to be operated by the administrator who has a responsibility to sell the homes as going concerns. The homes would continue to run whilst this happens.

What if homes have to close?

ADASS is clear that it will work with new providers to create a sustainable business for the future. We are not expecting to see care home closures as a large part of any plan.

Please reassure people that the ADASS position remains as stated in our press release from May this year:

“In all eventualities, directors of adult social services and their social work staff will put the peace of mind, physical and emotional welfare, and the interests of older residents and their carers at the forefront of every decision we make.”

ADASS is working with Southern Cross, and will work with the new providers, to ensure a smooth transition of ownership and contractual relationships so as to minimise any disruption for residents and their families. As soon as we start to hear from landlords about proposals for local care homes we will be asking for a communication plan with residents and relatives involved. This will start to address the specific issues about what all this means for people living in named care homes. The statement released by Southern Cross today suggests that the timescale for this is from now through to mid October, so it is important to set expectations with this timescale in mind.

Our Quality Assurance team is still committed to undertaking monthly visits to each home and our Personal Care and Support teams are committed to reviewing care plans in the homes to ensure we are one step ahead of any decision about the future of the homes.

For information, here is the current position regarding funding in Surrey homes. Contact has been made with the managers of Southern Cross homes out of county to monitor the welfare of any Surrey funded residents.

Name	Registration	Surrey Funded
Milner House, Ermin Way, Leatherhead , KT22 8TX http://www.housingcare.org/housing-care/facility-info-136512-milner-house-leatherhead-england.aspx Freehold: K/S Ermin Way (incorporated in Denmark), £5.5m in 2006 Ashbourne homes	58 rooms with Nursing, Old Age, Dementia	13 (22%)
Norfolk House, Portmore Road, Weybridge , KT13 8HQ http://www.carehome.co.uk/carehome.cfm/searchref/20001060NORA Freehold: K/S Weybridge (incorporated in Denmark), £8.9m in 2006.	76 rooms with Nursing Old Age	37 (48%)

Ashbourne homes		
Dungate Manor, Flanchford Road, Reigate , RH2 8QT http://www.carehome.co.uk/carehome.cfm/search?hazref/10001060DUNA Freehold: Cannon Life No1, transferred in 2008 to Ashbourne (Eton) Ltd. Ashbourne homes	45 rooms – Residential Care, Dementia, Old Age, Physical Disability	2 (5%)

Response to Question 2.

Businesses do sometimes go out of business for reasons over which we have no control - as in the case of Southern Cross.

The Procurement team ensures assessments on organisations financial standings are undertaken in a number of ways dependent on how we procure our goods and services and the value or risk of our business with them.

1. Spot Contracts Terms & Conditions

Ongoing Liaison - Our terms and conditions enforce ongoing liaison between the County Council and the provider. The provider is bound by contract law to inform the County Council of anything that may affect the well being and continuation of service of the service user(s).

Monitoring and evaluation - Our terms and conditions stipulate that the County Council will monitor and evaluate the provider. The County Council is also able to check and request any further information relating to the financial standing of the provider.

2. Tendering

The County Council uses Bravo Solutions to tender for some social care services. Our process ensures adequate vetting of the provider to ensure they have a strong financial standing. It also requests financial accounts to which our finance teams can analyse the providers financial situation. Our standard terms and conditions will play a key role in the ongoing monitoring of the providers ability to provide services.

3. Relationships and key meetings

The County Council ensures that where possible our relationships with our key providers initially covers safeguarding against potential financial issues. We regularly set up review meetings and accommodate providers who wish to discuss any matters relating to finances.

We are setting up quarterly reviews beginning with our strategic providers part of which will be to understand their financial standing and ascertain if there are

any issues that may compromise the service they are providing to SCC residents as outlined in our terms and conditions.

It is, however, important to note that requesting information from providers (i.e. financial accounts) gives us a snap shot of their standing in a particular period of time but things can deteriorate quite quickly.

To note: the old National Minimum Care Standards used to include a standard on financial probity, however, the new standards do not. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) check up on the financial status of a new registration but not as an ongoing concern.

CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

(6) MR IAN BEARDSMORE (SUNBURY COMMON AND ASHFORD COMMON) TO ASK:

In October Spelthorne Borough Council are instigating a food waste collection service. Over the first 3 years Surrey will be paying about 90% of the costs. Over the following 3 years Surrey will be paying about 60% of the cost. In total, this amounts to almost £1.3m over the 6 years.

- (a) How does this compare to past, current or proposed future payments to other Boroughs and Districts?
- (b) Is the money going to be ring fenced?

Reply:

- (a) Surrey County Council has, so far reached agreement with seven authorities to support the collection of food waste. The offer, on the same basis, is open to all Surrey's Boroughs and Districts.
- (b) There is no specific ring fencing. However, Surrey County Council has pledged support only for the first three years. Funding for subsequent years, based on a tapered and reducing rate, is subject to performance. The exact terms of funding after the first three years remains the subject of discussions between Surrey County Council and District and Borough Councils.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND LEARNING

(7) MRS PAULINE SEARLE (GUILDFORD NORTH) TO ASK:

I am aware that in Guildford negotiations have been taking place with schools which are being asked to increase this Autumn's intake again! Have all Surrey children who have applied for places in reception or year 7 through the

coordinated admissions system now been offered a place in an appropriate school?

If this is not the case, please could the Cabinet Member give the numbers of children concerned in each Borough and District? What resources are being offered to help schools create places for local children?

Reply:

All 'on-time' applicants for school places starting in September 2011 in the Reception Year, Junior intake (year 3) and Secondary School intake (year 7) have been offered school places. All places have been offered in accordance with published admission arrangements.

The percentage of parents who were offered their 1st ranked preference and the percentage of parents who were offered one of their 3 ranked preferences are as follows:

- **Reception:** 82% of 1st ranked preferences met (down from 83% last year) and 94% offered one of their 3 ranked preferences (down from 96% last year)
- **Junior:** 85% of 1st ranked preferences met (down from 86% last year) and 92% offered one of their 3 ranked preferences (down from 97% last year)
- **Secondary:** 83% of 1st ranked preferences met (up from 79% last year) and 96% offered one of their 3 ranked preferences (up from 92% last year)

These figures mean that 6% of reception applicants, 8% of junior applicants and 4% of secondary applicants have not been offered one of their preferred schools.

The total number of reception applications was 4% up on last year. The total number of secondary applications reduced by 5%.

With the number of applications for reception entry being well above trend in a number of areas, the Council has undertaken a programme providing additional classes at a number of schools making use of both existing accommodation and temporary mobile classrooms. These have all been appropriately funded. The capital programme for this project is in excess of £5m. In addition schools taking additional children have been supported via our Education Finance team with the provision of exceptional revenue to meet costs associated with additional demand. This work has not been taken out of context with larger capital programme for permanent expansion of schools. Many of the mobile projects have been developed to enable future permanent expansion.

All schools have worked extremely well in cooperation the Authority to ensure that we meet our statutory duty. The additional demands placed on schools when taking 'bulge' classes are recognised and we will continue to work with schools to manage these as they progress through the schools.

The School Admissions team is still dealing with a large number of late application that have been received after the January closing date. The position on these figures is fluid, and the team is still receiving applications daily. At present not all of these applicants have been offered school places for entry in September. The breakdown by District Borough is as follows;

3 - Reigate and Banstead
8 - Waverley
6 - Woking
4 - Epsom and Ewell
1 - Mole Valley
1 - Elmbridge

We will aim to offer these students a school place prior to the end of term. Late applications that are received during the school summer holidays will not be offered school places prior to the start of the School year.

It is still necessary to note that we anticipate movement in waiting lists between the end of term and the start of the new school year. At present, as a result of successful appeals and movement from school waiting lists 110 applicants hold an offer of a school place but have also been provisionally offered a school of a higher preference and are therefore holding two school places. When these offers are confirmed this will free up place, enabling more children to obtain a school place of their preference. This will also provide school places for further applications that the Authority may receive prior to the start of the new school year.

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

(8) MR DENIS FULLER (CAMBERLEY WEST) TO ASK:

I'm (just) old enough to remember the hot, dry Summer of 1957. In August I spent two hot weeks at CCF Camp near Thetford, in parched Norfolk – we saw not a drop of rain. Our school playing fields at Hampton remained parched until late Autumn.

We'd not heard about 'Global Warming' or 'Climate Change' 50 years ago – we called it 'Weather', or 'Climate'. However, we choose to describe a dry spell (and we're hearing about hosepipe bans etc. already this year), I, as a cricket lover, am aware that the Cardiff Test Match was badly affected by rain; there was rain at Lords on the day that I was there, and today (16 June) it has been pouring down at the Rosebowl.

Professor Roger Falconer of Cardiff University has been looking at proposals for improving our canal network so as to integrate them into the water supply, possibly by creating a 'Grid'. Later this year he, with other engineers, will hold a conference at the Royal Academy of Engineering to discuss possibilities.

We in Surrey are blessed with stretches of canal, including the Wey & Arun, Basingstoke etc. Our canals are supported to a large part by teams of dedicated volunteers.

Therefore; would Surrey County Council, if so requested, give due and serious consideration to any request to helping our canals, and indeed other waterways, form part of a future National Water Grid? “

Reply:

The only waterway in Surrey that is under the control of Surrey County Council is the Basingstoke Canal, from the county boundary at Ash to the Wey Navigation at Woodham. As further information becomes available we will review the situation. However, the Basingstoke Canal is fed by chalk springs at Greywell in Hampshire and by surface water run-off along its route. It forms a key part of the sustainable urban drainage system in the Ash; Frimley; Deepcut; Brookwood and Woking areas. The canal is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest for the diversity and range of aquatic plants, dragonflies and damselflies that it supports. The canal has traditionally suffered from a lack of water, particularly in the summer months, leading to temporary restrictions on navigation. These constraints would be likely to mitigate against the Basingstoke Canal forming part of a National Water Grid.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

(9) MR JOHN BUTCHER (COBHAM) TO ASK:

Following the recent shocking revelation of newspaper hacking into, and interference with, the mobile phone of the murdered Surrey schoolgirl, Milly Dowler and of other instances of disgraceful newspaper snooping, does the Leader welcome the Prime Minister's announcement of an Inquiry into how the media operates?

Reply:

I am sure other Members will join me in welcoming the stance that is being taken to uphold appropriate standards of public taste and decency.

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT:

**(10) MR GRAHAM ELLWOOD (GUILDFORD EAST) TO ASK:
(2nd question)**

You are aware of my concern that the system of allowing County Councillors to allocate 100 points towards three priority road repairs in their wards appears to be ineffective. In my own ward only one road is on the works schedule currently and that was on the list of three in 2009/10! There was no points allocation, as

far as I can see, for 2010/ 11 and I have now had to prioritise two roads for the third year running!

Can the Cabinet Member please get the whole priority system reviewed with a view to ensuring councillors wishes achieve greater priority?

Reply:

Roads are currently prioritised using three types of criteria:

- an engineering assessment of the condition of that road.
- the importance of the route, looking at traffic volumes and bus routes
- Member and public concerns including insurance claims

The 100 points enables us to use Members' knowledge of their area to influence and add weight to specific schemes on the prioritised list. Prior to 2011, Members were last asked to bid for their three worst roads in 2009 and these bids were included in the allocation of points used to create the 2010-11 programmes for Major Maintenance and Surface Treatment. In 2010, the service was being restructured and the new contracts being negotiated, so the prioritised lists for Major Maintenance and Surface Treatment works were not significantly revised in 2010 and the points allocated in the 2009 bid process (including the 100 points for Member priority roads) were carried over and used for the 2011-12 programmes.

237 bids were made by councillors in 2009 - 1 councillor abstained from the bid process. Of the 237 schemes bid for by councillors, we expect 170 schemes (72%) will have been completed by the end of March 2012. This means that 76 councillors have had one of their schemes delivered.

The remaining 67 schemes bid for by councillors have all been assessed as requiring Major Maintenance works, which cost approximately £350,000 per km. Based on the length of the remaining schemes these 67 schemes would cost over £11m to complete.

The Highway team is already working on the 2012-13 programme and many councillors have taken the opportunity to nominate their three worst roads. Each of these nominations will be scored and added to the list for prioritisation.

If the prioritisation system were changed to give further weight to Member nominations, this would risk prioritising Member nominated schemes over those roads that are in significantly worse condition. As time passes these roads get into worse condition and cost even more to resolve. Members would therefore be taking on greater corporate responsibility and liability and increasing the costs of doing the repairs in the long run. However, the Chairman of the Environment and Transport Select Committee may want to consider this area for scrutiny.

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND 2012 GAMES

(11) MRS HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK: (2nd question)

At the June meeting of the Mole Valley Local Committee I put forward a local allocation bid for £4,000 to enable the Norbury Park Sawmill to purchase a computerised routing machine to help the sawmill become more financially sustainable. My local allocation bid was queried by the Committee Chairman at the meeting and after the meeting officers decided that the bid was inconsistent with County Council policies and could not proceed. Why is such a local allocation bid inconsistent with County Council policies when the sawmill is on land owned by the County Council, the sawmill is currently being subsidised by the County Council and the County Council is currently advising the sawmill how to become more financially sustainable?

Reply:

Your allocation bid for £4000 to enable the Norbury Park Sawmill to purchase a computerised routing machine was submitted to the June Meeting of the Mole Valley Local Committee and agreed - we have referred to the decision log.

Upon investigation your application is not judged to fall outside of the current criteria for Members allocations that can be agreed by Local Committees. However a key requirement within the financial framework for Local Committees is that spending should *'deliver value for money'*. When looking into this specific request, it was raised that the future operation and profitability of the Norbury Park Sawmill beyond 30 September 2011 is currently the subject of a review. The question that this raises is thus one of 'value for money' at this time? If the sawmill does not operate beyond the end of September 2011, the expenditure of £4000 in July / August may be called into question? The officer advice provided thus stands - that you as the sponsoring Member may chose to 'hold' the purchase until there is certainty with regards to the future of the sawmill.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

(12) MR DENIS FULLER (CAMBERLEY WEST) TO ASK: (2nd question)

Following the example of David Cameron, who is not afraid of listening to public opinion and amending policies, Surrey County Council has abandoned a proposal to merge two Camberley Schools – Kings International and Tomlinscote, having during the consultation process considered the wishes of parents, teachers, governors and local councillors.

This is a victory for local opinion, being clearly a rebuttal of the advice of expert officers and contrary to established policy and practice.

Would you be willing to 'U-Turn', in future, instances when local opinion is sufficiently strong and well informed to demonstrate that a 'one-cap-fits-all' policy may not be appropriate?

Reply:

It is right and proper that politicians listen to their voters. Indeed if they do not then the voters have a regular opportunity to turn their politicians out. However there are times when politicians need to lead and persuade rather than to follow.

You mention the example of King's International and Tomlinscote Schools in Camberley. Kings has a chequered history, is a seriously under-subscribed school and was put into special measures by Ofsted in early 2010. The County brokered a soft federation between the two schools and then went further with a proposal for the two Schools to merge. The County consulted on this proposal. The consultation revealed that a majority of parents and staff opposed the merger and in the light of that, the County decided not to proceed. The purpose of consultation is to hear views on a proposal and to respond to those views. That is exactly what has happened here. It is not a U-Turn. It is consultation working as it should. Late last week following a further inspection, Ofsted released Kings from special measures – this is good news and is a vindication of expert officers solutions working well and bearing fruit.

We will of course continue to use consultation processes to hear the views of partners and residents on various proposals.

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT

**(13) MRS HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK:
(3RD question)**

The recently issued Highways Bulletin for Mole Valley for the period 4 July to 17 July 2011 issued to all Mole Valley Councillors shows that in May 2011 only 51% of responses by Highways were given within 20 days in Mole Valley, which is considerably worse than for any other District or Borough in Surrey. What is the reason for the poor speed of response by Highways in Mole Valley and what action is being taken to improve it?

Reply:

In recent months the Highways Service has made excellent progress in answering the vast majority of customer enquires politely, factually and within 20 days. More information is being put onto our website so residents can easily find the answer to frequent questions and our contact centre is equipped to deal

with most concerns at the first point of contact. To ensure transparency performance figures are reported monthly.

In May 2011, there were an enormous 4,051 “recorded” general highway enquiries. This does not include many dealt with and closed at the contact centre or received directly by officers. Our overall performance for the county in May was an excellent 86% responded to within time. As Mrs Watson will be aware May is not typical of performance within Mole Valley, which was caused by temporary staffing absences, and the figures for the rest of the year are provided below

April 2011 – 88% within 20 days

March 2011 – 88% within 20 days

February 2011 – 84% within 20 days

January 2011 – 86 % within 20 days

It is unfortunate that in May there was a fluctuation in performance but systems are in place and with the commitment of staff we will endeavour to ensure previous levels of performance are maintained for our residents.

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

TUESDAY 19 JULY 2011

**QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED UNDER THE PROVISIONS
OF STANDING ORDER 10.13**

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POLICE AUTHORITY

MR WILL FORSTER (WOKING SOUTH) TO ASK:

Please would the Surrey Police Authority confirm when Surrey Police was made aware of the telephone hacking of murdered Surrey teenager Milly Dowler?

Reply:

Surrey Police has issued the following statement:

"Surrey Police has received numerous requests to disclose information regarding the alleged hacking of Milly Dowler's mobile phone and we would like to make clear our position. We are currently assisting the Metropolitan Police as part of their ongoing investigation. Any detail, such as Surrey Police's knowledge or any contact with the News of the World, could be highly relevant to that investigation and could potentially undermine it. Therefore it would be inappropriate for us to make any further comment at this time."

The Authority is also unable to make further comment on this matter.