

CABINET – 28 SEPTEMBER 2021**PROCEDURAL MATTERS****Members Questions**

Question (1) Catherine Baart (Earlswood and Reigate South):

Addressing the Climate Funding and Policy Gap

Surrey County Council has an approved climate change strategy with goals and targets verified and agreed. The strategy and targets have been promoted across Surrey to members, residents and stakeholders. The County Council is now working on a climate change delivery plan which is due for Cabinet approval later this year. The government has recently appointed Michael Gove MP as the new Secretary of State for Housing, Levelling-Up and Communities, which includes Local Government. How will Surrey County Council work with the Mr Gove's department to bridge the funding and policy gaps between the Council's climate strategy and targets and the financial resources and powers available to the Council.

Reply:

Surrey County Council is working across multiple government departments to ensure we are able to meet our climate change strategy goals. We have a very close relationship with Michael Gove and his team as a result of his status as a Surrey member of parliament and in his role as a senior member of the government.

We have also been working with Neil O'Brien over the past few months as part of his role as head of the government's Levelling Up Unit, while Guildford MP Angela Richardson has also been appointed parliamentary private secretary at LUHC. At the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, we are working closely with Secretary of State Kwasi Kwarteng (another Surrey MP) and his team. We are also working closely with the other MPs from Surrey to brief them on the activities of SCC in this area and how they might be able to support us in our dealings with the government.

The Cabinet Office is the lead department for the COP26 Summit in Glasgow, taking place in November and we are working with Alok Sharma and his officials there to see how we can support across a number of areas, including transport, communities and youth empowerment. We have recently been successful in a funding bid to deliver a COP26 Green Zones event focussing on decarbonising transport in a rural county. The event will take place on 10 November.

Finally, we have recently signed up to UK100, a network of local authority leaders committed to making the transition to net zero. All of this work is designed to highlight the positive work that SCC is doing presently and to seek government support in the form of extra funding, new powers and as a potential pilot area around climate change and meeting our net zero ambitions.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
28 September 2021

Question (2) Catherine Baart (Earlswood and Reigate South):

Expenditure on Procurement Contracts

For the top 10 most valuable current procurement contracts please provide the starting date, title, directorate, financial value, recipient, location (whether in Surrey) and procurement period.

Reply:

Annex 1 details the top 10 largest contractual arrangement that Surrey County Council has for its third-party expenditure, by Contract Name, Contract Description, Directorate, Supplier Name, Expected Value over contract duration, Start Date, End Date, Post Code (invoice address) and Location. The Hard FM tender contract represents a Framework agreement with numerous contractual entities, across Surrey, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove authorities.

Becky Rush

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

28 September 2021

Question (3) Jonathan Essex (Redhill East):

Gatwick Airport Public Consultation

A public consultation on turning Gatwick's stand-by runway into a second runway started on 9th September and runs until 1st December. Surrey County Council is one of the ten councils around the airport that has formally been asked to respond to the consultation. Please can you confirm how the following three aspects will be reflected in the Council's response: the Council's briefing for councillors on the 25th October; the local transport and environmental impacts these plans would have on Surrey's residents; and the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in Surrey.

Reply:

The County Council's proposed response will be taken to Cabinet on 30th November. Consultation material has been circulated to the relevant council services including Highways and Transport, Flood and Climate Resilience and Greener Futures for specialist officers to consider the potential impacts of the project on Surrey residents and businesses. Their comments will inform the Council's response. The response will also take account of comments made by members at the briefing session on the 25th October.

Matt Furniss

Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure

28 September 2021

Question (4) Catherine Baart (Earlswood and Reigate South):

I note that in the Highways Spotlight the number of trees and whips is mentioned. Whips were planted along the new road linking Westvale to A23 near Horley to create a hedge. Unfortunately, these whips were planted in May, which is outside the usual winter planting season and, unsurprisingly, the majority of the whips are now dead. Please explain how quality assurance operates for planting trees and whips along roads by contractors.

Reply:

The whips have not been planted or arranged by the County Council. They were installed by a developer as part of a new highway scheme serving a development. Prior to the area being adopted as public highway the site will be inspected; it will be for the developer to ensure that the conditions of their planning approval are met. Officers were already aware of this and they would expect any failed trees to be replaced.

The County Council's highways team always looks to plant whips in the winter months to give them the best chance of survival.

Matt Furniss
Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure
28 September 2021

Question (5) Catherine Baart (Earlswood and Reigate South):

Please can you tell me how many applications for highway trees have been approved by the county council and then the decision later reversed. How can the process for approving the positioning of highway trees be improved?

Reply:

The County Council introduced a revised policy for tree planting in April 2019. Officers have advised of two locations (in Runnymede) where trees were planted but had to be removed at the request of a statutory undertaker. There are no other sites Officers are aware of.

To improve the level of service, specific training is being undertaken to ensure there is a consistent level of service across the County. For any site not approved, Officers have been asked to provide full reasons in future. The team are currently recruiting a new Environmental Officer post to support this important work and help to speed up the assessment of new planting requests.

Matt Furniss
Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure
28 September 2021

Question (6) Will Forster (Woking South):

Please can the Council confirm what public transport support is available for staff and members travelling to Woodhatch Place?

Reply:

It is our desire, as part of our Greener Futures agenda, to encourage the use of public transport as much as we can, for travelling to and from all our buildings across the county, including Woodhatch Place.

Currently Redhill Train Station is connected to Woodhatch Place by bus routes 420, 424, 460 (all hourly) and 430, 435 (every 30 minutes). The bus stops for these routes are between a 4 minute and 12 minute walk from Woodhatch Place. The bus routes pass through and serve residential areas and are all stopping services between Woodhatch and Redhill.

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To understand what further provision may be required we will be running a scheme from October to Christmas to collect data on journeys between Redhill Station, Reigate Station and Woodhatch Place. Staff will be able to claim a 75% expense on a taxi journey between these sites whilst providing us with data on frequency and volume. We will be encouraging the shared use of taxis during this scheme.

The data from this scheme will inform how viable an additional public bus service might be, to also serve residents across the Woodhatch, Reigate and Redhill area. We want to make sure that any long-term provision demonstrates value for money, hence we are taking the time now to fully understand likely demand and the options available to us. It should be noted that Members are entitled to a 100% taxi expense already.

For larger events taking place at Woodhatch Place over the coming months we are looking at ad-hoc mini-bus provision on a need basis, provided by one of our not-for-profit transport providers. Again, demand for this service will inform the need for a more sustainable solution.

To support staff and Members to make informed travel planning choices, there is now a personalised travel planning service available, bookable via the intranet. This service identifies the best public travel options between any two sites, considering any accessibility requirements where needed.

Tim Oliver
Leader of the Council
28 September 2021

Question (7) Will Forster (Woking South):

Surrey County Council has previously agreed to introduce 11 rainbow crossings as a way to celebrate LGBTQ+ communities and the diversity of Surrey. Please can the Council confirm what progress has been made on this undertaking? What locations have been identified, and when will the rainbow crossings be installed?

Reply:

I am pleased to confirm that the first rainbow crossing was installed at Flambard Way in Godalming on 24 September, in advance of, and to compliment the Pride in Surrey Parade.

The County Council has worked closely with Pride in Surrey and Officers have identified ten other potential sites, one within each District. The intention is to install these over the coming year. Discussions are still to be held with the relevant Divisional Members, but once the sites are formally agreed a full list will be circulated to all Members.

Tim Oliver
Leader of the Council
28 September 2021

Question (8 & 9) Will Forster (Woking South):

Adult Social Care

What effect will the upcoming deadline for mandatory vaccination against Covid 19 have on the staffing of the Council's care homes?

What will be the knock-on effect on the Council's social care provision if private care homes experience reduced staffing levels due to the vaccination requirement?

Reply:

Adult Social Care have planned very carefully for the change in legislation and have been supported by the council's HR and Legal teams. A small number of staff employed at in-house care homes have been identified who have declined COVID-19 vaccinations.

The council has proactively engaged staff in conversation and as a result some have reconsidered. The council continues to engage with staff who have confirmed their intention not to be vaccinated and, where continuing to decline, supporting them to leave the organisation. Please be reassured that the numbers are small and will not impact on the council's ability to safely operate services.

Staffing challenges have existed throughout the pandemic and the council will continue working closely with all care home providers in Surrey, as it has done throughout the pandemic. Through the use of the Capacity Tracker, a real time system on which providers report a range of service continuity measures including staffing, our collaborative approach with our NHS partners along with Surrey Care Association has allowed us to identify any concerns early so that our support, where needed, can be targeted and proportionate. This approach has ensured that care homes in Surrey, including those operated by the council, have maintained service continuity for all Surrey residents living in care homes throughout the pandemic. While there are some care home staff working for private care home providers that have declined to be vaccinated, private providers have adopted a similar approach to the council and have been proactively working with their care staff for some time to support them to reconsider and where this is not possible leaving their organisations.

Sinead Mooney
Cabinet Member for Adults and Health
28 September 2021

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