

CABINET – 24 September 2019**PROCEDURAL MATTERS****Public Questions****Question 1: Sally Blake, Resident**

SCC's response to a Freedom of Information request confirmed that woodchip from 2,722 tonnes of trees felled in the Council's Countryside Estate was supplied for use as biomass fuel in the year to March 2019. This has contributed a significant quantity of carbon emissions to the atmosphere, despite the United Nations dire report on global warming in October 2018. Although some of the trees were affected with ash dieback, SCC, and its contractor Surrey Wildlife Trust, decided to fell many hectares of ash trees, healthy and infected, whilst other local councils are only targeting individual trees for felling on a risk basis, and not supplying the timber as biomass fuel.

Please explain, from recorded information, why this policy was adopted and why the Council believes this is coherent with the Council's climate emergency motion passed at the Council meeting on 9 July 2019.

Please set out the action that is being taken to replace this volume of trees on the Council's Countryside Estate and the Council's projections as to how long it will take to replace 2,722 tonnes of timber to take the carbon emissions back out of the atmosphere.

In Surrey as a whole, the Cabinet Member for the Environment announced on 12 July 2019 that the Council will "facilitate" the planting of 1.2 million trees by 2030. To enable Cllr Goodman to make this categorical statement he must have prior knowledge as to how it will be achieved. Please set out who has undertaken to plant these trees, where they will be planted, who will be paying for this exercise, and what steps SCC will be taking to facilitate their planting.

Reply:

The Ash trees which were felled by Surrey Wildlife Trust in 2019 were either affected by, or at risk of infection from, ash die back. This was done under the full approval of the Forestry Commission and Natural England and, as landowner, Surrey County Council was consulted. The felling was carried out to ensure public safety on the County Council's countryside estate, due to the proximity of these trees along public rights of way. The Felling License allowed for an area of up to 22.56 hectares to be felled. Only 7.29 hectares were felled due decisions being taken to limit works in certain areas. There has been no policy produced to deal specifically with the issue of ash die back. Timber went for a mixed use – some went to be chipped for the biomass power station, but a proportion went to be used as timber for furniture.

The County Council is committed to tackling climate change and in July 2019 a Climate Change Emergency was declared at Full Council. A significant piece of work is being led by the Council, working alongside our residents, stakeholders and experts in the field of sustainability, to understand how we meet our ambitious targets to be zero carbon county by 2050, at the latest.

The County Council's pledge to facilitate the planting of 1.2 M trees by 2030, one for each head of the Surrey population, is a key measure designed to reduce carbon emissions. Trees sequester huge quantities of carbon dioxide, just one tree will sequester approximately 1 ton of CO₂ by the time it reaches 40 years of age.

We are currently working with our partners including the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Trust, the University of Surrey and the Surrey Wildlife Trust as well as water companies, businesses and local land owners to develop a strategy and action plan which will ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places in Surrey. This strategy will also ensure that the trees we plant are supported through to maturity, in order to offer the most benefit to Surrey's residents and the environment. The strategy will be published in early 2020 and will set out how we will work with Surrey's businesses in the wood industry to launch a scheme where one tree will be planted in Surrey for every tree which is used in the manufacture of wood products.

The first of the 1.2M trees will be planted at the Surrey Hills Wood Fair on 5 October by the Leader and Chairman of Surrey County Council. This will trigger our tree planting work with partners and businesses.

Mr Mike Goodman
Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste
24 September 2019

Question 2: Mr John Oliver, Resident

"The post of chairperson of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ("the Surrey Hills") is currently vacant. Given that Surrey County Council is the lead authority for the Surrey Hills, can you please:

- a. explain why, for such a prestigious position, the vacancy was not advertised beyond the Surrey Hills own internet sites and email list;
- b. confirm that no one who has previously had a political position on the Board will be considered for the position in an 'independent' capacity;
- c. confirm, in the light of the Council's recent commitment to environmental protection, that the person appointed will need to have significant environmental credentials rather than commercial involvement;
- d. confirm that the Surrey Hills 2020-2024 Management Plan will not be adopted until after the new chairperson is appointed?"

Reply:

- a. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman positions became vacant following the May Local Elections. This was an exceptional circumstance and officers proposed to the June meeting of the AONB Board that an Independent Chair was sought. The Chair role and the skills and experience required had been agreed at the AONB Board on 12th October 2016 and reviewed in 2019. This was the basis for the recruitment and a Panel was established to oversee the process and to advise the AONB Board. The vacancy was promoted through the AONB Board, as agreed, but Members of the AONB Board were also encouraged to promote the vacancy. The AONB Board will only appoint what it considers to be a suitable independent Chair. If no such appointment is made, the AONB Board can agree to review the job profile,

recruitment process and advertising it widely. This will be a matter for the AONB to decide within the terms of its Constitution.

- b. The AONB Board is a locally authority Joint Committee and will determine itself who a suitable candidate is based on the agreed criteria for the chairperson.
- c. The commitment to the environment is clearly set out in the job profile.
- d. The review and adoption of the AONB Management Plan is a legal requirement on the constituent AONB local authorities. This is not dependent on having an independent AONB Chairperson.

Mr Mike Goodman
Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste
24 September 2019

Question 3: Mr Paul Couchman, Save our Services

Does the cabinet accept that the recent consultation over the Making Surrey Safer Plan was inadequate? No public meetings were held and the only way to respond was through the council's formal consultation process, with carefully loaded questions. Only a small number of residents responded. If you compare this to the record 13,000 signatories to a petition (the largest SCC petition in nearly ten years) which opposes the cuts to night-time fire safety cover, is it not clear that far more residents oppose the council's plans than accept them?

Reply:

The public consultation took place for 12 weeks from 4th March to the 26th May following the Surrey County Council Consultation process. We engaged extensively with the public and our partner organisations in Surrey. We met community groups and held local District and Borough briefings. We also promoted the consultation in print media and on social media. We received over 1800 responses (substantially more than previous consultations on service plans) and have taken every response into account.

Ms Denise Turner-Stewart
Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience
24 September 2019

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