

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Natalie Bramhall, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Purpose of report:

To share details of the Cabinet Member's priority areas of work including strategy and policy developments and provide an overview of the budget position and performance of services within his/her portfolio.

Climate Change

1. Work is being undertaken to identify clear ownership, appropriate levels of funding and a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) by 2021 that can provide for robust monitoring.
2. An Officer Board and Delivery Group has been set up with representatives from each of the service areas. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change has been working with officers to further engage District and Borough Councils on the Climate Change Strategy. An interactive graphic was launched this week in Surrey Matters to provide further information on climate change to residents, including a tool to calculate your carbon footprint.

Countryside

3. The Countryside Estate has now been transferred back to Surrey County Council and the financial balance has been paid by Surrey Wildlife Trust. Work is underway to rebrand and improve the sites and landscape architects have been commissioned for three car parks and the visitor centre at Newlands. We are carrying out research on how our sites link to deprived areas, reviewing how we can reach the 18-30 age group, BAME and disabled groups.
4. The Countryside Access Capital Projects Team have been recruited and are currently working on a number of improvement projects across the county. The total budget spend on capital projects to date, including bridge repairs/replacements, is £208,157 plus staff costs. A further £341,471 of work is currently committed and a number of other schemes planned to start within the next few months. The increased vegetation cuts are on-going and have proved very successful in improving access to the public rights of way network, making routes more accessible for all users, including cyclists, and helping people to adhere to social distancing guidelines. Increasing the number of cuts per path has also meant the width has been maintained and paths have not become quickly overgrown again.

Flooding

5. The Outline Business Case for the River Thames Flood Alleviation Scheme is currently with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for approval and we are working with the Environment Agency to prepare for the next stage. Our officers continue to investigate the causes of recent flooding (on 13th and 27th August 2020) and support residents where they can. Members have been emailed for their input onto a new wetspots database.

Trees

6. Tree planting season starts in October and will last for approximately six months. The Council hopes to increase tree planting in urban areas and along urban highways during this time. We have asked members for suggestions of where new trees could be located within their divisional areas. A webinar has been organised to inform members in more detail.

Waste

7. All community recycling centres are now fully reopened, and the use of traffic management systems substantially reduced. Options around the Surrey Waste Local Plan are due to be considered by Cabinet in October. In the interim, officers are working on the development of a joint Minerals and Waste Plan. An outline of the programme for this work is due to be considered by Cabinet in November.
8. In July, Cabinet discussed a Paper on the Waste Commissioning Strategy following the expiry of the Suez contract in September 2024. They agreed to set up a Board and Governance arrangements for the Rethinking Waste Programme.

Recommendations:

1. The Committee reviews the information contained in this update and offers feedback to the Cabinet Member.
2. The Select Committee considers where it may add value to the Cabinet Member's work through scrutiny and scopes topics as required.

Next steps:

The Cabinet Member to return with a further update at the next formal meeting of the Committee.

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