

# **CABINET MEMBER DECISION**

## **Decision:**

Public Questions

### **(i) Details of decision**

Two questions were received from members of the public. The questions and responses are attached as Annex 1.

### **(ii) Reasons for decision**

To respond to the questions asked by members of the public.

### **(iii) Details of any alternative options considered and rejected**

None.

### **(iv) Details of any consultation and representations received not included in the published report**

Mr John Oliver asked the following supplementary question

Surrey Wildlife trust (SWT) is well aware of its obligations under the commons act 2006. What sanctions or penalties does the Council intend to impose on SWT for actively encouraging the placement of temporary structures and fencing on the Newlands corner and Ockham registered common by private companies without the prior permission of the planning inspector as required by the commons act and, when will the council be responding to Ms. Sally Blakes email of the 3 February and 1 March about these transgressions?

The Cabinet Member responded by stating that SWT had always acted in good faith when putting up structures in any of the commons throughout surrey and that SCC would ensure that SWT continued to discharge its responsibilities appropriately. In relation to SWT not seeking the Planning Inspectors permission to erect temporary structures and fencing at Newlands Corner, the Cabinet Member confirmed that conversations had taken place with the Planning Inspector and that the appropriate action would be taking place in response to this. It was confirmed that Surrey County Council would not be taking any sanctions against the Surrey Wildlife Trust. The Cabinet Member confirmed that officers will be responding to Ms Sally Blake in due course.

## **Conflicts of Interest and any Dispensations Granted**

**(Any conflict of interest declared by any other Cabinet Member consulted in relation to the decision to be recorded and any dispensations granted by the Audit and Governance Committee)**

None.

## **Decision taken by:**

**(i) Name:** Mike Goodman

(ii) **Portfolio:** Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning

**Date of Decision:** 23 March 2017

**Date of Publication of Record of Decision:** 24 March 2017

**Date decision effective (this cannot be called in):** 24 March 2017

## **CABINET MEMBER DECISION**

### **Decision:**

Petitions

**(i) Details of decision**

That the petition responses, attached as Annexes 3 and 4, be approved.

**(ii) Reasons for decision**

To respond to the petitions.

**(iii) Details of any alternative options considered and rejected**

None.

**(iv) Details of any consultation and representations received not included in the published report**

The following people were present at the meeting:

Nicholas Meadows, change consultant, Surrey County Council

Richard Parkinson, Waste Operations Group Manager, Surrey County Council

Lisa Creaye-Griffin, Countryside Group Manager, Surrey County Council

The lead petitioner for the petition concerning the Surrey Wildlife Trust read a statement which is attached as Annex 4.

### **Conflicts of Interest and any Dispensations Granted**

**(Any conflict of interest declared by any other Cabinet Member consulted in relation to the decision to be recorded and any dispensations granted by the Audit and Governance Committee)**

None.

### **Decision taken by:**

**(i) Name:** Mike Goodman

**(ii) Portfolio:** Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning

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**CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING  
23 MARCH 2017**

**PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**Public Questions**

**Question (1) from Mark Moseley:**

I wish to ask that when a bag of rubble is taken to the refuse centre could it be taken in a vehicle and also a trailer. At the moment you can only take a bag of rubble in a car. Thank you for your time.'

**Reply:**

The **Van and Trailer permit policy** has been in operation at Surrey's Community Recycling Centres (CRCs) since 2010, and was refreshed in April 2016 to bring the application system online. The permit policy was put into place as a measure to stop businesses bringing their commercial waste into CRCs for free.

A permit is required to visit any of the CRCs in a van, pickup or trailer. You must be a Surrey resident to qualify, and only one permit can be issued per household. The permit is free and entitles residents to 12 visits in one calendar year (automatically renewing on your first visit in the new calendar year).

Under this scheme only household waste can be brought to a CRC in a van, pickup or trailer. The council do not allow for any construction waste (including waste from home DIY projects) or business waste to enter a CRC in these vehicles. If a resident was bringing construction waste in a van, pick up or trailer they would have to go to a Waste Transfer Station, where it will be weighed and charged.

Residents who bring construction waste in a car to a CRC currently have a free daily disposal allowance of one bag (Bags no bigger than 50cm x 77cm). Subsequent bags of construction waste brought on the same day are then subject to a charge of £4 per bag or part bag of this waste (Bags no bigger than 50cm x 77cm). If these materials are loose, a charge of £50 will apply per car load. However in this case they are offered an opportunity on site to bag it up if they think it might be cheaper.

**Mr Mike Goodman  
Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning  
23 March 2017**

**Question (2) from John Oliver:**

What is the Council's policy on placing sanctions and penalties on organisations or individuals who are contracted by the Council to manage or carry out work upon the Surrey County Council Countryside Estate, where the organisations or individuals have failed to comply with legal requirements in order to:

- make a financial gain from that management of, or work upon, the Estate; and/or
- allow others to make a financial gain from use of the Estate.

**Reply:**

Generally the County Council would expect organisations or contractors to apply for whatever consents are required by law in order to carry out their work. This may vary on the Countryside Estate depending on the type of work and who owns the land, for example in the case of the Access Agreements, which are privately owned, consents may be applied for by the landowner, ourselves or the organisation/individuals. The agreement to undertake the work will set out who is responsible for obtaining the consents.

**Mr Mike Goodman**  
**Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning**  
**23 March 2017**

**CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING**

23 March 2017

**PETITION CONCERNING THE INTRODUCTION OF RECYCLING AND WASTE CHARGES AT COMMUNITY RECYCLING CENTRES****Petition**

The new recycling and waste charges to be introduced on 1st September 2016 are exorbitant and will mean that the problem of fly tipping will increase. Only being able to take one bag per day will result in people making daily trips. How environmentally friendly is that? Hundreds of cars making additional journeys and sitting in queues at the dump! I don't think this policy has been thought through as, far from generating an income for the County Council, it will cost them as much, if not more, in having to clear up all the fly tipping which is sure to result.

Submitted by Mrs Janet Holah

Signatures: 7060

**Response**

Surrey County Council (SCC) is having to make significant savings as a result of increased demand on essential services, coupled with reduced government funding. This has meant the council has had to review spend on non-essential services in other areas. A public consultation on a range of cost saving options to Surrey's Community Recycling Centres (CRCs) was conducted from 15 July 2015 to 30 September 2015. The preferred changes based on feedback submitted by residents and stakeholders during the consultation in order of preference were:

1. Reduced opening hours
2. Closure of some CRCs on the least busy days
3. Charges introduced for non-household waste
4. Closure of CRCs

At their meeting on [24 November 2015](#), Cabinet (the council's decision making body) agreed to implement the first three changes, but not to close any CRCs. Changes to opening hours and days were introduced on 1 April 2016. The introduction of a charging scheme for non-household waste is the last of these changes, and was implemented on 1 September 2016.

SCC is required to provide a place for Surrey's residents to deposit household waste free of charge. However, the types of waste in the charging scheme are not classified as household waste. Therefore, the council can choose not to accept this material, to put limits on the amount we accept and/ or charge to accept it. In recent years the amount of waste from household alterations and building works that is being brought to our CRCs has increased. This, coupled with significant pressures on the council's finances, means SCC can no longer afford to accept unlimited quantities of this waste, free of charge.

Therefore the council have had to introduce charges for types of non-household waste, which are in line with other councils. The council is not making a profit from this scheme, as the charges only cover the disposal and administration cost with dealing with these types of non-household waste. These charges are intended to help SCC to achieve critical savings while still maintaining a comprehensive service for residents. The council does understand that small quantities of rubble may arise from minor repair works, and agreed a reasonable

free allowance of one bag, one item, or one sheet of charging scheme waste per customer per day only. Charges do not apply to general household waste and green waste.

The traffic count data from September to December 2016 shows that the number cars visiting CRCs has reduced significantly. An overall average of 6,800 fewer visits have been made per week compared to the same period the previous year. Also, the anecdotal evidence from site staff suggests there are no significant issues with vehicles queuing to access the CRCs, as a result of introducing the charging waste scheme. Therefore there has been no negative impact on the environment from cars making additional trips to CRCs. However, the council will continue to monitor this.

The council did not expect any significant increase in fly-tipping as a result of the charging scheme and other changes at CRCs, given the experience of other authorities that have already introduced similar measures. Figures collected between April last year and January, show that the amount of fly-tipping collected by district and borough councils for disposal, has fallen by 30 percent compared to the previous 10-month period. This represents a drop of 1,100 tonnes in fly-tipped waste saving Surrey taxpayers £125,000. This position is contrasting to recent report of high levels of fly-tipping in other parts of the country.

However, the council is aware that there is more to do to combat the problem of fly-tipping. Last June, SCC launched a concerted drive with Surrey's district and borough councils and other agencies to address the issue of fly-tipping. The council continue to be committed to this partnership and will seek to bring those responsible for this illegal activity to justice.

**Mike Goodman**  
**Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning**  
**23 March 2017**

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING**

23 March 2017

### **PETITION CONCERNING THE REDUCTION IN FUNDING TO SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST**

#### **Petition**

The Council's plan to cut funding under its 50-year agreement with the Surrey Wildlife Trust to zero by 2021 will result in all the jobs of the Trust's 16 rangers becoming redundant. Few of these very experienced and dedicated staff are going to be re-employed in the much smaller organisation that will replace them. The loss of experience and capacity will be highly detrimental to Surrey's countryside - the likelihood is that footpaths and bridleways will not be properly maintained; woodlands, downlands and heaths will increasingly be taken over by scrub and invasive plants, and sensitive habitats - heaths, chalk downland and coppiced woodlands (homes to nationally rare and threatened species such as the dormouse) will be lost. If we care about and enjoy the places that make Surrey special, these unnecessary and damaging funding cuts must be reversed. The funding to avoid these job losses is small – less than 15p per head of population – in comparison to the risk of the harm caused

Submitted by Mr Michael Gibson

Signatures: 4250

#### **Response**

Surrey County Council's (SCC) Countryside Estate covers 10,000 acres across the County including land owned by the County Council and land managed under Access Agreements with private landowners. The Estate had been managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) since 2002 under a 50 year agreement. The Estate includes a range of building, farms, woodlands and a range of different habitats. Following increased pressure on public sector funding, SWT and SCC have agreed the need for the Estate to become self-financing by 2021. In order to achieve this both parties are working together to generate income from the Estate and ensure that the management of the Estate is as efficient as possible. SWT have successfully increased the level of income since 2002, with the County Council's contribution representing less than a third of the total expenditure. The majority of funding comes from income generated from rents, activities on the Estate and grants. At the same time SWT continue to review their operational arrangements and have therefore agreed a new staff structure that will centralise the management of the Estate, giving greater flexibility in allocating staff where they are most needed and will ensure the standard of service is maintained and can be improved where necessary. The new structure will also develop the skills most needed for the future, public liaison, volunteer co-ordination and managing the land itself. In order to make this change the existing area ranger team has had the opportunity to apply for posts in the new structure. The new Teams will be finalised by the 3<sup>rd</sup> April.

If the funding is not made more secure by making the Countryside Estate self-funding, there is a risk that the Estate could not be protected for future generations to enjoy.

**Mike Goodman**  
**Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning**  
**23 March 2017**

**STATEMENT ON PETITION CONCERNING THE REDUCTION IN FUNDING TO SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST FROM MR MICHAEL GIBSON**

Good morning. I am Mike Gibson, and I live in Guildford. I happen to be a trustee of three local charities serving the community, but I am here today as an ordinary member of the Surrey Wildlife Trust and one of its volunteers. I set up this petition after the Trust's chief executive and his HR director took the trouble to come outside on a cold morning in January to meet a group of volunteers during one of our regular work parties.

They explained to us the restructuring of the Countryside Management Department. We learnt three things. First it was apparent that the jobs of all 16 rangers were redundant. Second, that there was no certainty that any of them would be re-employed in the new, smaller organisation. And third, and although it may be said that it is for Surrey Wildlife Trust to determine the way in which its services are delivered, it was the Council which took the initiative to vary the SWT agreement - with an implicit threat of termination – that led the Trust into taking this step.

I've been volunteering alongside the rangers for more than five years, and it's clear to me that their long experience and deep local knowledge of the sites they manage is all going to be lost, with potentially dire consequences for Surrey's countryside. And this is a view shared by my Conservative MP, Anne Milton, out of her experience of liaising with rangers on local environmental issues. My fears are now turning out to be well-founded. Only two of the existing team of 16 rangers have gone into posts in the restructured organisation. Such is the value of their expertise that several have been snapped up with good job offers from organisations like the RSPB and Natural England.

Also do you know that from the beginning of this week through until June, the Wildlife Trust is having to suspend its daily volunteer work programme while the staff changes take effect? The Trust has some 1800 volunteers who do a vast amount of the practical work. Examples of projects that have been cancelled this spring include digging ponds; clearing paths; creating invertebrate habitats; setting up grazing compartments for the conservation herd of cattle; and putting up fences to protect the spring growth of recently-coppiced woodland from being eaten by deer.

So your action is already jeopardising Surrey's countryside. There is going to be an impact in the next few months while a diminished and untried team finds its feet, along with an immediate loss of volunteer manpower. In the longer term, you face the risks of a deterioration in the estate, including triple SIs; reduced maintenance of paths and bridleways; and ultimately damage to Surrey's wildlife.

Natural England is well aware of the changes you have forced on the Wildlife Trust. Its area manager has written that he is prepared to take enforcement action if he finds a lack of proper management is a threat to wildlife.

Your policies have lost us an irreplaceable bunch of very experienced, expert and dedicated staff and put the fulfilment of your responsibilities for nature conservation and public access at risk. You have effectively ransacked the Trust in order to make a very small saving from the £67 million part of the council's budget covering the environment, out of nearly £1.7 billion overall.

By restructuring and cutting six posts the Trust reckons on saving about £150,000 a year. It has already made considerable savings in the past two or three years, but it has found the 2021 self-funding target you've set impossible to meet in the timescale without drastic action.

So I am asking you to take the pressure off Surrey Wildlife Trust to be self-funding by 2021. Surely, within the contingencies of a £1.7 billion budget, you can find the money to pay the Trust for the resources it needs to manage our countryside properly ..... and I urge you to do so.