

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**TUESDAY 20 MARCH 2018****QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED UNDER THE PROVISIONS
OF STANDING ORDER 10.1****DAVID HODGE, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****1. MR ROBERT EVANS (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK:**

Surrey has received plenty of national press coverage due to the County's dire financial situation. What discussions have been held recently with the Government, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer or any other local MPs, on this issue? Will the Council share this information with members?

Reply:

My Cabinet and I are always in regular contact with local MPs on a whole range on issues of importance to our residents, including financial matters.

MARY LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION**2. MR CHRIS BOTTEN (CATERHAM HILL) TO ASK:**

The Government is set to change the threshold at which families in receipt of Universal Credit are able to claim free school meals. Can the Cabinet Member explain why the threshold at which a family in Surrey no longer qualifies for free school meals will be £7,400 whereas a family in Northern Ireland will have a threshold of £14,000? As a result of this change in the threshold, what is the estimated reduction in the number of Surrey children who will no longer qualify for free school meals?

Reply:

I would like to thank Mr Botten for raising the important issue of free school meals. According to the Department for Education, there were 7,019 children in Surrey claiming a free school meal on January 2017 school census day.

In 2013, the coalition government introduced the universal infant free school meal programme which provides free lunches for all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.

We recognise the benefits for our infant school children in Surrey, both nutritionally and in bringing children together at lunchtime. We also welcome the current government's ongoing support for this programme.

We know that one of the unintended consequences of the universal infant programme, nationally and in Surrey, has been an under-claiming of free meals by parents of older children. For this reason, we piloted a project last year, working with four primary schools and Woking Borough Council, to identify parents who were missing out on free school meals for their children and to encourage them to claim. This benefits the schools too, of course, as they then have access to pupil premium funding. The results

of this pilot are being evaluated and I hope that I will be able to say more about work to take this forward in the near future.

In terms of the government's proposals for free school meals for Universal Credit claimants, I understand that the DfE have estimated that an additional 50,000 children nationally would benefit from free schools meals by 2022 than under the current criteria. The government has stated that any child on free school meals whose family moves onto Universal Credit will continue to be eligible for free school meals until they reach the end of the phase of education which they are currently in (either year 6 or year 11) irrespective of whether the income threshold is exceeded. And as thresholds for eligibility for free school meals is a devolved matter, Northern Ireland can set its own.

At this stage, we cannot estimate the numbers of Surrey children who will be affected by the new criteria, as we do not have data about net family income. We do know that all our infant school children will continue to receive free school meals, and those older children who currently claim free meals can continue to do so during their phase of education. We will also continue to promote take up by low income families in Surrey who are eligible and I hope that Members will support this in their own Divisions because it is something that Members could raise when they visit schools and meet residents.

COLIN KEMP, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS

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

Does the Cabinet Member agree with Surrey's Road Policing Unit who tweeted on 18 February 2018 that "most cycle lanes are not fit for purpose" and "full of potholes"? If so, what action will be taken and over what timescale?

Reply:

There are about 300 miles of cycle paths throughout Surrey, and we are working on installing more as part of our extensive investment in highway improvements as a result of our successful bids to our Local Enterprise Partnerships. New cycle infrastructure is being delivered to modern standards meaning that wherever possible the facilities will be segregated from intimidating traffic that otherwise proves to be a barrier to more cycling. We will be investing over £26 million on maintaining our roads, pavements, cycleways and other highway assets in 2018/19, which includes an additional £5 million to make repairs in response to the recent winter weather, but we know this is still not enough to repair everything so we have to prioritise our spending using strict criteria.

As well as our capital maintenance programme, we inspect the network ourselves to identify and repair safety issues meeting our safety defect matrix and we encourage our police partners and the public to report any safety concerns to us by using Surrey County Council [on-line reporting system](#) or calling our contact centre (0300 200 1003).

TIM OLIVER, CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY AND BUSINESS SERVICES

4. MRS HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK:

The retail workforce in the UK has reduced from 3.2m in 2008 to approximately 3m in 2017, with the British Retail Consortium predicting another 900,000 jobs will disappear by 2025. With 50% of the County Council's investment portfolio in the retail sector and in light of the predicted increase in online sales, can the Cabinet Member confirm whether the County Council, through its wholly owned subsidiary property company Halsey Garton, intends to increase or decrease its investment in the retail sector over the next 5 years?

Reply:

The Investment Strategy is one of a series of initiatives to improve the financial resilience of the Council in the longer term. The Council and its property investment company, Halsey Garton Property, continues to pursue a mixed and diversified portfolio in order to manage inherent economic and market risks.

Together with our external investment advisers we will keep our portfolio under continuous review which may mean that as a proportion, the exposure to the retail sector decreases over time. As it currently stands our current focus is on different classes of investments including distribution facilities, offices in key regional centres and in other non-retail sectors.

MEL FEW, CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULTS

5. MRS ANGELA GOODWIN (GUILDFORD NORTH) TO ASK:

Wiltshire Council has introduced an innovative "Shared Lives" programme, with cross-party backing, which allows carers to volunteer to look after vulnerable older people in their own home and could potentially save millions of pounds. Will the Cabinet Member consider piloting such a scheme in Surrey?

Reply:

Shared Lives is a national scheme that can provide long term accommodation, short breaks and day time support.

Surrey County Council already commissions a Shared Lives Service predominantly through our Local Authority Trading Company - Surrey Choices although we do use other providers. The scheme works specifically with adults who have a learning or physical disability or mental health need, older people and people living with dementia who may be vulnerable. There are currently 94 individuals supported by Shared Lives in Surrey.

Surrey Choices also provide EmployAbility which is a dedicated service that helps to find work placements, training, volunteer opportunities and paid work for people with autism or a learning, physical or sensory disability. On average we have 775 placements with Employability.

DAVID HODGE, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

6. MR WILL FORSTER (WOKING SOUTH) TO ASK:

The County Council's recent staff survey data shows highly negative responses under the categories of "Leadership", "Wellbeing" and "A Fair Deal". Can the Leader of the Council set out how he intends to reverse these negative perceptions?

Reply:

At the last Council meeting, I was asked about the staff survey and repeat below my response in relation to "Leadership" and "Fair Deal."

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 People, Performance and Development Committee. 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.

In relation to wellbeing, this is actually an area Best Companies have identified as a strength for us at a team level with team members responding that they feel happy with the balance between their work and home life, don't spend too much time working and work isn't interfering with their responsibilities at home. This becomes more challenging at a senior manager level where the result shows a decline in wellbeing scores. This reflects the significant pressure our senior officers are under, carrying large workloads in a very challenging environment. Again, People, Performance and Development Committee are looking at this with the new Chief Executive to ensure that we have the right capability across the organisation, recognising that in some areas, we will need to increase our leadership capacity.

HELYN CLACK, CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH

7. JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK:

As Public Health falls out of the scope of the Fairer Funding Review, what representations has the County Council made to government in terms of the need to change the current funding formula? Does the Cabinet Member agree that ring-fencing should continue beyond March 2019?

Reply:

Public health is funded by a ring fenced grant from the Department of Health, distributed via Public Health England. Surrey continues to receive the lowest funding per head of population in the country.

The Leader of Surrey County Council has written to Surrey MPs on several occasions: November 2015, November 2016, July 2017 and September 2017. An additional letter was sent from the Leader to the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP on 6 March 2018 and copied to Steve Brine MP, Sajid Javid MP and Surrey MPs. If you would like a copy I will send it to you with the appendices. The content of the letter outlines that Surrey County Council is not asking for a change in the formula, merely asking for a 'fair deal' – an allocation of funding in 2018/9 onwards that reflects the health needs of Surrey residents as set out by the ACRA (Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation) target.

The public health ring fenced grant is in place until March 2020. I will continue to support the ring fenced grant unless the Government devises an improved alternative grant system which guarantees proper funding of Public Health in Surrey.

DAVID HODGE, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

8. MRS FIONA WHITE (GUILDFORD WEST) TO ASK:

The Council Tax bills for 2018/19 for Surrey residents contain leaflets setting out the expenditure of the Police and in some cases the relevant district or borough but do not include a breakdown of the County Council's expenditure, which is the majority of the Council Tax bill. Will the County Council commit to working with the Police and Crime Commissioner to include a breakdown of its share of the Council Tax bill on a combined leaflet, to commence in the financial year 2019/20?

Reply:

We will explore options with the Police and Crime Commissioner to establish what is viable for 2019/20. We do need to be aware that to minimise postal costs many district and boroughs do not include information with posted council tax bills and each district and borough determines what information is included for residents in their area. Residents in some areas can also opt for electronic billing. The majority of councils now provide this information online. The County Council currently works with districts and boroughs and Surrey Police to agree what is included with council tax bills and will continue to do so to make sure we explore all available options.

TIM OLIVER, CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY AND BUSINESS SERVICES

9. MRS PENNY RIVERS (GODALMING NORTH)

What steps has the County Council taken to prepare for the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which will come into effect in the UK from 25 May 2018?

Reply:

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) is a regulation by which the European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission intend to strengthen and unify data protection for individuals within the European Union (EU). It also addresses export of personal data outside the EU. It has some similarities with, but supersedes, the existing provisions of the Data Protection

Act 1998. The GDPR will apply in the UK from 25 May 2018. The government has confirmed that the UK's decision to leave the EU will not affect the commencement of the GDPR. However the GDPR itself does not cover key elements of processing of personal data that local authorities such as Surrey County Council (SCC) undertake and we are awaiting the UK Data Protection Bill to come into force later this year.

The County Council's preparation is based on the Information Commissioner's Office's (ICO) '12 steps to take now' document – the ICO being the main regulator in the UK. Although the principles of handling personal data and the safeguards expected are similar and already embedded in the Council's practices, there are new elements such as enhanced rights for individuals, increased financial penalties and the position of a mandatory Data Protection Officer, with the main thrust being the establishment of accountability and evidence to prove compliance. In order to achieve this a New Data Protection Law toolkit is being developed which will enable services to examine their data flows and establish the key elements of data processing, such as purpose, sharing of data and the legal basis for processing. This information will feed into the mandatory Privacy Impact Assessments to be undertaken and the Privacy Notices to ensure that Council's obligations to its clients, members of the public and its own staff regarding how we securely handle their data, are met. In addition the Orbis partnership has worked together in the areas of Procurement, HR and IT & Digital in respect of its contractual, employment and IT responsibilities with exercises taking place concerning changes to terms and conditions, employment practices and audits of systems.

Many of the ICO's recommended steps for preparation are still being finalised and the Council will take note of and implement them as and when this advice is published.

MIKE GOODMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

10. MR ROBERT EVANS (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK: (2nd question)

Council will, of course be aware that Hedgehog Preservation Week is 6-12 May this year. Does Surrey County Council have any plans to support this initiative? Will the Council and Members agree to take measures to promote awareness of hedgehogs and the dangers they face?

Reply:

The Council is aware of the decline in hedgehog numbers and fully support all the organisations that help to conserve hedgehogs across the county. The attached links provide a lot of information about hedgehogs and I am pleased to promote awareness of help Hedgehog Preservation week in May and the plight of hedgehogs and would ask all members to consider becoming more aware of the hedgehog and supporting the Preservation week.

Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) have a short video promoting the need to be aware of the dangers hedgehogs can face in our gardens:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnlAYm37CvQ&feature=youtu.be>

SWT are also collecting reports of hedgehogs from across the County and would welcome records of any siting which will then help us to focus attention in areas that need most help: <http://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/record>

I also have a personal interest in the protection of hedgehogs as Windlesham is the first hedgehog friendly village and the home of Harper Asprey Wildlife Rescue supported by Dr Brian May which is promoting the conservation of hedgehogs at a local level with the aim of encouraging all communities to become hedgehog friendly.
<http://www.gracethehedgehog.co.uk/campaign/hedgehog-friendly-districts/windlesham/72-windlesham-first-hedgehog-friendly-village>

The Hedgehog Heroes Roll of Honour can also be found here:
<https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/hedgehog-heroes-roll-honour/>

COLIN KEMP, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS

11. MR STEPHEN COOKSEY (DORKING SOUTH AND THE HOLMWOODS) TO ASK: (2nd question)

How much funding is needed to bring the condition of Surrey's roads and footways up to a reasonable condition, and how does this amount compare with the amount of funding that is currently budgeted by the County Council? On the current level of funding available, how long will it take to bring Surrey's roads and footways up to a reasonable condition?

Reply:

The accumulated depreciation of our road network was reported to HM Treasury last year as being £496m and footways were reported as £258m. These are the one off amounts of money it would cost to bring all roads and footways back to "as new" condition and would require a combined budget of £50m per annum over 15 years. When developing our Asset Strategy in 2016, we calculated that to keep all roads in their current condition would cost approximately £17m per annum and to keep all footways in their current condition would cost approximately £3m per annum giving a combined requirement of £20m per annum. Depending on how "reasonable" is defined it would cost somewhere between the two figures (£20m and £50m) to return all roads and footways to "reasonable" condition over a 15 year period.

Over the period of the first five years of the Asset Strategy (2016-2021) the available budget for roads and footways averages to £15.3m per annum which is £4.7m per annum less than needed to maintain condition and £34.7m less than needed to return everything to "as new" condition.

DAVID HODGE, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

12. MRS HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK: (2nd question)

The New Local Government Network (NLGN) recently conducted a nationwide survey of Council Leaders and Chief Executives about the impact Brexit would have on their local areas. Please can the Leader of the Council confirm if he or the Chief Executive responded to this survey and if so, what conclusions did they come to?

Reply:

In common with the vast majority of County Councils, Surrey did not respond to the NLGN survey.

DENISE TURNER-STEWART, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES

**13. MR WILL FORSTER (WOKING SOUTH) TO ASK:
(2nd question)**

Has the County Council, as a key stakeholder, been consulted on the proposed closure of Reigate and Woking Police Stations, as well as the closures of Police Counters in Addlestone, Camberley, Caterham, Dorking and Godalming by the Surrey Police & Crime Commissioner? If so, what was the County Council's response?

Reply:

The County Council has not been invited to take part in the consultation. However, we have been advised about the proposals concerning the Surrey Police Estates Programme and are considering our response. The Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable have committed to ongoing communication about the details as the programme progresses.

DAVID HODGE, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

**14. JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK:
(2nd question)**

The County Council have announced £5m extra borrowing in order to invest in Surrey's roads. What other invest-to-save schemes, funded by borrowing, is the County Council intending to implement in 2018/19?

Reply:

The Council continues to invest in the infrastructure of Surrey through the approval of a 3 year capital programme. The focus remains, as it has for a number of years, on the continuing forecast growth in school pupil numbers and the importance residence place on good roads.

The Council borrows to fund part of the capital programme. Given the current pressures on the Council's finances, and the impact of borrowing which results in additional capital financing costs, the Council restricts the capital schemes funded by borrowing, to those that either generate a revenue saving, prevent revenue pressures or are a statutory requirement. Therefore, the majority of the borrowing for capital schemes are for invest to save purposes.

Surrey's highway network has suffered extensive damage over the winter, particularly during the severe cold spell which brought snow and ice in late February/early March. This damage is causing particular problems on the busier roads, which will require repair so they are serviceable for all road users. It is recommended that these roads are repaired with a programme of large and small local structural repairs, followed up with surface dressing to seal the repairs. To reflect this, the capital highway maintenance budget has been increased by £5m, this additional expenditure will be funded from capital receipts.

The Council ensures that capital decisions take account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability.

DENISE TURNER-STEWART, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES

**15. MR ROBERT EVANS (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK:
(3rd question)**

Will the Council provide the current details for the numbers of police officers in Surrey by borough and district?

Reply:

The Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), Alison Bolton, has undertaken to respond to this question and it will be forwarded to her. This will enable her to provide a context to her response and to respond direct to any subsequent questions.

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