

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**TUESDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2012**

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

**CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT**

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

On 12 January the Environment and Transport Select Committee received a report on the performance of the newly appointed highways maintenance contractors. While it was clear the new contract is working better than the old one a number of issues were raised including:

- Failure to deliver follow up permanent repairs to emergency repairs within the stipulated 28 days.
- IT and operational problems preventing the contractor achieving the productivity required to deliver contract response timescales for safety repairs.
- The contractor not having sufficient resources to meet surface protection work demands.
- Problems with road marking sub contractors.
- Carriageways not being swept of stones after surface protection within agreed timescales.
- Residents and businesses being given advance notice of works in their road too late or too early.
- Failure to promptly answer councillor queries.

What actions will the Cabinet Member be taking to ensure Surrey residents and businesses receive the standard of road maintenance that they pay for?

**Reply:**

The report presented to the Environment and Transport Select Committee did identify a number of areas where May Gurney had not achieved the required level of performance. Two key issues were identified in the report:

- 1) Repair of Safety Defects – It was anticipated that there would be on average 30,000 safety defects to repair each year, however in the 6 month period between April and October, May Gurney repaired 20,000 safety defects, partly due to a large backlog of defects inherited from the previous contract, partly caused by the bad winter. In spite of this higher than expected defect level May Gurney achieved an average of 85% repaired within the required timescale, and October's performance confirms an average 95% success rate. This is steadily improving, and

we are confident that May Gurney will achieve the required targets before April 2012.

- 2) Surface Dressing/Microsurfacing – May Gurney did not effectively plan and resource the surface treatment programme, and as a consequence residents were not always advised of works and May Gurney could not secure necessary resources to deliver the full programme in 2011/2012. We have now addressed the issues that caused these problems, which included a national equipment shortage and Surrey not producing the Capital programme until March, 3 months late. We are confident with the better pre-planning May Gurney will deliver the expected performance for 2012/13.

We have learned our lessons from the SHiP Contracts, and there are two key mechanisms contained in the new contract to ensure May Gurney are focussed on resolving these issues. These are:

- 1) May Gurney are paid a fixed lump sum for repairing all safety defects. This means that the additional resources that have been brought in to deal with the increased number of safety defects are at their expense.
- 2) May Gurney's profit is directly linked to their performance, and therefore deductions have been made from their profit to reflect the actual levels of performance achieved.

These two features ensure that Surrey only pays for the level of service it receives, and also provides a strong incentive for May Gurney to achieve the required performance and productivity levels.

The mobilisation of a new contract is always a difficult and challenging time, and May Gurney have faced some real challenges, including problems with IT systems and managing the transfer of staff from the previous contracts. However, the quality of the work is noticeably better than the previous contracts and performance continues to improve. We will work with May Gurney to ensure they achieve the required performance standards, particularly in the areas identified above.

Information on the performance of the highways contract is now published on the Council's website.

## **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

### **(2) MR JOHN ORRICK (CATERHAM HILL) TO ASK:**

Surrey County Council offers advertising on its website, but at present not a single advertising space is being used. By contrast, Tandridge District Council also offers advertising on its website through the same system, and every advertising space is taken. What action is being taken to maximise this source of income for the Council?

**Reply:**

Thank you for your query on the use of advertising on the Surrey County Council website and action we are taking to maximise this as a possible source of revenue.

We do offer space for companies to advertise on our website on a month by month basis. However, we do not offer it across the full site, as Tandridge do, but across specifically identified pages. We only allow adverts to appear on those pages that are relevant to the content; for example, customers might see advertising for wedding cakes on our own registration of marriage web pages. This is done to maximise the effectiveness of the adverts for both the supplier and the customer and is in line with the accepted practice used by many of the large social media websites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

We recognise that there is an opportunity to increase the number of adverts displayed on the Surrey site and we intend to carry out more promotion to raise awareness so that businesses can take advantage of the opportunities. We will also arrange for something to appear on our homepage to promote this.

However, even if we were to take a more general approach and allow more adverts, we may not see a large income stream. The company that we use for advertising work with many other local authorities but have said that they have seen a big decline in companies advertising on local authority sites recently and very little profit is made in this current market. We are meeting to discuss options and our advertising policy later in February.

**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND LEARNING**

**(3) MR DAVID MUNRO (FARNHAM SOUTH) TO ASK:**

It is widely expected that, in September 2012 and beyond, applications for the three secondary schools in Farnham (All Hallows, Heath End and Weydon) will greatly exceed the places available.

Would the Cabinet Member please outline how this shortfall in places will be dealt with.

**Reply:**

On time first preference applications for secondary schools in the Farnham area amount to 759 (lower than 2011 by 94 and the lowest figure for 6 years). Historically, there is significant fall-out to the private sector in the area and it is expected that the schools, with a collective PAN of 677 will be able to meet demand in 2012. Our projections suggest the position for 2013 will be very similar to 2012.

Thereafter, the need for places will increase. We project a slight shortfall in 2014 against current planned admission numbers. By 2015 we will need an

additional form, and by 2016 we will need both additional permanent provision and some temporary increase to manage what appears to be a bulge year. We are preparing for this by including provision for the expansion of Weydon School and thereafter, Farnham Heath End School. Funding for both expansions is included in the proposed capital programme 2012 - 17.

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND THE 2012 GAMES**

### **(4) MR GEOFF MARLOW (THE BYFLEETS) TO ASK:**

What progress is being made with the introduction of a Community Library in Byfleet?

#### **Reply:**

Surrey County Council has been working for some months with a community group, the Friends of Byfleet Library, who have stepped forward to manage the library.

The group held a very successful celebration of National Libraries Day on Saturday 4 February and we are working with this hard working and enthusiastic group of volunteers over transitional arrangements.

Currently a Judicial Review, brought by an individual on behalf of a small group of Surrey residents, is pending; but Byfleet Library is exempted from the injunction and hand-over arrangements are being put in place to allow Byfleet to operate as a community partnered library, with the support of Surrey County Council, during this week.

It should be noted that the court has not passed judgment on our plans for community partnered libraries - this is just an order halting the process ahead of a hearing to look into our proposals.

We await a date to be set for the full Judicial Hearing - which will take place later in February - and the continuation of Byfleet as a community partnered library will depend on the outcome of the Judicial Review.

Surrey County Council is very grateful to the Friends of Byfleet Library for their support and wishes them every success.

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **(5) MR CHRIS TOWNSEND (ASHTEAD) TO ASK:**

Numerous residents have been very annoyed that the Randalls Road waste site has been closed. Could the Cabinet Member let us know when the public were notified of this and where this occurred? Also, why is the site closed for 8 months for refurbishment? This causes the residents of the north of Mole Valley and the surrounding area to be without this site for a considerable period.

### **Reply:**

The Leatherhead community recycling centre and waste transfer station is undergoing a major refurbishment and expansion. The purpose of the development is to reduce congestion, and provide an enhanced level of recycling facilities to meet the 70% recycling target within the Surrey Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

The refurbishment involves the demolition of the existing site and construction of completely new facilities on existing and newly acquired land. Unfortunately, because of the scale of the development and the need to have the new facilities in place before the proposed development of the Eco Park, it has been necessary to close the site to the public during the period of development, which is expected to be 8 months.

Prior to the closure of the site on 9 January 2012, a communication programme was undertaken by SITA to advise residents of the closure and of the alternative sites available. This comprised:

- Writing to local elected members, officers, residents associations and immediate neighbours on 22 November 2011
- Handing out a flyer to site users, advising of the closure and alternative facilities from 23 November 2011
- Sending copies of the flyer to Leatherhead Library on 23 November 2011
- Sending copies of the flyer to Epsom Library on 12 January 2012 and Ashted Library on 20 January 2012
- Erecting five A1 signs around the facility, advising of the closure and alternative facilities on 23 November 2011
- Issuing a press release to local media during week commencing 23 November 2011 (local radio and newspapers)
- Putting an advert in the Leatherhead Advertiser for three weeks (on 15 and 22 December 2011 and 5 January 2012)
- Providing information on the SITA Surrey website and Surrey County Council's website
- Public exhibitions on 16 and 17 August 2010 at the Leatherhead Institute
- Public exhibitions on 18 and 19 November 2010 at St Mary and St Nicholas Parish Church Hall.

It is recognised that the communication programme may not have reached all users or stakeholders and I have asked officers to ensure that SITA include

within their ongoing communication programme additional stakeholders, including all elected Members who may have constituents affected by the closure.

I also recognise that the temporary closure will be inconvenient for many residents. However, residents are able to use any of the fourteen alternative sites around Surrey during this period. The nearest alternative sites are at Epsom and Ranmore Road in Dorking.

## **CHAIRMAN OF PLANNING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE**

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

At the last Council meeting (13 December 2011) I sought a response to the recent Advertising Standards Authority adjudication that, on a number of counts, SITA had made misleading public statements concerning the Charlton Ecopark proposal.

I received a personal reply outside of the meeting from you in accordance with the Council meeting minute.

Please can that answer now be placed in the public domain in response to this question.

Please can you also provide an update, as appropriate, for any actions that the Council has subsequently taken on this matter.

### **Reply:**

On 19 December 2011, I responded to your question to the County Council about the Eco Park planning application and the recent Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) Adjudication on SITA's consultation material. My answer was delivered outside the meeting as I was unable to attend but was copied to all Members of the County Council.

In my letter to you I explained that it is the County Council's standard practice for all committee planning decisions to be re-examined by officers where there has been a delay in issuing the decision notice following a committee resolution. This is done to assess whether any new factors have arisen since a committee decision which might rationally be regarded as a material consideration, and which might require the committee to consider an application again. This process was established by a protocol that was agreed by the Planning and Regulatory Committee in 2003.

When I wrote, officers had carried out an extensive consultation exercise to assess whether any new factors had emerged since the resolution to grant, but were still considering the responses. Officers had written to around thirty organisations and individuals including yourself, the Environment Agency and

the Health and Safety Executive. Some respondents had drawn our attention to new factors which they stated were material considerations and this information was carefully examined by officers including Legal Services.

Clearly when I wrote I could not speculate on the outcome of the process. The results were expected to follow in a month or so and were to be made public. While there is no specific timescale governing the review, we aimed to complete the process as soon as possible in order to reduce public uncertainty about the application.

The officer assessment process is now complete and the application will be considered at the Planning & Regulatory Committee meeting at 10.30am on 9 March 2012, because it is considered that the following new factors have arisen since the resolution to grant which require the Committee to consider the planning application again. The Committee will consider the ASA Adjudication of 26 October 2011 upholding a complaint about a misleading newsletter produced by the applicant (SITA UK). The complaint related to claims made about the reliability of the technology to be used in the gasification facility proposed for the Eco Park. The Committee will also consider new information provided by Spelthorne Borough Council in a letter dated 15 December 2011, including a Technical Note on Air Quality and reference to two draft reports prepared on behalf of the Borough Council given their duties relating to the Air Quality Management Area for Spelthorne. Other matters may also be included depending on the outcome of the public consultation exercise that is currently underway in preparation for the Committee meeting on 9 March 2012.

Given my role, I cannot comment any further on the matters to be considered by the Committee at their meeting.