

Cabinet – Procedural Matters – Questions and Select Committee reports with responses

**Date & time**

Tuesday, 27 March
2018 at 2.00 pm

Place

Ashcombe Suite,
County Hall, Kingston
upon Thames, Surrey
KT1 2DN

Contact

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We're on Twitter:
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Cabinet Members: Mr David Hodge (CBE), Mr John Furey, Mrs Helyn Clack, Mr Mel Few, Mr Mike Goodman, Mr Colin Kemp, Mrs Mary Lewis, Mr Tim Oliver, Ms Denise Turner-Stewart and Mrs Clare Curran

Cabinet Associate: Ms Charlotte Morley

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4 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

a Members' Questions (Pages 1
- 2)

- (i) The deadline for Member's questions is 12pm four working days before the meeting (*21 March 2018*).

b Public Questions (Pages 3
- 4)

The deadline for public questions is seven days before the meeting (*20 March 2018*).

5 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY BOARDS, TASK GROUPS, LOCAL COMMITTEES AND OTHER COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL (Pages 5
- 8)

Joanna Killian
Chief Executive
Monday, 26 March 2018

CABINET – 27 March 2018

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Members Questions

Question (1) Hazel Watson (Dorking Hills):

In an article commenting on the conviction of the Parsons Green bomber Ahmed Hassan, The Times on 18th March 2018 stated that:

"When he was placed with Ron and Penny Jones, foster parents appointed MBEs for their work, they were not told about his claims of Isis links or fears that he was being radicalised....they are now said to have stopped fostering."

Can the Leader of the Council confirm that these assertions in The Times are correct? If so, was it the responsibility of the county council to inform the foster parents of Ahmed Hassan's claims of ISIS links and fears that he had been radicalised? And if so, why did this not happen?

Reply:

We place a high value on openness with all our foster carers, share information about any risks with them from the outset and continue to keep them informed. This was our approach with Mr and Mrs Jones and our social workers shared information in full, and also gave them regular updates. In the light of events we have looked again at our practice on this occasion, and our overall approach, and we have no concerns about gaps in information sharing

Mr and Mrs Jones continue to be registered with us as foster carers. Now the trial has concluded we will have further discussions with them about their wishes in terms of their future in fostering.

**Mr David Hodge CBE
Leader of the Council
27 March 2018**

Question (2) Hazel Watson (Dorking Hills):

The Investment Strategy, as published on the county council's website, states that: "The financial returns delivered from investment will help to ensure that we continue to deliver quality services for our residents"

Since the creation of the County Council's wholly owned property subsidiary company Halsey Garton, can the Cabinet Member set out the total amount of rental income generated from the purchase of commercial properties and how much of this has been used to support spending on council services?

Reply:

The investment portfolio created under the Investment Strategy 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

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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 net income delivered by the Strategy is reported in the Annual Report provided by the Investment Board to Cabinet and to Scrutiny Committee. That report is available on the Councils website. A forecast for the current year is reported in the monthly monitoring report provided to Cabinet. The total net income delivered to date by the strategy will be used to support spending on council services in the future and is expected to be £5.3m by March 2018.

Mr Tim Oliver
Cabinet Member for Property and Business Services
27 March 2018

Question (3) Jonathan Essex (Redhill East):

The NHS is holding a consultation on Accountable Care Organisations this spring. Will the Cabinet Member be responding to this consultation?

Reply:

Surrey County Council will work with our NHS partners in Surrey Heartlands to respond jointly to the NHS England Consultation on Accountable Care Organisations.

Mrs Helyn Clack
Cabinet Member for Health
27 March 2018

CABINET – 27 March 2018

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Public Questions**Question 1: Mr George Hesse**

My question relates to The Library Gardens, West Street, Farnham. These gardens are a highly valued open public space in the Town Conservation Area. In recent years they have become less accessible to the public and are deteriorating rapidly as a consequence of considerable neglect. There are crumbling walls, collapsing safety balustrades. Heras site fencing all over the place and the lower part closed off by a heavy steel gate including the run down tennis court which is padlocked. Until recently these gardens were looked after by Farnham Town Council on behalf of SCC but a few years ago the management of these gardens reverted to Surrey who now obviously find it difficult keeping these gardens fully open to the public and in good condition. The standard of gardening is basic grass cutting, leaving edges, shrubs and roses overgrown. They are closed every Sunday and Bank Holiday throughout the year and the bottom gate, which has been a pedestrian access for many years is now sealed off with a metal fence. Last year on the 9th March (2017) I asked a public question at a meeting of FTC's Full Council, in which I requested consideration be given to transferring responsibility back to FTC, to which the then SCC councillor for Farnham Central, in which the Library Gardens are located (and who is also an FTC councillor) Pat Frost, advised that "she would pursue this". I again raised this matter as a public question at the meeting of FTC's Full Council held on 2nd November 2017 at which the FTC Town Clerk stated that several attempts had been made to negotiate the resumption of the management of the Library Gardens from SCC but as yet, no solution had been found. I yet again raised this matter as a public question at the last Full Council meeting held on 8th March 2018 and was advised that there was unlikely to be any transfer until January 2019, which is the next time tenders are due to be invited for management of the gardens. This leaves the gardens in a continuing downward spiral of neglect and ever more hazardous to public safety and another Summer when local residents and visitors are deprived of the full enjoyment of them.

The Library Gardens are recognised and named as an important green space in Farnham's Town Centre Conservation Area in Farnham's Neighbourhood Plan, which in May 2017 was approved by a 88% vote in a referendum and which is now adopted by Waverley Borough Council as material consideration, as subsequently confirmed in Waverley Borough Council's recently approved and adopted Local Plan --- Part One. The public should not continue to be denied access to the Library Gardens and I would, therefore ask , is there any reason preventing the transfer of responsibility to FTC at the earliest possible opportunity --- so that they can again be fully reopened to the public seven days a week, restoring the rear pedestrian gate and the tennis court?

Reply:

Farnham Gardens is a great space and we are pleased to open it to the local community, local schools and other groups. Being the Library Gardens, it is Surrey County Council staff working at the library that open and close the gates to the garden. This they do this in line with the library opening hours, 6 days per week, Monday to Saturday. The gardens have always been locked overnight, and on the advice of Surrey Police, to minimise the risk of damage from vandalism as there has been in the past some horrible vandalism, the gardens are now being accessed by the upper gates closest to the Library.

The gardens are comprised of lots of different areas; a meadow area in which we retain long grasses to encourage wildlife, a more formal garden with beds, an ornamental area with wall, a fountain and seating area and tennis courts. Unfortunately the tennis courts have been closed to the public for some time now. This is due to the presence of Japanese Knotweed, a noxious weed, which has deteriorated the surface of the tennis court making it uneven and broken. The knotweed has been treated over the past growing seasons but it is yet to fully be eradicated. When it is eradicated, our intention is to resurface the courts and open them up again to the public and maintenance money has been set aside for this purpose.

In addition, there is a project underway to rebuild and repair the wall which is badly ageing. The haras fencing is to secure off access around the wall area. Also major landscaping works are planned with the creation of new flower beds and additional planting happening in Summer 2018.

Farnham Town Council used to look after the grounds maintenance in the Gardens some five or more years ago and Surrey would be happy to have further discussions with them over taking this on again when we are out of contract with our current provider. However, this would not change the situation as regards the tennis court, the bottom gate or the opening hours of the gardens.

The gardens are a valued and well used part of the community and we need to ensure that they remain so.

Mr Tim Oliver
Cabinet Member for Property & Business Services
27 March 2018

Question 2: Ms Alexandra Bannatyne

Newlands Corner once belonged to the Crown. The King had his race course there. Newlands Corner was subject to a royal decree by the King in 1400's-1500's that it be 'for the open and free use of the common man'.

In the year of two royal weddings please would SCC not install car parking charges as an act of goodwill?

Reply:

The land is still available for access by the 'common man' but in order to maintain that access we need to generate an income to provide the facilities that are now required and to manage the land and paths. The kings and queens of the 1400s and 1500s would not have anticipated that most people would arrive by motor vehicle or that over 500,000 people would visit the site in a year. Because of the need to raise income to maintain that access we cannot agree to your suggestion.

We wish the royal couples well for the future and hope they enjoy Surrey's Countryside.

Mr Mike Goodman
Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport
27 March 2018

OVERVIEW & BUDGET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Item under consideration: BUDGET SCRUTINY

Date Considered: 22 March 2018

- 1 At its meeting on 22 March 2018 the Overview & Budget Scrutiny Committee considered a report detailing the conclusions and recommendations of the Council's Select Committees in relation to service plans and fees and charges produced as part of the 2018/19 budget planning process.
- 2 The Select Committees did not make significant recommendations to alter fees and charging schedules. There was broad agreement with the direction of the service plans with emphasis put on taking advantage of opportunities to generate income and ensuring the Council compared favourably with other authorities.
- 3 The Budget Sub-Group reiterated the need for an increased pace of change at the Council to ensure a sustainable budget and it would follow up on transformation plans as they emerge as these would play a key part in meeting savings targets
- 4 The Committee reflected on a positive scrutiny process for the setting of the 2018/19 budget with more detailed information released to Select Committee at a timely juncture. However, the process for 2019/20 budget scrutiny needs to be agreed early with the Cabinet and Strategic Directors to give Members the earliest opportunity to contribute to the budget planning and service priorities from July 2018 onwards.

The Committee agreed the following recommendations:

1. The **Adults and Health Select Committee** recommended that:
 - a) Officers benchmark income from charging for adult social care services with neighbouring local authorities to identify opportunities for Surrey County Council to maximise income from charging for adult social care; and
 - b) The Adult Social Care & Public Health Directorate embeds a process for reviewing the potential financial implications to the Council arising from reduced spending on Public Health programmes or non-statutory adult social care services.
2. The **Children and Education Services Select Committee** noted:
 - a) The service plans and recognised that there were significant challenges to the Directorate regarding securing external funding; and

- b) That the Committee reviewed and approved the current scheme of charges as proposed by the Children, Schools and Families Directorate.
3. The **Communities Select Committee** recommended that:
- a) An assumption is made that inflation is taken into account when annual increases in fees and charges are being considered by Cultural Services;
 - b) Officers adopt a more commercial approach to operating the Library Service in order to optimise income generation, this includes improved marketing of the stock and services that the Library Service has to offer;
 - c) Officers benchmark fees and charges within Cultural Services against those levied by neighbouring authorities;
 - d) Surrey Fire and Rescue Services' plans to achieve savings as outlined within the Medium Term Financial Plan are shown to the Cabinet in order to progress these plans or explore alternative opportunities to deliver these savings where appropriate; and
 - e) Encourages the Buckinghamshire County Council and Surrey County Council Joint Trading Standards Service to continue its work establishing Primary Authority Partnerships (PAP) and recommends that the Service seeks to expand the number of PAPs by actively marketing them through district and borough councils and chambers of commerce
4. The **Corporate Services Select Committee** recommended that
- a) The Cabinet Member for Communities considers the introduction of an administration fee for health and safety planning and support provided by the Emergency Management Team to event organisers.
 - b) The Chief of Staff reviews the budget allocated to the Healthwatch contract so that total expenditure does not exceed the amount of the national government grant
 - c) The Council explore income generation opportunities within Audit and Pension Administration Services.
 - d) The Head of Communications explore income generation through online advertising on the Surrey County Council website and promoting in-house communication services to Local Authorities and Government bodies.
 - e) The Head of Legal Services explore income generation opportunities within employment law and special projects as part of Orbis Public Law integration.
5. The **Environment & Infrastructure Select Committee** recommended that:
- a) Future reviews of fees and charges assume an increase at least by the level of inflation and ensure that it presents justifications for any variation on this; and

- b) Further work is undertaken regarding cost recovery: where it is focussed and what can effectively be recovered, as part of a review of fees and charges and that this is reviewed by the Select Committee in late 2018.
 - c) The Council considers the implementation of new technologies such as LED lighting and charging points on lamp posts; and
 - d) The service presents a business case for use of such new technologies as outlined in the IoT (Internet of Things) UK research report^[1] for use in Surrey in 2018/19 as this presents an income opportunity.
6. The **Overview and Budget Scrutiny Committee** recommended that:
- That scrutiny on next year's budget and business planning begins in July to allow sufficient time for Member input at the earliest stage possible

Kay Hammond
Chairman of the Overview & Budget Scrutiny Committee

RESPONSE:

The cabinet thanks the select committees for the detailed work on budget scrutiny this year. The 2018/19 budget has been challenging to set with the continuing pressures on social care and special educational needs budgets in particular, and further reductions in government grants. The greater involvement of select committees this year in the budget setting process has considerably aided the cabinet in determining how to make the necessary savings.

Given these continuing and increasing pressures, the cabinet agrees with the need for an increased pace of change to ensure a sustainable budget, and has asked the Chief Executive and Director Finance to recognise this in developing the budget and business setting process for the next MTFP.

The cabinet also thanks the committees for their recommendations, especially on fees and charges. In developing the budget for 2019/20, the cabinet will carefully consider these recommendations.

David Hodge CBE
Leader of the Council

^[1] Hannah Griffiths, *The Future of Street Lighting: The Potential for New Service Development*, IoTUK, April 2017, (available at: <https://iotuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/The-Future-of-Street-Lighting.pdf>, as accessed 13/03/2018).

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