

CABINET MEMBER OF THE MONTH: Marisa Heath
SPOTLIGHT: Environment

Climate Change

- Over the last three months, officers have been developing and finalising the Climate Change Delivery Plan (2021- 2025). This has involved comprehensive engagement with stakeholders and partners (including Boroughs and Districts) as well as residents and community groups, including two community workshops with over 100 attendees. Alongside this, we are participating in a number of events across the County with the University of Surrey, Royal Holloway University, Surrey Hills group and businesses to ensure our Delivery Plan is inclusive and partners and environmental experts are engaged. A CEH Select Committee member reference group has participated in four workshops and made several recommendations that have influenced the Delivery Plan.
- Officers have also been developing a programme which sets out how the Council will achieve net zero carbon for its operations by 2030 as well as working with consultants Atkins to develop a Greener Futures Finance Strategy, which provides costings for the net zero targets and sets out investment approaches to finance the necessary carbon reduction activity. The Council has been selected to develop a COP26 Green Zones event on 10 November focussing on decarbonising transport in a rural county which will be filmed and live streamed into the COP26 conference in Glasgow.
- Recognising the crucial role communication will have in delivering our climate change ambitions, we have been working on improving the information on the County website, engaging with residents and looking to deliver a collaborative communication strategy with the Boroughs and Districts. This is a large piece of work linked to behaviour change and we are seeking expertise as we develop this work. It will also aim to help our residents understand the changes they can make to be more sustainable and offering guidance to improving the EPC rating of their homes, choosing an electric car or other mode of greener transport, reducing waste and supporting our countryside, biodiversity and wildlife.

Waste

- We continue to see elevated levels of all wastes collected at households compared with 2019/20, however tonnages have declined slightly from those seen in 2020/21. The national shortage of HGV drivers is starting to impact garden waste collections in some districts and boroughs and is influencing Suez's ability to remove material from the waste transfer stations. Early results from a composition analysis of kerbside collected material indicates that food is still the most prevalent recyclable material left in residual waste, particularly in flatted properties and this reinforces the importance of the work that we are undertaking with the Surrey Environment Partnership to increase the capture of food waste from flatted properties.
- Our rethinking Waste Transformation Project continues to progress well, baseline data gathering for the re-procurement of our waste contract is largely complete and we are mobilising additional resources and consultancy to support the development of specifications and contracts with the aim of going out to tender for waste services in summer 2022. It is expected that contracts would be awarded in September 2023 which would allow 12 months for mobilisation.

Countryside

- Work is progressing well in the Countryside Estate; the Discovery Centre and toilets at Newlands Corner are due to be completed this autumn, new natural play equipment has been installed at Chinthurst Hill with more to come at Young Street in Norbury Park this autumn. The Norbury Park Community Forum has reconvened, and Officers will be launching a vision for Norbury Park which supports the Council's aims to support conservation and recreation at the site in October, including piloting rewilding. We are actively exploring occupants for the sawmill site. Over 235,000 trees were planted in Surrey last year and the Council was successful this month at securing £300,000 for planting an additional 34,000 trees. More broadly, we are looking at developing biodiversity and wildlife projects across the County and are keen to bring these ideas forward in due course to get the views of stakeholders.

Flooding

- Surrey experienced heavy rainfall events in June and July 2021 which caused localised surface water flooding in several areas across the county. Approximately 580 properties were reported to be flooded, with 89 of those experiencing water inside the living space of the property. Predominant locations identified as effected from these storms are the Worcester Park area in Epsom and Ewell and the Nork and Tattenhams areas in Reigate and Banstead. Ongoing investigation to confirm the number of properties affected with formal “Section 19” reports being produced for the two areas are underway. These and other investigations will produce recommendations which will be shared with Risk Management Authorities to mitigate flood risk. In areas where this is more challenging or difficult to achieve, work will take place with communities to support education and resilience to prepare and reduce the impact of future flooding. We are connecting the work we do on flooding with our Climate Change Delivery Plan and will look to drive natural flood prevention wherever possible also connecting it into the tree planting work and the work we do on the highways.

Electric Charging

- World EV Day on 9th September was marked in Surrey by the switch on of the first 10 public EV chargepoints in Waverley, as part of the LEP funded installation of 80 chargers in four boroughs. The remaining installations are planned to take place over the coming weeks and will be complete by March 2022. Only a handful of proposed locations remain contested by residents and/or councillors and negotiations are continuing to resolve matters. Work is nearing completion on a submission for On Street Residential Chargepoint funding of 75%, the remainder to be funded by Surrey. Following a funding award, we would expect installation by the end of Q1 2022. For the longer term roll out of public EV chargepoints, we have a direct procurement opportunity to engage Connected Kerb for the installation of Fast and Rapid chargers across the county. This option is being carefully appraised and the options of continuing to progress on a project-by-project basis, as now, or approving contracting a concession with Connected Kerb will be put to Cabinet December. Again, this is all being connected into other work that sits within the Climate Change Delivery Plans where we are working with the Cabinet member for Highways to look at car clubs, improved bus links and all of the work we are delivering around the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans