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Member Questions and Responses

for the meeting of

**THE COUNTY COUNCIL**

to be held on

**6 FEBRUARY 2018**

**6 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME**

(Pages 1  
- 8)

1. The Leader of the Council or the appropriate Member of the Cabinet or the Chairman of a Committee to answer any questions on any matter relating to the powers and duties of the County Council, or which affects the county.

**(Note: Notice of questions in respect of the above item on the agenda must be given in writing, preferably by e-mail, to Democratic Services by 12 noon on Wednesday 31 January 2018).**

**Questions and Responses enclosed.**

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*Thank you for your co-operation*

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2018****QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED UNDER THE PROVISIONS  
OF STANDING ORDER 10.1****DENISE TURNER-STEWART, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES****1. MR ROBERT EVANS (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK:**

What is the current estimate for the final budget figure for the costs of the new Fordbridge fire station in Spelthorne and how much does Surrey County Council envisage receiving from the disposal of the Sunbury fire station and any other related assets?

**Reply:**

The latest estimated spend on the new fire station in Spelthorne is £4.97m as per the Medium Term Financial Plan budget. The estimated receipt for the sale of Sunbury can't be provided as it is commercially sensitive information.

**DAVID HODGE, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****2. MR EBER KINGTON (EWELL COURT, AURIOL AND CUDDINGTON) TO ASK:**

In January Councillors received the results of the latest staff survey feedback from Best Companies via an email which included the comment that "we have areas to celebrate and others where we need to improve". Looking at the data, will David Hodge tell me which elements of the staff feedback he is celebrating and what are his priorities for improvement?

**Reply:**

The Best Companies staff survey, which was sent out to over 10,000 employees in October 2017, has once again provided us with valuable data about how our workforce are feeling. The overall response rate for Surrey County Council was 54%, a significant increase on the last two years' rates of 34.46 and 48.94% respectively. According to Best Companies' data, large (3,500+ employees) not-for-profit organisations have an average response rate of 40.44% and large private sector organisations 49.49%. We should certainly celebrate such a high level of engagement in the survey.

From Best Companies' own analysis, they have identified a number of areas of strength for us. Of the eight factors, the Council's strongest area is "My Team" with questions about people going out of their way to help each other and team members feeling people in their team care for each other scoring highly. Another area identified by Best Companies is the support team members and team leaders get from their manager, particularly in being able to ask for help when things are going badly. And finally, that team members feel happy with the balance between their work and home life although this becomes more challenging when we look at the results for more senior managers.

In terms of priorities for improvement, it is clear from the staff survey that pay and reward remains a challenge for us and this is a priority for Members to consider through the People, Performance and Development Committee. A key to this will be working with officers and trade unions to ensure the Annual Pay Review in 2018 is concluded by July 2018 and to continue to look at options to reward our teams, although this remains challenging given our current budget position.

The second priority for me is ensuring we respond to concerns raised about the direction of travel for the organisation and visibility of leadership. It is a challenging time to be working in the public sector and with increasing demands and reducing budgets, it is not surprising that staff are feeling anxious about the future. This is an area I have already been discussing with our incoming Chief Executive and I know that she will be prioritising this in her first three months, getting out and talking to teams to understand what they would like from the organisation and involving them in shaping our priorities for the future.

### **MIKE GOODMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT**

#### **3. MR STEPHEN COOKSEY (DORKING SOUTH AND THE HOLMWOODS) TO ASK:**

Will the County Council be responding to the DEFRA fly-tipping consultation "*Consultation on proposals to tackle crime and poor performance in the waste sector & introduce a new fixed penalty for the waste duty of care*", and if so, will the Council in its response state that it agrees with the Government's commentary, which states that "*The Government's view is that residents should be able to dispose of household DIY waste free of charge*" and "*The Government will consider clarifying the law if councils continue to charge for disposal of reasonable amounts of DIY waste*"?

#### **Reply:**

Surrey County Council welcomes the Government's consultation on measures to tackle waste crime and will be responding to the consultation as part of the Surrey Waste Partnership.

Surrey County Council considers that the law is very clear in allowing it to levy charges for any waste arising from construction or demolition work including where that waste arises from a household. The council is also clear that the term DIY waste does not have any legal status.

Should the Government wish to make a change to the law to reclassify construction waste from households so that it has to be accepted free of charge at the Council's community recycling centres, then we would expect the Government to reflect this additional financial burden in the funding formula. In the event that additional government funding was not forthcoming then the Council would need to find additional compensating savings in the order of £0.5 million to £1 million per year to cover the additional cost of dealing with this waste.

In addition, if the Government were to change the law regarding construction waste then the Council would want to see clear and unequivocal guidance on what would be termed a 'reasonable amount'.

## **COLIN KEMP, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS**

### **4. MR WILL FORSTER (WOKING SOUTH) TO ASK:**

I am sure the Cabinet Member is aware that Greater London and Kent are continuing to pilot new powers to control road works. The Department for Transport is considering rolling out these 'Lane Rental' schemes to other areas. Please will the Cabinet Member commit to writing to the Secretary of State for Transport to ask that these powers be extended to Surrey County Council to reduce congestion on our local highway network?

#### **Reply:**

In September 2017 the Department for Transport consulted on the future of Lane Rental Schemes. Currently legislation only allows Kent County Council and Transport for London to operate pilot Lane Rental Schemes. The department is considering options regarding changes to Lane Rental Operation and expansion of the scheme to other authorities, hence the consultation exercise.

Whilst there are currently no legislative means for any single Highway Authority to request powers to operate a Lane Rental Scheme, Surrey County Council did send an extensive response to the consultation. Specifically, we answered "yes – as soon as possible" in response to the consultation question; "Would your Authority want to introduce a Lane Rental Scheme as outlined in Option 2\*" (\*of the consultation document).

We await with interest the output from the Department of Transport relating to the September 2017 consultation on Lane Rental, which we expect to receive in the next few months. Once we've been able to review this output, we may be able to pursue operation of a Lane Rental Scheme in Surrey at the earliest opportunity, if we feel it provides the necessary benefits to help reduce congestion on our road network.

## **DAVID HODGE, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

### **5. MRS HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK:**

Can the Leader of the Council confirm when all members of the Cabinet will be setting an example, as part of their Leadership role, by adopting the "modern councillors" policy of the County Council to go paperless at their Cabinet meetings?

#### **Reply:**

My Cabinet and I are committed to the Modern Councillor initiative, and realise the long-term benefits this will bring in terms of both cost and efficiency. When individuals become better acquainted with the technology I can see this working well over a period of time.

I am aware that some committees have started to hold paperless meetings and I watch their progress with interest.

## **COLIN KEMP, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS**

### **6. MRS ANGELA GOODWIN (GUILDFORD NORTH) TO ASK:**

What steps - if any - is Surrey County Council taking to encourage residents to respond to the Government's current consultation on extending Blue Badge eligibility?

#### **Reply:**

I can confirm that actions have been taken to raise awareness amongst Surrey residents of the Department for Transport's consultation on Blue Badge eligibility, which is considering whether to take into account people with non-physical conditions that affect their ability to get from place to place. People can respond as an individual, as a representative of a disabled person, or representing a disability group.

The Blue Badge web pages on the council's website ([www.surreycc.gov.uk/bluebadges](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/bluebadges)) have been updated with information about the consultation and a direct link to it. Recognising the importance of this proposed change and its potential impact for residents, key representative groups have also been directly contacted to make them, and the Surrey residents they represent, aware of the consultation. These groups include:

- Surrey Coalition for Disabled People
- Surrey Disabled People's Partnership (which includes disability hubs)
- Surrey Sensory Services
- Engagement and Partnership Office.

Where residents have contacted the Council to ask about the proposed changes to the Blue Badge scheme as a result of national press coverage, they have been signposted to the consultation and encouraged to respond so their views can be considered.

In shaping the Council's own response to the consultation, the Blue Badge Team will be engaging with colleagues in areas such as social care, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and mental health to identify other groups to engage with, as well as with appropriate Cabinet Members.

## **CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN**

### **7. MR JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK:**

The Budget shows draft savings in 18/19 and 19/20 in appendix 6 - this is broken down by directorate with a short description of each saving. The biggest saving over two years highlighted is called "Early Help reconfiguration - reprofiled" which amounts to a £6.57m "saving" over these two years. The 'case for change' that was brought to the Children & Education Select Committee on 17/11/17 to provide a policy development and review, did not specify how these savings would be made, or what the staffing or service impacts would be. There is currently no Equalities Impact Assessment for this on SCC's website, or anywhere in the public domain. Can the Cabinet Member please provide and publish full details of the scope and range of staffing reductions and service changes, as well as a complete Equalities Impact Assessment?

#### **Reply:**

The Cabinet's intentions have been presented to the Children and Education Select Committee and will be further outlined in the Early Help Strategy report to be

considered by Cabinet in February. The current savings plan in Early Help outlines the approach to achieving the current medium-term financial plan (MTFP) requirements. The Equalities Impact Assessment reflects the changes which are currently the subject of staff consultation within Family Services. The EIA is being updated for the February Cabinet meeting to reflect the full range of changes required to meet the MTFP. Early engagement with our children’s centre providers has started in order to ensure the proposals for change to Surrey’s approach to providing children’s centre services are fully informed by those who deliver this important provision.

**DENISE TURNER-STEWART, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES**

**8. MR ROBERT EVANS (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK:  
(2<sup>nd</sup> question)**

How many Surrey Fire fighters have left the service for other brigades, especially London, and how many days have Surrey Fire stations had to close due to staff shortages?

**Reply:**

From 01 April 2017 to date (01 February 2018), eight operational staff have transferred to another service. Of these, three transferred to London Fire Brigade.

<b>Number of transferees</b>	<b>Service transferred to</b>
3	London Fire Brigade
2	Kent
1	South Yorkshire
1	Dorset
1	Suffolk

Our fire stations are never closed, and appliances are available across Surrey 24/7, 365 days a year. Our available fire cover is reviewed on a day to day basis. Where required, we take into account crew availability and reallocate staff as necessary. We use sophisticated technology, which shows the location of fire engines and other vehicles and allows us to monitor response cover across Surrey.

Understanding risks and the location of assets across the county ensures our own resources are allocated in a way that addresses risk, within the budget allocated by Surrey County Council. In addition, we use mutual aid from other fire and rescue services to ensure that fire cover continues to be met as and when required. This cross border cooperation between the fire and rescue services is well established and when required is part of our risk based assessment.

It is an important part of our fire service business to ensure that the availability of resources are aligned to achieve the appropriate level of fire cover across the whole of Surrey. This is even more important in times of increased demand, for example, the flooding in 2013/2014.

**TIM OLIVER, CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY AND BUSINESS SERVICES**

**9. MR WILL FORSTER (WOKING SOUTH) TO ASK:  
(2<sup>nd</sup> question)**

Please can the Cabinet Member confirm what plans, if any, the Council has to repair or rebuild the Lakers Youth Centre in Goldsworth Park following the awful fire last month?

**Reply:**

Officers are working closely with the Council's insurers regarding the next steps. In the meantime whilst we wait for an agreed insurance approach, due to ongoing vandalism and break-ins, cost estimates are currently being obtained to undertake partial demolition of the affected part of the building as agreed with our insurers to make the building and the surrounding area safe for members of the public.

We are working closely with the local Member, Colin Kemp, to understand the local demand and need for this facility so that once the Council is in possession of the full recommendations from the insurers, consideration can then be given to the next steps for the future of the building.

**TIM OLIVER, CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY AND BUSINESS SERVICES**

**10. MRS HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK:  
(2<sup>nd</sup> question)**

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that, following the publication of the Government's "*Guidance on Local Government investments*", which emphasised transparency and democratic accountability around commercial investment by local authorities, the Investment Board Annual Report for 2017/18 will contain the description, location and cost of purchase of each property purchased by the County Council or its wholly owned company Halsey Garton, and will be published on the County Council's website for all residents to access?

**Reply:**

The Investment Strategy is one of a series of initiatives to improve the financial resilience of the Council in the longer term. The Portfolio consists of property investments which have been made by the Council in order to deliver economic regeneration or to provide for long-term future service use, whilst delivering an investment return. These assets provide flexibility in the estate whilst producing a net revenue. The Council has also provided its subsidiary company, Halsey Garton Property Ltd, with equity and debt financing to facilitate the purchase of assets for their investment return. The portfolio of property investments therefore consists of assets held by the Council together with those owned by the Property Company. The Council is developing a mixed and diversified portfolio in order to manage the inherent economic and market risks.

The request in the question is similar to the recommendations made by the Overview and Budget Scrutiny Committee in November 2017 to include this information in the next Annual Report of the Investment Board, which the Investment Board have agreed. I can confirm that we have made available, in advance of the next annual report, an updated summary version of the 2016/17 Annual report on the Council's website which contains the information requested for each property.

**MIKE GOODMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT**

**11. MR JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK:  
(2<sup>nd</sup> question)**

When will the County Council be responding to the Heathrow Consultation, and how will it be consulting and engaging with Members and Surrey residents before formulating its response?

**Reply:**

Surrey County Council will be responding to the consultations being undertaken by Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) – which end on 28 March - on the physical changes needed to build a new north west runway and operate an expanded airport and on the principles for designing the new airspace required for an expanded airport. The Council has run a number of briefings for Members at which HAL have outlined their plans, the latest of which took place in December and the questions asked by Members will inform its response. As is normally the case, Members are also able to advise the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport of their views and he may consult with them before the response is finalised.

The Council does not intend specifically to consult Surrey residents but notes that HAL are running a series of consultation events at which members of the public will be able to engage directly with the scheme promoters.

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