

CABINET – 25 FEBRUARY 2025

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Members' Questions:**Question (1) Catherine Powell**

Please can the Cabinet advise if alternatives were considered for the MFR proposed at Trumps Farm, Chertsey given that this isn't a particularly central location in Surrey? Can the Cabinet Member also advise:

- a. If waste generation locations, transportation distances from the Districts and Borough and Waste Transfer Station locations were considered in selecting Trumps Farm for the MFR & whether they can share the analysis.
- b. If Local Government Reorganisation has been considered in determining this location and if there is a risk that additional facilities may be required.

Reply:

- a. An alternative site assessment was undertaken at the early stages of the planning process. This was in addition to two site searches previously conducted in 2008 and 2020 for the Waste Local Plan.

The criteria for the assessment was as follows:

- MRF's need to be positioned to minimise distance from source of waste arisings therefore reducing transport impacts.
- Location of a MRF in the north-west Surrey, closest to most waste arisings would maximise the potential for direct deliveries by district and borough collection vehicles and reduce the need for transfer and bulking material using articulated vehicles.
- Maximising direct deliveries would allow space to be freed up in existing transfer stations for commercial waste.
- Availability of a site - likelihood that SCC could acquire the site for development.
- Suitability – a site of sufficient size and located within the NW Surrey search area.
- Deliverability – likelihood of securing planning permission for a MRF by means of its size, scale and layout.

Consequently, Trumps Farm was identified as the most suitable and deliverable site for an MRF. An Alternative Site Assessment Report is included within Annex 1: Surrey MRF Outline Business Case.

- b. Local Government Reform has been considered in relation to the Outline Business Case presented here. The size of the proposed facility is appropriate to provide capacity for Surrey's dry recycling now and into the future and it is very unlikely that there would be a business case to develop

any further MRF capacity beyond what is proposed at Trumps Farm and the existing facility at Leatherhead.

In the event that Surrey was split into a number of unitary authorities, that were responsible for waste disposal, the continued use of strategic waste management facilities such as the MRF and anaerobic digestion plant would be managed through inter authority agreements.

Natalie Bramhall
Cabinet Member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure
21 February 2025

Question (2) Catherine Baart

The land covered by the proposed Land Management policy includes Surrey's highway verges. How does the current increased verge cutting programme, and suspension of new Blue Heart verge applications until February 2026, align with Policy 1 of the proposed Land Management policy ("Protecting Nature: we will enhance biodiversity by protecting natural habitats and creating connections between them")?

Reply:

The number of urban grass cuts for this year has been set at six, maintaining the same frequency as in 2024. As you may be aware, many of our residents appreciate well-maintained verges, which enhance the overall appearance of the streetscape. However, the County Council is also dedicated to recognising the environmental value that highway verges can offer, particularly in terms of biodiversity. For this reason, the review of the Blue Heart scheme is approaching completion.

All existing Blue Heart verges will remain in place where they are supported; there are no plans to remove any previously agreed sites. The updated approach will be finalised in the spring, with the goal of confirming it long before February 2026. This will allow us to further enhance biodiversity by establishing a clear policy for site selection, which we believe will make a significant impact. In parallel with the Blue Heart scheme, we are examining ways to improve the management of conservation verges within the highway network, ensuring they play a more active role in supporting biodiversity.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
21 February 2025

Question (3) Catherine Baart

Currently the majority of Surrey farms owned by the county council produce milk or meat. In the vision for Land Management by 2050, do you envisage the Council supporting its tenant farmers to move away from meat and milk production and into growing vegetables, legumes and fruit (soil type permitting?) to align better with the 10 Policies?

Reply:

The Council is actively working with its tenant farmers to support their transition to a new way of farming in order to benefit from the many different new approaches to land management and food production. It recently held its third farming network event with tenant farmers to explore subjects such as the adoption of regenerative farming techniques, applying for Environmental Land Management Grants, water pollution and Biodiversity Net Gain.

As a landlord, the Council remains open to requests for any changes in business model from tenants that are based on viable business plans and appropriate investment funding. SCC currently does not have a policy to move away from meat and milk production.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
21 February 2025

Question (4) Catherine Baart

With the advent of Procurement Act 2023 there is a requirement to move from “Most Economically Advantageous Tender” to “Most Advantageous Tender”. How does this change from MEAT to MAT impact the council’s practical implementation of “Best Value” (Local Government Act 1999)?

Reply:

Since 2004 the methodology associated with evaluating tenders in public procurement in the UK has been Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT). The introduction of the Procurement Act (2023) replaces this with Most Advantageous Tender (MAT). Both methodologies use a combination of factors (award criteria) to evaluate bids submitted in a competitive procurement procedure. Most commonly this will be price and the quality of the goods, services or works being procured and is expected to remain so under MAT.

Many procurement professionals do not see a distinct difference in what was allowed by MEAT and what is being proposed by MAT. Since 2014/15 (the start of the previous regulatory public procurement regime) it has been more common to see an extension of these criteria in MEAT to include things such as social value and environmental sustainability. However, key here is that the change to MAT is accompanied by powerful commentary aimed at changing culture and mindset in public procurement that the use of award criteria that achieve wider policy and mission-led public service goals can and should be used.

The Council’s statutory duty of delivering “Best Value” can be defined further in that a Council must demonstrate that it is making arrangements that are economic, efficient and effective with a regard to securing continuous improvement – the core aim of the Best Value duty. Criteria used to evaluate tenders, whether that be using

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the MEAT or MAT methodology will always contain a level of regard to these in a way that is relevant and proportionate to the contract and the aims of objectives of the Contracting Authority (i.e. the Council). The change from MEAT to MAT should not therefore impact the council's ability to deliver Best Value as per the Local Government Act, but it does encourage budget holders, stakeholders and decision makers to consider what value should mean against a broader set of potential outcomes, for example whole-life costs and environmental externalities that might have otherwise have longer-term cost implications that were not considered against the costs suppliers are proposing through the tendering process.

The changes in the Procurement Act should also be taken more broadly when considering the impact on Best Value, for example greater focus on performance management of suppliers and transparency thereof is also a potentially powerful tool for demonstrating longer term Best Value and continuous improvement.

David Lewis
Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources
21 February 2025

Questions (5,6,7,8) Steven McCormick

With regard to Item 10, A Land Management Framework and Policy for Surrey County Council Owned Land:

- 1 Can consideration be given in this item and policy specifically to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Land Banking options please? There are discussions in progress with the cabinet member and I would like to ask that the proposed policy be updated to include a section on BNG, Land Banking in relation to SCC property please.
- 2 Under community engagement can I ask a specific mention is included that the related/impacted Divisional member is folded into discussions on land that may be in their division being considered under this proposed policy?
- 3 Do we know what the scope of buildings owned by SCC that may fall into the land management policy area are please?
- 4 Is there any way we can include a reference or consideration to Community Asset Transfer and Best Value considerations in this policy to facilitate / support this possible route?

Reply:

- 1 The Land Management Framework and Policy outlines how SCC will look at its land to provide a range of outcomes, including BNG. For example, the SCC Land and Property and Natural Capital teams are already working closely together to assess the potential for BNG on SCC land to use for its own capital projects.

- 2 Divisional Members will be contacted at the appropriate time to be briefed on proposals for the use of land within their Division. This will be made clearer in the policy.
- 3 The Land Use Framework and Policy only covers land based assets, not buildings.
- 4 The Land Use Framework and Policy covers the use of SCCs land in relation to commercial and operational uses, including items such as BNG. Community Asset Transfer does not fall within the remit of this policy and would need to be covered separately in a specific policy that would cover the transfer of land and buildings.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
21 February 2025

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