

RUNNYMEDE JOINT COMMITTEE – 9 March 2020

AGENDA ITEM 7

WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Mrs Aileen Owen Davies submitted the following question:

What policies or actions have been taken by the RBC following the unanimous decision to declare a Climate Emergency? All the following need to be considered if the Council is to live up to this promise.

Have the Council considered the following

1. Will the current housing need numbers be re-assessed? Will empty office blocks be converted to fill the housing need?
2. Can legislation be enacted to ensure that all new housing and house/office refurbishments, install solar and proper insulation throughout the building?
3. Can legislation be enacted to ensure that anyone cutting trees down must plant the equivalent number to replace them?
4. Is the Council prepared to strengthen their plans to preserve the Green Belt?
5. What tree planting initiatives are taking place?

Officer response.

Surrey County Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 in line with their Community Vision of 2030. You can find out more on what Surrey are doing to tackle this by visiting their website here:

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/climate-change/what-are-we-doing>

Runnymede Borough Council has not declared a climate emergency but does take environmental matters extremely seriously and there are policies already in place in the new Local Plan Runnymede 2030 which addresses sustainable

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development and which includes climate change factors including policies in respect of transport and flooding.

The Local Plan will review housing provision as part of its remit. It responds to the housing need as indicated in our latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment and there is no intention to alter this at the moment. The Government introduced a new light touch planning regime which enables offices to be converted to homes, and there is no indication yet that the Government will change its approach.

Legislation regarding the use of sustainable power in new homes is a matter for central government. However the Local Plan requires new housing developments to consider renewable energies and solar power is just one of a suite of options available and planning decisions can include planning conditions which secure the renewable energy measures. Insulation is dealt with under the Building Regulations.

The Council's new Local Plan is very strong already on the protection of the Green Belt, and the new policies are wholly consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework. Only development that fulfils the requirements of the Local Plan and the NPPF are allowed.

With regards to the planting and cutting down of trees: Central government would be responsible for forming legislation for this. However, Runnymede Borough Council has commissioned a consultant team to produce guidance in support of the new Local Plan specifically on Green and Blue Infrastructure and undoubtedly trees will feature in the document, which will be the subject of public consultation in due course.

RBC has its own tree planting programme: The Council's Tree Officer oversees trees in the Council's own housing stock and would always recommend tree planting where appropriate. A number of trees are being planted in Homewood Park and Aviator Park this month.

Surrey County Council also has its own tree planting initiatives and last year planted the first of 1.2 million trees to be planted by 2030. This represents one tree for every Surrey resident. You can find out more about that here:

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/surrey-matters/community/first-of-1.2-million-new-trees-planted>