

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2011

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

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE 2012 GAMES

(1) MR STEVE RENSHAW (HASLEMERE) TO ASK:

I am sure that the portfolio holder appreciates that although the Kindle is the most popular form of e-reader in the UK, members of the public still cannot currently download books from SCC libraries onto their Kindles, as the software is not currently available.

My understanding is that whilst it is a 'supported portable device', available for US libraries, at present there is a UK-wide rights issue that has to be resolved strategically between the book publishing world and public libraries sector.

Given that SCC was considered to be a pace-setter with our involvement in introducing ebooks etc., can she please advise what steps she and SCC are taking to help resolve this issue and when would she expect that this facility will be available through the SCC libraries, which I am sure will greatly facilitate the move to e-books?

Reply:

The issue raised is a national one. In the UK, Kindle owners have to buy books from Amazon to download. Amazon does not allow any public library books to be downloaded to Kindles. Most public library e-book suppliers protect digital rights using special software which is not recognized by Amazon. In addition, Amazon uses proprietary software to create e-books using a file format called .azw which means that files in other formats - and all library books are in other formats - cannot easily be read on Kindles. Library books can be downloaded to e-book readers which are not Kindles.

The situation is made more complex by the fact that the e-book industry in the UK is still very new and extremely fragmented. All publishers and suppliers are feeling their way. There is very little agreement or understanding yet about business models and there is a great deal of nervousness about protecting digital rights, and there are still a wide variety of file formats being used.

However, Surrey Libraries' e-books are supplied by a company called Overdrive. In the USA Overdrive and Amazon have come to an arrangement whereby Overdrive library books can be downloaded onto Kindles. Surrey Library Service, along with other library authorities, has been assured by both

Amazon and Overdrive that this model will be available in the UK in 2012, but as yet no date has been given.

It should be noted that the market is so volatile that this move in the USA has led to unease amongst publishers and Penguin books have withdrawn their books, temporarily we are told, from Overdrive both in the USA and the UK.

In the meantime, Surrey is maintaining its pace-setter status on two fronts. Surrey Library Service is currently investigating other models of e-book delivery, including one which does not involve Digital Rights management, which means that books could be read online.

In addition, Helen Leech, Virtual Content Manager in Surrey Library Service, has also become co-Chair of the e-books sub-group of the Society of Chief Librarians, which is currently co-ordinating a national library authorities forum, and trying to find a way forward with organisations such as the Publisher's Association, The Reading Agency, and the various digital suppliers.

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE 2012 GAMES

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

On Wednesday 16 November 2011, His Honour Judge McKenna ruled that Gloucestershire County Council's and Somerset County Council's plans for their public library services were unlawful on equalities grounds.

He ruled that both councils had failed to take account of their equalities duties when pushing through the cuts, condemning both councils' approach as "bad Government", and that it was "important to the Rule of Law" that the decisions be quashed.

Surrey County Council's PVR methodology states "PVRs will be delivered by...consulting widely including with residents and specifically vulnerable groups and communities and with staff".

The Equalities Impact Assessment on the Community Partnered Libraries plan stated:

"Older users of branch libraries will be negatively impacted if their nearest branch closures. Younger users of branches and mobiles could be negatively impacted by the removal of services. Surrey's draft Single Equality Scheme suggests places to go are restricted for young people, and this is exacerbated by poor public transport, particularly in isolated rural areas. Libraries currently help promote literacy and love of reading among young people, and no reduction to this service is proposed. However, young people would be negatively impacted by local branch closures as they may not be able to travel independently to another branch."

"Residents with a disability will be negatively impacted by any local branch closures as they may find it more difficult to travel independently to another branch."

"More women will be impacted by any reduction in library services than men."

"Reduction of branches would mean carers have to travel further to get to a local library."

"Rural communities with limited access to services may be impacted if branch services are reduced. Not all library premises have toilets or baby changing facilities. There is a relationship between socio-economic disadvantages and other protected characteristics that libraries have an impact on: race, religion, disability ... Libraries offer free information and educational material and programmes help residents with low educational attainment, literacy development and finding employment and developing resilience and life skills."

Given the judgment by His Honour Judge McKenna, the negative impacts highlighted in the Equalities Impact Assessment and the lack of the wide consultation with residents and specifically vulnerable groups and communities and staff stipulated in the PVR process, would the Cabinet Member agree that pushing ahead with the Community Partnered Libraries Programme lays the County Council open to judicial review and therefore the proposals should be abandoned?

Reply:

The Court Ruling was that Gloucestershire and Somerset had not sufficiently gathered and analysed information relating to equalities and, in Gloucestershire, had selected a library in a deprived area for closure. They were ruled to have not given 'due regard' to their statutory equality needs.

In Surrey, libraries in the county's Priority Areas were excluded from the list of those selected for community partnering and are to remain as part of the strategic core network.

Surrey carried out its EIA concurrently with the PVR. Although the EIA noted that over 85% of Surrey residents have access to a car. Public transport modelling carried out as part of the PVR study showed that 95% of households would continue to have a journey time of under 30 minutes at peak times to a library by public transport.

Surrey's Books on Wheels service will continue to offer service to housebound users.

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

(3) MR MEL FEW (FOXHILLS AND VIRGINIA WATER) TO ASK:

Will the Council introduce a 20mph variable speed limit outside all schools located on or near main roads throughout the County similar to systems currently operating in the United States, Canada and Australia thereby reinforcing the Councils commitment to the safety of our young residents?

Reply:

Surrey County Council is fully committed to road safety. It is vitally important that we keep our residents safe, especially the youngest and most vulnerable members of society. We are proud of the excellent record that we have in reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads.

We will continue to implement 20 mph speed limits outside schools and in other key locations where this lower limit will help to make the road safer and reduce congestion. We have looked carefully at proposals for a blanket 20 mph limit outside all schools in the county. We have concluded that this would not be a good use of public money and would not have the safety benefits that might at first appear.

There are a number of reasons for this conclusion. Due to the number of vehicles parking near to school gates, actual speeds are already often less than 20 mph without the need for changing the speed limits. Even at these low speeds, children can be in danger if they cross between parked cars. Because of this, it is often more important to build better pedestrian crossing points than to reduce the speed limits.

Experience has shown that there are relatively few road safety casualties outside school gates during the school run. This is in part because cars dropping off children force all traffic to move at low speeds. We also believe that drivers are more careful near to schools and are looking out for children and parents crossing the road.

At a time when resources are very scarce, we believe that it is far better to have a targeted programme of road safety improvements which tackle the specific problems of a particular location. A blanket programme of 20mph speed limits would be relatively costly and less effective because it would mean implementing lower speed limits at some locations where they would not make a noticeable difference to road safety.

It is recognised that local committees are best placed to make constructive judgements and determine the priorities within their own financial local committee resource.

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE 2012 GAMES

(4) MRS ANGELA FRASER (BANSTEAD EAST) TO ASK:

Surrey is extremely rich in historic listed buildings and architectural sites. As a consequence I would like to invite the Council to sign up to ARCH (Alliance to Reduce Crime against Heritage) and the Memorandum of Understanding, both of which are supported by English Heritage, the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Crime Prosecution Service and some Local Authorities. Will the Cabinet Member investigate the benefits of Surrey County Council joining these groups?

Reply:

Mrs Fraser attended the meeting referred to above and has subsequently raised this question of support for ARCH and can be assured that arrangements for Surrey support for this initiative are already in hand.

ARCH would like to see explicit support from the County Council via letters from the Chief Executive and from the County Council.

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

(5) MR PETER LAMBELL (REIGATE CENTRAL) TO ASK:

Some Local Committees, such as Reigate and Banstead, agreed to implement on-street parking charges under duress, knowing that their decisions would have been called in by the Cabinet if charges for their areas were rejected out of hand.

In light of the recent policy reversal by the new Leader, will these Local Committees have the opportunity to reconsider their decisions?

Reply:

The Leader has agreed that Local Committees should make decisions about new on-street parking charges in their areas. If the Reigate and Banstead Local Committee wish to review decisions on this matter then this is for them to decide. I understand they have an informal meeting in January where this may be discussed.

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

(6) MR STEPHEN COOKSEY (DORKING AND THE HOLMWOODS) TO ASK:

Would the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment indicate the costs to date to the Council of the scheme to introduce on-street car parking charges

including an estimate of the cost of officer time and the cost of contract negotiations and advertising? Would he indicate how many proposals developed by Parking Officers are going ahead with a view to implementation in each District and Borough and how many have been withdrawn prior to submission to Local Committees or rejected by Local Committees?

Reply:

The County Council's in house parking team undertakes reviews of restrictions for the Local Committees. This staff resource, which forms part of the core establishment of Environment & Infrastructure, was used to progress on-street charging proposals. Likewise, the procurement team commissioned the "call off" contract for parking payment machines. While the County Council has not yet needed to use the call off contract, Borough and District Councils have made savings using it for their off-street car parks.

To date the total cost of advertising the proposals stands at approximately £45,000. A temporary member of staff employed to assist with the consultation process has cost approximately £15,000.

Schemes were developed for all eleven Boroughs and Districts within Surrey. Of these, two Local Committees have entirely dismissed the proposals. The others are still considering options or consulting in some locations.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

(7) MR DAVID GOODWIN (GUILDFORD SOUTH WEST) TO ASK:

Would the Leader of the Council list all time limited S106 funding that has been lost because of late or non implementation since 2005. In each case would he indicate the projects for which the funding could have been used, the nature of the scheme concerned and the amounts of money involved.

Reply:

A thorough check of the records has been carried out and the only monies that have had to be returned in the period 2005, to date relate to the three schemes below:-

1. 251-263 EPSOM ROAD, GUILDFORD (05/P/00455) and PLANNING APPEAL (Y/3615/A/05/1180650)
Mixed commercial and residential development
Financial contribution of £25,000 towards the provision of a toucan crossing near Merrow Street and an improved access arrangement to the site.
Monies returned to Guildford Borough Council on 24 November 2009 due to a toucan crossing having been constructed prior to monies being received and the improved access requirements being on private land.

2. 95-133 EASTWORTH ROAD CHERTSEY (RU/02/1194)
Residential development
Financial contribution of £10,000 towards the costs of improvements to facilities for bus passengers.
Monies returned to the Developer on 20 March 2006 due to local bus stop improvement having already been undertaken prior to receipt of monies.

3. A331 BLACKWATER VALLEY ROAD (SU97/1176)

The scheme was being handled and progressed by Highways and was to provide pedestrian crossing facilities across the A331 Blackwater Valley Road linking Sainsbury's with a proposed visitor centre alongside the Blackwater River. The monies were also permitted to be used on a review of bus routes, the provision of a bus gate or cycle route provisions along and to or from the A331 BVR.

Approximately £15,000 of the £60,000 was spent on producing a design for the crossing, but the remaining balance of £45,000 plus any accrued interest was insufficient to allow the crossing or other works to be implemented.

The Agreement required the payment of a sum of £60,000 with a 5 year expiry from the date of receipt, (May 2004). The funds were transferred to Surrey County Council in September 2003. They were refunded in June 2008.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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

Would the Leader agree that to ensure political accountability for the decisions over the procurement of major contracts, the recommendation from officers of service providers should be taken to the Cabinet, under Part 2, together with evidence of competing bids so that a proper decision can be taken, and be open to call in, and that the officers' recommendations should not be circulated before such a decision as a *fait accompli*?

Reply:

The Cabinet holds the authority to award or not award contracts above £1million contract value. It does not have the authority to evaluate bids as the question indicates as this is done as part of the Procurement process.

The note that this question referred to clearly states that the award is subject to approval from the Procurement Review Group and Cabinet and therefore clearly respects the role of Cabinet and is in line with our Procurement Standing Orders.

The note was decided to be issued as there is a key business risk that staff would leave during this major and innovative transformation, as there was a large degree of concern over the potential types of organisation that may win the contract. It was attempting to address this risk, whilst making it quite clear that this was still subject to the approval processes.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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

Please can the Leader of the Council confirm at which meeting did he rescind the solar photovoltaic panel investment scheme, approved at the Cabinet meeting on 26 July 2011?

Unlike many other local authorities who have already successfully installed solar photovoltaic panels on their estate, why did Surrey County Council not approve and install solar photovoltaic panels on its estate earlier to achieve the best possible financial and environmental benefit?

Please can the Leader of the Council also explain his decision to cancel completely the Council's pre-FiT review scheme, when other authorities including Reading Borough Council and Woking Borough Council are pursuing a reduced investment in solar photovoltaic panels?

Finally, please could the Leader of the Council also confirm what abortive costs have been incurred by this Council in terminating the solar photovoltaic panel scheme, such as surveying, electrical design, structural surveys, project management and legal costs?

Reply:

On 26 July 2011, the case for investment in solar PV was approved by Cabinet, subject to final assessment and scrutiny by the then Acting Assistant Director for Finance & Strategic Assets and me. The Council was fully committed to implementing the project, at the approved scale and proportion of benefits and level of risk at that time.

However, the approved case for the Council's project was no longer achievable, after the proposed changes to the Feed in Tariff published by the Department for Energy and Climate Change on the 31 October 2011.

It is not for me to comment on the decisions of other Councils, but in the case of Surrey County Council, as the approved case was no longer achievable and under the delegated authority of the July Cabinet approval, the Acting Assistant Director for Finance & Strategic Assets and I instructed officers not to sign the contract. The outcome of the consultation is being closely monitored and if the project returns to the approved levels of benefit and risk, after the final decision from Government, then the project will be implemented.

On the matter of abortive costs, I can confirm that resources were invested in this project which has increased knowledge of our assets in relation to their potential for generation of renewable energy. Total officer time has been estimated in the order of £35,000 and project costs of £25,000. I can reassure all members that this work will not be wasted, as the council must continue to move towards reducing reliance of increasingly costly and insecure fossil fuels. For example in the case of solar PV, this may involve deployment of solar PV at the points of required roof maintenance.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

(10) MRS DIANA SMITH (KNAPHILL) TO ASK:

What progress is being made on the replacement or renewal of the Catch 22 contract for young people leaving care?

Reply:

The current contract with Catch22 for young people leaving care comes to an end on 31 January 2012. After a recent procurement exercise it was judged that none of the proposals put by the bidders met the council's requirement and therefore an award of contract could not be recommended. From 1 February the service will be delivered by Surrey County Council.

A project group has been meeting fortnightly to ensure that there will be a smooth transition as the service moves from Catch22 to Surrey County Council with the minimum of disruption for young people and for staff. The group includes business support and finance managers to ensure that there is no risk to business continuity.

Two of our young care leaver apprentices are also members of the project group and are involved in a consultation exercise with the Children in Care Council and wider care leaver group about how the new service will run and how we can seek to continually improve as it develops in 2012.

Human Resources colleagues are fully involved and are liaising with their counterparts in Catch22 around the potential transfer of staff to the county council. Surrey County Council Managers are meeting with the Catch22 Managers and their affected staff and Trade Unions throughout December and January.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND LEARNING

(11) MR ERNEST MALLETT (WEST MOLESEY) TO ASK:

At a meeting of the Chandlers Field School Governors, West Molesey, I was informed by the Chairman of the Attainments Committee that assessments

needed to plan and fund the teaching of pupils to be 'Statemented' are running at delays of one year or more.

Will the Cabinet Member give the typical time delays on this matter for the whole of Surrey and say what is being done to correct this.

If this problem is only typical of Chandlers Field School and maybe a small number of others, what is the reason for this to be a problem at a few schools and what is being done to correct this?

Reply:

Concerning performance across the County as a whole, from 1st April to October 2011, 98.2% of Statements of Special Educational Need were completed on time (97.9% in September, and 98% in August). This figure represents SSEN that are completed or delayed as a direct result of Surrey services. Of this figure, 165 SSEN were completed on time, with 3 delays since April. However, 79% of SEN assessments were concluded outside of the statutory deadline of 28 weeks, compared with 77.7% in September and 76.6% in August due to delays by services outside of Surrey's control. The bulk of the delays are caused by late assessment report submission from agencies within the national health service. These delays, whilst unacceptable, are outside of the SEN Service's direct control. In the financial year to date, 386 statements have been issued, 81 of which were delayed by third party contributions. The length of delays is harder to measure using our present system, but current data clearly demonstrates that these delays are not within Surrey's own services. The total number of new SSEN issued by Surrey to date, is 551.

Concerning performance specifically at Chandlers Field, this school and its near neighbours in Elmbridge are affected by a particular difficulty we are experiencing concerning inputs from Kingston Primary Care Trust. This is being raised with that organisation.

According to EMS, there are currently 10 children with statements of SEN in Chandlers Field School. Out of these 10 statements 8 were on time and 2 were outside the timescale. The 2 currently under assessment are late due to medical information still not received.

CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

**(12) MRS CAROLINE NICHOLS (LOWER SUNBURY AND HALLIFORD)
TO ASK:**

The Chairman will be aware that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has, after 5 months of deliberation, declined to call-in the application to install a gasifier and anaerobic digester at the Charlton Lane Waste Management Facility in Shepperton.

The Chairman will also be aware that it was **after** approval by the Planning & Regulatory Committee of the application by SITA UK that the Advertising Standards Authority found that Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) Code

had been breached in respect of rules 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 (Misleading advertising), 3.7 (unsubstantiated claims), 11.1 and 11.4 (Environmental claims).

My question comes in 4 parts:

1. Will the Chairman accept that the public consultation which was required to be undertaken by SITA UK was flawed in that the Company misled the public in the critical areas highlighted by the ASA?
2. Since the ASA has found against SITA UK in these critical areas, will the Chairman accept that the public have not therefore been consulted with the full and unvarnished truth; and that SITA UK's obligation to consult the public has therefore not been fulfilled?
3. Given that the ASA adjudication was published on 26 October 2011, i.e. after the application had been approved by the PRC, will the Chairman now take the procedural and legal steps necessary to revoke the approval?
4. If the Chairman does not, will she accept that for the historical record, and for the enlightenment of future generations, that the Council has approved the installation of the gasifier in a populated area of Sunbury/Shepperton, and in an Area of Air Quality Management (AQM), without evidence that it is a proven environmental technology; and without evidence that it has operated successfully elsewhere?

Reply:

Due to the nature of the question and the detail required, the Leader has asked officers to provide a written response to Mrs Nichols within the next seven days.

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

(13) Mr COLIN TAYLOR (EPSOM & EWELL SOUTH WEST) TO ASK:

Would the Cabinet Member please advise whether it is intended to allow Local Committees flexibility in setting permit charges for parking in on-street Residents Parking bays? Currently a set of minimum charges seems to be prescribed in the council's Parking Strategy document.

Reply:

On-street parking enforcement was costing the County Council approximately £500,000 per year to run. Resident parking permit charges set at disproportionately low levels contributed towards the deficit. For example, many permits cost just £10 per annum – insufficient to cover the cost of administration and enforcement. From April this year, the minimum fee countywide is set at £50 for the first parking permit and £75 for the second. Local Committees are free to set fees higher than this if they feel there are sound local reasons.

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

(14) MR STEVE RENSHAW (HASLEMERE) TO ASK: (2nd Question)

As Chairman of the Environment and Transport Select Committee, I, the Committee, and many other Members of the Council were pleased to hear the announcement of the newly appointed Leader of the Council at the meeting of the 11 October 2011 as quoted on the Surrey County Council website, that;

“...the single countywide policy for on-street parking ends today.

Local committees – working with the boroughs and districts – are far better placed to make these decisions. From today, local committees will have the freedom to decide without interference from us. They will not refer decisions to the Cabinet. We trust them to make the right choice for their communities.”

However, at the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 29 November 2011, in response to the recommendations of the On Street Parking Task Group, which were fully endorsed by the Environment and Transport Select Committee, and with regard to enforcement arrangements, the Cabinet stated that it would develop:

“...proposals for joint working. This may impact on operational details, such as how surpluses and deficits are managed.”

Therefore, I ask the Leader whether he agrees with me that the above decision of the Cabinet is;

- i) contradictory to his statement of the 11 October 2011, as quoted on the Surrey County Council website, that Local Committees would be free from interference in choosing how to implement on street parking charges, and;
- ii) infers that the Cabinet and officers are negotiating a position with ‘their enforcement agents’ that could result in a ‘take it or leave it’ option that will subsequently be presented to the Local Committees.

Reply:

On-street parking charges have been subject to much local debate. The Leader announced his decision that Local Committee are best placed to determine what, if any, new on-street charging will be introduced. This position remains unchanged and was endorsed at Cabinet on the 29 November 2011.

The Select Committee's paper to Cabinet encompassed more than just the principle of on-street charging and looked at operational detail.

The Local Committee rightly makes decisions on local parking concerns. Nevertheless, the County Council has an overall responsibility to ensure on-street Civil Parking Enforcement operates effectively across the whole of Surrey. As detailed in my reply to Cabinet, for the last three months the County Council, with my support as Cabinet Member, has been in discussions with Boroughs and Districts. This work is nearing completion and it would have therefore been premature for the Cabinet to endorse all of the Select Committee's recommendations at the November meeting. The Select Committee will have opportunity to comment and contribute on proposals before Cabinet considers them.

For the reasons explained the Leader cannot agree with either of the statements in Mr Renshaw's question.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

**(15) MRS HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK:
(2nd Question)**

A recent letter to a parent at a Surrey Primary school with a debt of £6 for school meal money referred to a letter to schools from Surrey County Council and quoted two paragraphs from the letter:

- "1 There is now a zero tolerance of debt and providing school meals without upfront payment. The unofficial debt ruling will no longer apply and schools should now adopt a policy that ensures all meals must be paid for in advance.
- "2 If parents persistently send a child to school with no food or money, the school is advised to warn the parents that if food/money is not provided then they will be reported to the local welfare officer for child neglect."

Is this really the County Council's policy? If it is the Council's policy to report parents to the local welfare officer for child neglect for owing money for school meals, does the Cabinet Member agree with me that it is draconian and needs to be changed and that social services should have higher priorities than dealing with cases of children whose parents owe small sums of money for their child's school meals? If this is not the County Council's policy, what action does

the Cabinet Member propose to take to ensure that such letters are not sent in future? Regardless of whether or not it is Council policy, will a letter of apology be sent to all parents who have received such a letter?

Reply:

It would have helped if Mrs Watson had taken this up directly rather than producing an anonymous unsourced piece of information on the Council order paper.

A review of the process to manage school meal payments in Surrey took place in January 2009. Advice was revised in March 2009 and a letter sent to all schools reissued. The current recommended and published Babcock 4S/Surrey County Council debt management process for School Meals is available on request.

It appears that the school concerned is using information that was withdrawn in March 2009. I suggest that we review this again and re-issue information to all schools to ensure that there is no misunderstanding

The published Babcock 4S/Surrey County Council debt management process for School Meals advises the following procedures are adhered to:

1. Surrey's recommended policy is for school meals to be paid in advance and that no debt should be allowed to accrue.
2. If a debt does occur, it is the responsibility of the school to recover the debt and adopt procedures to prevent the debt reoccurring.
3. Schools having issues managing parental debts and or dealing with difficult parents, should seek the advice of the Headteacher on how best to manage the situation as all circumstances vary.
4. If parents persistently send a child to school with no food or money, the school is advised to speak to a local welfare officer as this may be indicative of a wider problem. It is recommended that this course of action is undertaken at the discretion of the Headteacher.
5. If a Headteacher feels/knows of exceptional circumstances surrounding the family concerned they can speak to Jenny Pittam at Babcock 4S (01372 834471) who can authorise Free School Meals in these cases.
6. If it is not an exceptional circumstance, but the school still wants to provide a meal, they can do so, but this will be at their cost (it cannot be coded as a Free School Meal). Some schools do have discretionary funds e.g. via the PTA to pay for these situations.
7. Free School Meals must not be given until eligibility has been checked. However, Surrey County Council will refund the applicant for up to 2 terms if meals have been paid for and eligibility is confirmed at a later date.
8. All Adult meals must be paid for in advance and schools will be responsible for any adult debt incurred.

The Council and Babcock 4S are always happy to advise parents about eligibility for free school meals and recognise the challenges presented by the current economic climate where personal circumstances might change.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

(16) MR STEPHEN COOKSEY (DORKING AND THE HOLMWOODS) TO ASK: (2nd Question)

The Quarter 2 Corporate Report Card indicates that only 39% of Surrey residents 'feel that they can influence decisions', down from 40% in the previous quarter. The target for 2011-2012 is 45%. Can the Leader of the Council indicate what steps are being taken to give residents more confidence in their ability to influence Council decisions and does he believe that the target of 45% is appropriate for a Council with 'world class' ambitions?

Reply:

When I became Leader in October I made a commitment to listen, learn and reflect before making decisions. I put this into action immediately and announced a change in council policy on-street parking - this was as a direct result of listening to the feedback from residents and businesses. I also recently announced the end of library changes and support for the proposed community-run libraries.

My clearly stated approach is based on listening, learning and reflecting, before deciding. This demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that residents can - and do - influence decisions.

On the 'fall' from 40 to 39%, a 1% fall from one quarter to the next is not statistically significant and could have occurred as a result of sampling error. SCC has been asking this question in resident surveys since 2003. In that time the percentage who strongly/tend to agree that they can influence decisions affecting the local area has improved from 19% in 2003 to 39% in Q2 of the current year. The best ever score recorded was 40.3% in Q4 of 2010/11. A 45% target is ambitious and stretching.

The performance against the ability to influence indicator is driven by a number of things including:

- Whether local public services act on residents' concerns;
- Whether residents feel informed about how to get involved in decision-making
- Feeling informed about local public services overall;
- Whether local public services seek people's views on anti-social behaviour;
- Whether local public services deal effectively with anti-social behaviour;
- Feeling informed about emergency procedures;
- Whether residents believe local public services promote residents' interests

As with all "perception-based" indicators, there are other factors at play. It's not possible to show how these factors contribute, but:

- People will be influenced by what their borough/district council do and say
- People will be influenced by national media - the general tone of the national press has not been positive towards local government
- Surrey's demographic profile will affect response - for example, the highest positive responses are often from very diverse London boroughs

The council continues to use both traditional and innovative ways of engaging and involving residents. For example:

- People are able to get involved in decisions that are important to them in their local areas in a number of ways. For example, all Local Committees take questions and petitions online, making it easier for residents to get involved in their area. More informal and interactive ways for residents to talk about local issues are also being developed, including "Let's Talk" open evenings in Elmbridge Borough with Surrey County Council Members and officers in attendance alongside colleagues from the Borough Council and Police.
- The Mole Valley Total Place pilot is leading work to involve residents in decisions about services for young people and is working to improve the way that residents can influence decisions on section 106 developer contributions. All Local Committees will be making decisions on the local priorities for services for young people in the next financial year via a Local Prevention Framework and task groups involving young people have been established to assist in this process.
- Use of new media (including social networking websites) has continued to rise. The number of followers of the Council's SurreyNews Twitter feed is now 2,450 (up from 1,600 in quarter one). The Council's Surrey Matters Twitter feed has seen a similar rise to around 2,500 followers.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

(17) MR WILL FORSTER (WOKING SOUTH) TO ASK: (2nd Question)

Bob Neill MP, Minister at the Department of Communities and Local Government wrote to Council Leaders and Monitoring Officers in February 2011 saying that, "There are recent stories about people being ejected from council meetings for blogging, tweeting or filming. This potentially is at odds with the fundamentals of democracy and I want to encourage all councils to take a welcoming approach to those who want to bring local news stories to a wide audience."

The House of Commons recently voted in favour of allowing tweeting in their Chamber to allow and encourage MPs engage with their constituents as much as possible.

In light this, when will the County Council reverse or review its ban on County Councillors tweeting during meetings? Also, when will this Council reverse or review the ban on County Council computers and blackberries accessing twitter?

Reply:

The Audio Equipment Protocol was developed in 2009 in response to difficulties caused by the ineffective use of microphones and other audio equipment, and the impact of the use of mobile technology in meetings. The Protocol, which has been endorsed by Members, advises that those attending meetings should switch off their mobile phone or BlackBerry at the start of the meeting, as they interfere with the microphone and induction loop systems. In addition, their use can give the impression to members of the public either attending the meeting or watching the webcast that Members are not participating fully in the debate. The interference caused by the use of mobile devices in meetings is a particular issue for those reliant on a hearing loop, as their ability to contribute to the discussion may be compromised.

The above reasons for non use of twitter and mobiles in council meetings are still relevant today and all members can communicate to their residents, in whatever manner best suits individuals after a meeting has concluded.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHANGE AND EFFICIENCY

**(18) Mr COLIN TAYLOR (EPSOM & EWELL SOUTH WEST) TO ASK:
(2nd Question)**

Earlier this year Epsom & Ewell Borough Council upgraded their MS Office 2007 software to MS Office 2010. Shortly thereafter Surrey County Council changed to MS Office 2007.

Unless this was due to a time warp, presumably there was a cost benefit compared to buying the latest version. How much was saved, as a percentage of the cost of Office 2010?

Reply:

Surrey started planning its deployment of its Windows 7 desktop in February 2010, before Office 2010 was launched (in June 2010). The applications training team needed to revise all their training materials, and didn't want to wait until Office 2010 was released, as it would not have given them enough time before the rollout started. Consequently, the decision was made to rollout Office 2007, and upgrade to Office 2010 at a later point in time.

There is also a cost benefit as prior to 2010, Surrey had purchased around 3000 Office 2007 licences. Under the agreement with Microsoft at the time, the only upgrade path would be to replace these at full cost. We will need to replace these at some point, and it may be advantageous to wait until the next

release of Office. This year, Microsoft have introduced a new licensing model, which is much better for future purchases. We already have 3000 Office 2010 licences and plan to purchase the remaining 3000-3500 licences needed

There is little difference in functionality between Office 2007 and Office 2010 - most of the changes were in the email client, which we don't use.

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

(19) MR WILL FORSTER (WOKING SOUTH) TO ASK: (3rd Question)

Please could the Cabinet Member confirm what percentage of Surrey County Council schools have a travel plan?

Reply:

A total of 347 Surrey schools have travel plans, which equates to 88% of schools. Two districts, Elmbridge and Woking, have school travel plans in place in 100% of schools.

Funding from the Department for Transport to support school travel planning ceased in 2009 and 37 Surrey schools who were preparing their Travel Plans did not receive funding in 2010.

However, earlier this year, Surrey County Council received a small one off grant for sustainable school travel and invited bids from all those schools who previously missed out on the Travel Plan funding. As a result of this, £160,000 of additional funding is now being distributed to those schools who submitted proposals to fund a range of measures including cycle and scooter parking, cycle training and improved signage and lighting on school premises.

In addition, the County Council provides a range of self-help advice and curriculum materials to support all Surrey schools in sustainable travel activities.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

(20) MRS HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK: (3rd Question)

On 21 October 2011, the Leader sent a response to the Department for Communities and Local Government consultation on the Local Government Resource Review. At which Cabinet, Cabinet Member Decision Making or Select Committee(s) has this been discussed? Why did the Leader only copy his response to Leaders of Boroughs and Districts and not to fellow county councillors?

Reply:

It is correct that I, as Leader, sent a response to the consultation on the Local Government Resource Review (LGRR) to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on the County Council's behalf. I consider it an important element of my role as Leader and as principal spokesperson, to engage with the Government on key issues that affect the council and I am sure you will agree that this is an issue of great importance to ourselves, as it is to the whole local government community.

In making the above response, I was acting within my statutory powers as Leader. As no 'key decision' was being made, it was not necessary for the response to be considered by a formal meeting.

Regarding the issue of not copying my consultation response to county Members whilst forwarding to district and borough leaders, there was no untoward intent in so doing, it was done in the spirit of openness and partnership with fellow political leaders. Surrey Leaders Group had previously agreed to share responses with one another. I have asked officers to circulate the response to all Members.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHANGE AND EFFICIENCY

**(21) Mr COLIN TAYLOR (EPSOM & EWELL SOUTH WEST) TO ASK:
(3rd Question)**

According to the council's website, Surrey County Council now has 16 official pages on Facebook, 10 official profiles on Twitter including the Leader's (with a further 16 Library profiles), a photo gallery on flickr and a YouTube channel. It also seems to use WordPress.

However attempts by Members to access such Social Media from council Blackberries or PCs at home or in group rooms, mostly generate a rather intimidating *Configuration Error*. Whilst this is an improvement over the previous *Access Denied* with its dire warnings about breaches and discipline, the form-filling process involved is still discouraging.

If the Council intends to adopt the Government's approach to modern digital media as advocated by Bob Neill MP, why not have all the PCs used by Members and political assistants reconfigured in the manner suggested in the Configuration Error message, rather than expecting members to contact IMT individually?

Reply:

Many thanks for raising this issue. The error is occurring as the devices being used have not been configured for WEB proxy servers. IMT have now raised this as an issue with the IMT Service Desk and resolution will be worked through.

I would encourage Members to use the IMT Service Desk which is available through 020 8541 9000, option 2 or via email to IMTServiceDesk/ICT/SCC to raise any concerns such as this with the service.

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

(22) MRS HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK: (4th Question)

Can an assurance be given that the administration will promptly pursue opportunities for funding from Government under the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme so that the County Council obtains the maximum funding and environmental benefits unlike for the Solar PV scheme where the County Council lost out on the financial and environmental benefits many other Council have obtained owing to the delay by the administration in making a decision?

Reply:

Yes, I can give full assurance to all members that the council is proactively pursuing opportunities from the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme which was launched by the Department for Energy and Climate Change on 28 November 2011.

As Mrs Watson will recall Surrey County Council has set out its Woodfuel policy, which was approved by the Investment Panel in May 2010. The Policy is focusing on opportunities for the uptake of biomass heating, at both corporate and school sites. Furthermore the council is working with partners to maximise the environmental and economic development opportunities of bringing more SCC owned woodlands under sustainable and active management and at the same time provide local and renewable fuel sources.

This work builds on the success and learning from projects such as switching from an oil to biomass heating system at High Ashurst Outdoor Learning Centre and management of highway verges for the supply of woodfuel to sites such as the Surrey Sports Park, through contractor and supply chain agreements.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHANGE AND EFFICIENCY

(23) Mr COLIN TAYLOR (EPSOM & EWELL SOUTH WEST) TO ASK: (4th Question)

Members using council PCs at home are currently limited to using Internet Explorer 6 instead of the current Internet Explorer 8, because these PCs operate on Windows 2000.

As a result they get messages with increasing frequency warning them they are using obsolete software and urging them to update free of charge for improved security.

The labels on these PCs indicate that they were supplied with Windows XP and downgraded. If so, can this be reversed to allow the use of Internet Explorer 8, thus improving security whilst increasing efficiency by using tabbed browsing?

If insufficient licenses for Windows XP are held, what is preventing the use of Firefox, whilst still using Windows 2000?

Reply:

The effort to reverse to XP is considerable and in order to comply with Government Connect requirements and licensing, we have to control the build we put onto PCs. This takes some time to develop (3-4 months), and test with our applications. The focus therefore is to continue with the Windows 7 refresh, it would not make sense to divert those resources to a non-standard XP build.

We could use Firefox, and do so for some systems. Firefox has many more security holes than Internet Explorer, and keeping up with the security patches is very difficult. Each time there is a new version, or patch, the software needs to be tested with our web-based software such as S-Net, e-suite, SAP portal etc. This takes considerable time and effort to do. We will hopefully replace all the laptops within the next few months, so the need to do this will be reduced.

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2011

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

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POLICE AUTHORITY

(1) MRS ANGELA FRASER (BANSTEAD EAST) TO ASK:

Could the Surrey Police Authority advise me how many Wildlife and Heritage officers there are currently serving in Surrey?

Reply:

Currently Rural Communities Officers provide:

- training, advice and guidance regarding the investigation of Wildlife Crime;
- training, co-ordination and promotion of the county wide Country Watch scheme; and
- training, expertise, advice and guidance regarding Gypsy/Traveller issues to share these with the newly formed team of eleven borough Rural Community Officers (Single Points Of Contact) who have volunteered to include them as key secondary skills.

These SPOC's will be expected to provide and nurture links in their local boroughs providing additional confidence and communication with their communities. Following training during 2012, the eleven SPOC's will boost wildlife expertise from the current two officers to thirteen.

Heritage crime is an area of business connected with Country Watch / Wildlife and Surrey Police is a member of the recently formed group called 'Alliance to Reduce Crime against Heritage' led by Surrey County council Archaeologist Dr Joe Flatman.

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POLICE AUTHORITY

(2) DR ANDREW POVEY (WAVERLEY EASTERN VILLAGES) TO ASK:

Businesses are having a difficult time at present; business crime and its prevention are an extra cost that is not wanted.

What is Surrey Police doing to prevent and investigate business crime at this particularly economically difficult time?

Reply:

Business Crime is not a term that may be readily applied to any crime type. Nor is it easy to identify a single group or type of criminal who would target “Business” as their victim of choice.

Criminal offences of almost any type could be committed against a corporate entity, its property, estate, employees or customers. This is why “business crime” is not a term widely used in criminal justice circles, nor by the Association of Chief Police Officers.

To use the example of a high street retailer, a range (but by no means an exhaustive list) of offences that could conceivably be classed as business crime would be:

- Use of cloned payment card – Fraud
- Lying on a job application form – Fraud
- Robbery for cash takings
- Shoplifting – Theft of stock on display
- Burglary of the stock room
- Criminal damage to the building
- Assault on a member of staff
- Use of threatening or abusive language in the premises in front of other customers - Public Order
- Theft of catalytic converters from delivery vehicles

All of these crimes impact upon a business, and in some way impact on their trading. Clearly, the onus on preventing a number of these offences rests at least in part with the business themselves, and a cost/benefit analysis in terms of crime prevention measures against losses due to crime will continue to remain the cornerstone of this. This remains as true in times of economic difficulty as at any other time.

So what crimes do Surrey Police target as priorities?

Serious violent crime

Surrey is a safe place to live – low rates of violent crime create an environment where people want to live and invest. We target serious violent crime to ensure this remains the case.

Serious Acquisitive Crime - Burglary, robbery and vehicle crime

Crimes against business include robbery, burglary, vehicle crime. These are priority crimes for Surrey Police regardless of whether the victim is a private individual or a business.

Supply of drugs – Class A and Class B

Drugs are recognised as drivers of crime, in terms of drug-related burglary and thefts, ranging from petty shoplifting through to robbery of business premises. Therefore we prioritise the supply of these drugs within Surrey.

Organised Crime Groups

As a force we prioritise the disruption, deterrence and dismantling of organised criminal activity causing harm to Surrey communities, including the business community.

How are Surrey Police protecting Surrey's businesses?

200 more front-line constables including increased proactive resources

Examples of this include:

Economic Crime Unit, consisting of the Commercial Crime Team, Financial Investigation Team, Money Laundering Team and Payback Units. These are specialist staff working in fraud and money laundering investigation and general financial investigations in support of other teams such as the Major Crime Team and CID. Many cases are resolved by working with other agencies including the Serious Fraud Office, Financial Services Authority, Revenue and Customs and the Fraud Prosecution Service.

The Economic Crime Unit ensures that opportunities are taken to utilise asset recovery powers against all offenders found guilty of acquisitive crime by making full use of the Proceeds of Crime Act and Ancillary Orders for the lifetime management of organised criminals.

Between April and December 2011 the ECU has seized £1,461,749 from criminals as a result of financial investigations, and aims to seize £2.5m in this financial year.

Uniformed Proactive Team (established April 2010)

Targeting drug suppliers, burglars and auto-crimers. Since February 2011 this team have arrested **1160** suspects and executed **419** warrants. In addition at weekends the Uniformed Proactive Team provides officers for Operation Nightguard, policing and protecting the night-time economy in town centres.

Embedded Detectives

Since 2010 Surrey Police have embedded detectives in neighbourhood policing teams to improve the quality of investigations at local level, embedded detectives on response policing teams to improve primary investigation and embedded detectives in police custody centres to ensure every investigative opportunity is taken at the point when a suspect is arrested.

In October 2011 Surrey Police delivered a briefing to the Surrey Chambers of Commerce on this subject, and exposed our strategies and priorities to scrutiny. This briefing was delivered by the then Chief Constable Mark Rowley and Head of Investigations Detective Chief Superintendent Helen Collins, and it was again reiterated at this event that Surrey's primary aim was to prevent crime in all areas and walks of life. Surrey Police remains focussed on the prevention and detection of crime, whether that be within the business arena or not, we

continually work with partner agencies including Banks, Clearing Houses, HM Revenue and Customs and the Serious and Organised Crime Agency to name but a few to ensure that we target criminality in the most appropriate way.

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POLICE AUTHORITY

(3) MR NICK HARRISON (BANSTEAD WEST) TO ASK:

What is Surrey Police's budget estimate for the extra costs of policing the 2012 Olympics? Has agreement been reached for these costs to be recovered from LOCOG?

Reply:

Whilst the bulk of costs of policing the Olympics events in Surrey occur in 2012, the costs are spread over 3 years as planning takes place and infrastructure is built.

All additional actual costs to Surrey Police currently identified have been or will be funded by the Olympic Security Directorate (Home Office). This funding has been secured by way of submission of business cases which have been scrutinised by Surrey Police Authority. The total actual cost is £2.8m.