

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2015

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

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

(1) MR ROBERT EVANS (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK:

Could the Cabinet Member report on how the Council's plans are progressing regarding the closure of Spelthorne's two fire stations?

Reply:

The Service needs to address two challenges to create the new arrangements for fire cover. The first is to find and develop a suitable location and secondly, to create a new competent on-call unit of fire officers, in order to complete the station's response capability.

Whilst working with the SCC Property department, we have identified a suitable site for developing a new fit for purpose fire station. In recent months, there have been some extenuating factors that have meant that the proposed site is currently behind schedule. However, work is currently underway to address these issues.

As you know, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has undertaken a comprehensive recruitment campaign to attract candidates interested in being employed as 'on-call fire-fighters'. However, the dates are now being scheduled to progress this unit in line with the resolution of the property matters.

A further detailed paper expected to go to Cabinet in late Spring 2015.

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

**(2) MR IAN BEARDSMORE (SUNBURY COMMON & ASHFORD
COMMON) TO ASK:**

Not long ago, Sita was asking the Planning and Regulatory Committee if it could permanently retain the existing waste site and use the land outside its boundary for 'tree management'.

Now at the very beginning of the nesting season - which Natural England confirms began on 1 February - the chainsaws have been revved up, Sita Surrey Ltd are cutting down large swathes of trees around the waste site at Charlton Lane.

The inspector said this should not happen at least until all the relative permissions had been granted and the diverted foot path established, which has not happened and therefore why is this being done?

Reply:

I think the Member is perhaps confusing two issues.

Sita are removing trees and vegetation outside the main bird nesting season, which runs from March until August. Surrey County Council requires them to comply with the law and to observe best practice to avoid disturbing nesting birds. Therefore, the contractor has engaged an ecologist to supervise an inspection to ensure that there are no actively nesting birds.

In the event that the construction of the Eco Park proceeds, this will require a permanent diversion of footpath 70 along a defined route. However, the current closure is temporary because the footpath cannot be safely used by the public while the tree work is ongoing. Once it is completed, which will be by the end of the month at the latest, the definitive route will reopen to the public.

CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS AND LEARNING

(3) MR JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK:

Current Status and Value of Academy School Assets in Surrey

How does the process of creating new academies and transfer of existing schools to become academies ensure that the views of parents, teachers, students and the wider community are heard and taken into account, and that objections and alternatives proposed are properly considered?

What representations have been made to Nicky Morgan, Education Secretary, in light of the fact we know that Surrey County Council object to the fact Oxted School Governing body have applied for change of status to Foundation and are SCC prepared to make a public statement to the Press regarding their objection to this change of status?

In how many cases have changes been made subsequent to a school becoming an academy to any of the following:

- (i) any type of SEN provision
- (ii) subjects offered in the curriculum
- (iii) entrance criteria and what are the specifics of these changes in each case

Please can you confirm the names of academy schools created in Surrey:

- (i) last year,
- (ii) this year and so far committed in future and in which cases the school or academy has also been granted foundation status?

In each case please confirm the total value (delivered or budgeted) of both:

- (a) new school buildings and land being built and transferred to academy trusts/chains; and
- (b) existing school buildings and land being transferred to academy trusts/chains?

What arrangements are in place regarding disposal of the buildings and land in the event of the failure of an academy trust or chain and the allocation of pupils to other schools?

Reply:

[Note: As this was a multiple question, the questions have been duplicated in the response with the reply set out in bold after each question]

Current Status and Value of Academy School Assets in Surrey:

How does the process of creating new academies and transfer of existing schools to become academies ensure that the views of parents, teachers, students and the wider community are heard and taken into account, and that objections and alternatives proposed are properly considered?

The Governing Body of the school is obliged to consult on its proposed change of status. The process is prescribed by the Department for Education (DfE) and the local authority is a consultee. The decision to proceed is made by the Governing Body.

What representations have been made to Nicky Morgan, Education Secretary, in light of the fact we know that Surrey County Council object to the fact Oxted School Governing body have applied for change of status to Foundation and are SCC prepared to make a public statement to the Press regarding their objection to this change of status?

We have written to the Governing Body to say that we do not feel achieving Foundation status it is a necessary step to becoming an academy. Surrey County Council will be a consultee in the event that the Governing Body decides to proceed with an application to the DfE.

In how many cases have changes been made subsequent to a school becoming an academy to any of the following:

- (i) any type of SEN provision

The Echelford Centre (attached to Echelford Primary School, Shepperton) for pupils with Speech, Language and Communication needs was closed with effect from 31 January 2014.

- (ii) subjects offered in the curriculum

Academies have the freedom to set their own curriculum.

(iii) entrance criteria and what are the specifics of these changes in each case

Academies are their own admission authority but must adhere to the national school admissions code in the same way as the local authority. Therefore they are obliged to consult on any changes to their admission criteria and this will be a matter of public record for each individual academy.

Please can you confirm the names of academy schools created in Surrey:

- (i) last year,
- (ii) this year and so far committed in future and in which cases the school or academy has also been granted foundation status?

A detailed academies tracker is published monthly on S Net. St Lawrence Primary School converted to Foundation Status prior to academy conversion.

In each case please confirm the total value (delivered or budgeted) of both:

(a) new school buildings and land being built and transferred to academy trusts/chains; and

For academies created in the last year we have spent or plan to spend approximately £18.3 million on basic need.

(b) existing school buildings and land being transferred to academy trusts/chains?

In the financial year 2014/15 (to 31 December 2014) £31.2 million was de-reconciled from Surrey County Council's balance sheet.

What arrangements are in place regarding disposal of the buildings and land in the event of the failure of an academy trust or chain and the allocation of pupils to other schools?

We would seek to have any asset returned to us that had previously been granted a 125 year lease to ensure continuity of education. Where no lease arrangements exist we would work closely with the DfE to ensure that there is a very robust alternative for the education of all pupils affected.

CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS AND LEARNING

(4) MR JOHN BECKETT (EWELL) TO ASK:

Will the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning explain why the decision to close eight Sure Start Centres was not conveyed to the Divisional Members within whose Division the Centres are located, before the decision was made public?

Will she publish the criteria and analysis, which was used to select the eight for closure?

Could she confirm that the details of these eight closures were discussed with the Children and Education Performance and Finance sub-group charged with reviewing potential savings before the public announcement was made?

Reply:

Mr. Beckett is incorrect in that no decision has been taken to close any children's centres and no such decision has been made public. As you will understand, the pressures on the Council's budget are such that it will be difficult to maintain current levels of service involving 58 centres. We have had discussions on potential savings with 8 centre managers and this will enable us to publish consultations on specific proposals in the near future.

Divisional Members within whose Divisions the centres are located or whose residents may be affected by living within a wider reach area for those centres have been informed. Any final decision on closure would be made by Cabinet following consideration of the outcomes of the consultation. Options for savings in a range of service areas have properly been considered as part of the scrutiny process.

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