

CABINET – 26 APRIL 2022

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Members Questions**Question (1) Jonathan Essex (Redhill East):**

The government is consulting on amending legislation so that householders cannot be charged for bringing waste from DIY projects to recycling centres. Please confirm how much money has been charged in Surrey for DIY waste at recycling centres for each of the last 3 years. Please confirm who has use of these monies ultimately. Please also provide the cost of clearing fly-tipping on public land (to borough and district councils) over the same time period.

Reply:

The table below shows the income received in each of the last three years for the disposal of rubble, soil, plasterboard and tyres at our community recycling centres. Figures for 2021/22 are being finalised.

Year	Income received from charging
2020/21	£87K
2019/20	£235K
2018/19	£264K

The income that is received offsets the disposal costs for these materials and the administration of the charging scheme. Ultimately, it is the Surrey taxpayer that benefits from the reduced costs of disposal.

We do not hold information on the cost to district and borough councils of clearing fly tipping on public land, although the county council is responsible for disposing of any materials collected by a borough or district council. The tonnage of material recorded as fly-tipped and delivered to the county council for disposal and the approximate costs of disposal for the past three years are set out below.

Year	Tonnes of fly tipped material handled	Disposal cost
2020/21	3857 T	£474K
2019/20	3425 T	£416K
2018/19	4163 T	£477K

It is important to note that the vast majority of fly tipped material will comprise waste from commercial premises or waste that could have been disposed of at a community recycling centre free of charge.

A study undertaken by Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) in 2021 compared fly-tipping rates in authorities that had introduced charges with similar authorities that had not introduced charges. Using a regression model to control for a range of confounding variables, such as levels of deprivation, WRAP did not find evidence that charging is associated with higher rates of fly-tipping, and indeed,

concluded that it appears unlikely that there is an association between fly-tipping and charging at Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
26 April 2022

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

In the full Council meeting of July 2019 members passed a motion to work with borough and district councils to review and reduce the frequency of highway verge cuts and to assist in the management and timing of verge cuts in order to promote more wildlife habitats. Verge management contracts with the borough and district councils were originally up for renewal this month. However, in the most recent Council meeting this year, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure informed members that the council is offering a one-year extension to boroughs and districts until the final changes to their verge cutting contracts are made. As the extension is until April 2023 this means it will take, at the very least, almost 4 years to implement an agreed policy change intended to support wildlife, while biodiversity continues to decline.

Please explain the reasons for the decision to offer the extension on the contract. Please explain why the decision to extend the contracts, and therefore to delay implementation of the agreed policy, was not sent to the Communities Environment and Highways Select Committee for scrutiny before being made.

Reply:

It is not correct to imply no changes have been made since July 2019. There are a number of areas where the District & Boroughs (and the County Council where we directly manage the service) have reduced cutting to support wildlife and Officers from the County Council have continued to engage with their District & Borough peers to highlight the concern. In addition, the County Council has actively been supporting the "Blue campaign". This is a national campaign which includes promotion of not cutting verges, helping nature develop and encouraging biodiversity. Areas of verges are left uncut and can be marked by a blue plaque. Residents are encouraged to suggest areas where they think there is local support for not cutting, and if feasible this is something we support and encourage the districts and boroughs to action.

The decision was taken to extend the agreements by one year to give sufficient time to review available options and best practice. This is not a new contract period but an extension, and as there is no general policy change, it would not automatically be considered by the Select Committee. As well as supporting biodiversity, environmental maintenance is very important to the feel of a "place", and it is imperative arrangements continue to remain in place to provide this service whilst the future options are reviewed.

Matt Furniss

Question (3) Catherine Baart (Earlswood and Reigate South):

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Please report on the trial of environmentally more friendly alternatives to glyphosate-based herbicides agreed in the Council meeting of July 2019. Please provide the volume of glyphosate-based herbicides used on the council's estate for each of the last 3 years. What is the council's intention for its future use of glyphosate-based herbicides on the council's estate?

Reply:

On the Council's 10,000 acres of Countryside Estate and 3,500 km of public rights of way, less than 10 litres a year of glyphosate-based herbicides have been used for conservation and maintenance purposes in the last three years. It is usually only applied by paintbrush to individual stumps or stems are injected to reduce the need to spray.

In addition, 6 locations on the Countryside Estate and 14 on public rights of way are being treated by contractors for Japanese Knotweed. This is an invasive weed which is subject to legislative controls under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Roundup Pro-Vantage MAPP 15534, a foliar glyphosate-based spray or a stem injection glyphosate-based herbicide is used for this purpose. Given the importance of controlling this weed, glyphosate remains the main herbicide used. Specifically, 5.075 litres was used by SCC's contractors, JKW Ltd, in the last 12 months on SCC estate land to treat Japanese Knotweed. Herbicides are not used near to water or environmentally sensitive sites and the size of area under treatment is reducing year on year as treatment progresses.

On the Council's Land and Property portfolio, consisting of over 270 operational sites, glyphosate-based ecoplugs are used to kill tree stumps when regrowth is undesirable. The plugs contain a 300mg granular glyphosate compound and 437 plugs were used on SCC land between October 2020 and October 2021. During the same period, 49.4 litres of Gallup Biograde Amenity MAPP 17674, a glyphosate based product, was used for grounds maintenance purposes. Less than 50 litres was used in the preceding two years.

Glyphosate products are only on used on Council land by qualified contractors adhering to regulations set by the Government's Health and Safety Executive's for Control of Substances Harmful to Health (COSHH) and the safety guidelines provided by manufacturers. All operatives applying herbicide product are trained in PA1 and PA6, certified by City of guilds or LANTRA, as a minimum.

On the Countryside Estate land, recent alternatives trialled include the use of tree poppers to completely remove small saplings. These are a viable alternative for treating small saplings as they remove the whole plant including the root but are not

viable for treating larger trees or stumps. Volunteer groups continue to use them regularly to remove smaller vegetation.

Weed control on the highway is managed by the County Council in three districts and under agency agreements with the relevant Districts & Broughs in the others. Glyphosate is used to control injurious weeds and applied to areas of general weed growth on the highway – to maintain the street scene and help protect the infrastructure from damage. Use of Glyphosate has reduced considerably in recent years, with less weed spray treatments undertaken. As some of this work isn't undertaken directly, the exact quantity cannot be confirmed. But based on data we do have, it is estimated it is the region of 2500 litres per annum.

Officers from the Highways Service have considered various options to replace glyphosate including manual removal of weeds, citric treatment and foamstream. A substantive trial of the foamstream process was undertaken last season with overall positive results. Foamstream effectively controls unwanted vegetation by using heat in hot water, insulated by a biodegradable foam blanket. The foam stops the heat escaping to the atmosphere keeping the heat longer on the plant. In theory the process can be used in all conditions except very heavy rain (as it washes away the foam before the heat has time to take effect). It was found to be an effective but lengthy and costly solution. It takes approximately three times as long as conventional spraying and requires a significant amount of water, with the water tank needing to be filled twice per working day. Travelling to replace the water adds to the carbon footprint, as does the diesel engine required to provide heat to the water. Access can be problematic where there are parked vehicles.

Officers continue to engage with innovative solutions and learn from other authorities. We regularly consult with independent experts for advice on weed control and related issues, to ensure that we are fully up-to-date with changes in legislation, herbicide recommendations and commercial practice.

Looking to the future, the Council is currently producing a Land Management Policy which will set out how it manages its land to support ecosystem processes and maximise environmental and social outcomes. Whilst the Council already minimises its use of glyphosate, the policy will consider the use of alternative herbicides and set out plans for future use. This is due to be considered by the Council's Cabinet in the autumn.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
26 April 2022

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

Residents of Surrey travelling to Woodhatch Place by public transport to attend meetings – for example Home to School transport appeals – have to walk from the

Angel bus stop (6 minutes) or Sandhills (8 minutes). County council staff are provided with a shuttle bus to and from Woodhatch Place itself.

Please give the current estimated annual cost of providing the shuttle bus for staff. Please provide data on the number of staff using the shuttlebus. Please explain why Surrey residents using public transport to travel to Woodhatch Place from Reigate or Redhill stations cannot use the shuttlebus, alongside staff?

Reply:

In line with the opening up of our offices following the pandemic, the shuttle bus started operation in late February 2022, connecting Woodhatch Place with Reigate and Redhill Station. The bus has been commissioned to promote use of public transport and primarily to give staff the opportunity to travel to Woodhatch by train. There are many staff who are based in the surrounding area of Kingston because of the location of our previous County Hall building. Currently the bus is carrying between 50 and 75 people per week and this number will grow as more staff make use of our office buildings following the pandemic. We will also now be starting to promote free use of the bus to residents who have an appointment at Woodhatch Place.

The bus costs £320 per day and is run by East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership. A commercial alternative would have cost in the region of £500 per day.

As part of the overall Agile Office Estate Strategy, there will be more public facing services operating out of the building from the start of January 2023. In anticipation, we are currently looking at more sustainable and cost-effective public transport options to link Woodhatch Place with the surrounding area.

Tim Oliver
Leader of the Council
26 April 2022

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

According to last month's Council meeting, based on current methods of data collection about one third of Education Health and Care Plans, for children with additional needs in Surrey are currently not amended within statutory timescales by the county council. This frequently causes much anxiety and stress for the families of children with additional needs.

What is the county council's target for the percentage of EHC plans it will amend in accordance with statutory deadlines from now on, and what is the timescale for achieving this target? Will additional staffing be required to achieve the target and then maintain meeting the statutory deadlines?

Reply:

The statutory guidance detailed in the current Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) code of practice: 0-25 sets out clearly the timeframes for reviewing EHCPs and this is the measure that Surrey County Council uses to ensure that we are

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working towards full compliance with the statutory requirements. A recent High Court ruling has provided additional clarity to confirm the timescales relating to the annual review process, which may have been interpreted in different ways by local authorities and legal practitioners across the country. Currently, our data confirms that we have 68% of annual reviews that are either up to date or due this month.

This equates to over 8,000 timely annual reviews of the circa 12,000 plans currently maintained. However, the timely completion rate is significantly higher for children who are about to move to a new phase of education, and it is important that these reviews are timely as the majority will lead to a change in the ECHP as children move into a new provision. The Primary/Secondary Key Stage transfer annual review completion rate within the statutory timescales is 88%. The Secondary /Post 16 transfer annual review completion rate is 90% on time. This ensures that children and young people do move into their next educational phase with an updated plan matching their needs to their new provision.

Schools are responsible for convening an annual review to use this as an opportunity to actively monitor a child's or young person's progress towards their outcomes and longer term aspirations. The local authority has the responsibility to ensure that the reviews take place, and based on the outcome of the review, determine if there is a change required to the plan, such as a change in the description of the child's need, provision required or proposed outcomes. Based on the review, the local authority may maintain the plan unchanged, it may issue an updated plan or cease the plan.

We are working toward full compliance with these statutory timescales. We recognise that we have not yet reached that target and understand that for families where a plan requires changing, a delay can be stressful. There is currently a review of SEN systems and processes to look at how efficiencies can be found in the annual review process which will lead to a great percentage of annual reviews completed on time and determine if any further resources are required. While we make these improvements, the SEN teams are ensuring annual reviews for our most vulnerable children, such as children in care or children missing education, and children at key stage transfers are updated as a priority.

Denise Turner-Stewart
Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
26 April 2022

Question (6) Lance Spencer (Goldsworth East and Horsell Village):

The "Home to School Transport Consultation" that has recently been run is aimed at improving the efficiency of these services and reducing the costs.

The recently agreed budget shows a budget efficiency saving in financial year 2022/23 of £1.4 million in the schools transport budget. How much of these savings will come from the elements being considered in the consultation?

It is clear that significant reductions in support for Home to School transport will further increase the number of appeals coming through to the Members Appeals Panel. The most recent Appeals Panel was dealing with appeals that had started as far back as

August 2021. What plans are there to deal with the increased level of appeals that will inevitably arise?

Reply:

The Home to School Travel Assistant Policy (H2STA) Policy sets out the way in which the Council discharges its statutory and discretionary powers and responsibilities in relation to school and college transport assistance available for pupils aged up to 25 years of age, both with and without additional needs. The changes proposed will ensure that the County Council continues to support those who most need help, manage increasing costs and demand within the overall resources available and increase the options for children and young people who qualify for H2STA, encouraging environmentally friendly travel and support independent travel as a means of preparing young people for adulthood. Surrey's Home to School Travel Assistance Policy will support delivery of the £1.4m efficiencies required in the Council's Financial Plan.

Proposed changes to the appeals process is one of the changes recommended in the updated policy. This will allow appeals to be heard more rapidly and regularly than is currently the case. Ensuring a wider pool of panel members in line with the proposal will mean that appeals can be quorate and proceed in cases of ill health or lack of availability of councillors.

Denise Turner-Stewart
Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
26 April 2022

Question (7) Lance Spencer (Goldsworth East and Horsell Village):

It is noted that the Local transport Plan 4, which is now called the Surrey Transport Plan, will be going to Cabinet for approval in May 2022 instead of the previously stated December 2021.

Why was the plan delayed in going to Cabinet, considering it is a key part of the Greener Futures Delivery Plan?

Is the Cabinet member for Transport concerned that many of the questions in the consultation had fewer than 300 responses, which really does call into question the ability of Surrey County Council to gain traction and get real engagement with communities on key projects and transformations?

Reply:

Consultation on the Surrey Transport Plan (LTP4) was first conducted from July to October 2021, meeting the Council's statutory obligations set out in the Local Transport Act 2008 and the Transport Act 2000. Given the significant engagement and the socialisation of LTP4 during this period through the wider Greener Futures engagement plan, there were 1,437 contributions from 549 different respondents received, coupled with 8,355 visits to the Common Place web-based engagement

platform. Benchmarking of other Local Authorities revealed similar levels of responses to similar policy-based consultations during lockdown conditions over the same period.

However, post-consultation analysis highlighted that certain demographic groups, including younger people, women, disabled people and businesses had not responded in sufficient numbers to gauge their views on the Plan from the original consultation, which was meant to be reporting to Cabinet in December 2021. As the Council has prioritised improving the way in which we engage with our communities, the decision was taken to postpone the Cabinet's consideration of the Plan and the consultation to allow for further engagement, and specifically, a more demographically targeted engagement with a wider range of Surrey residents.

This additional consultation was conducted using a range of engagement techniques including online, postal and face to face interactions, plus stakeholder interviews. A total of 1,762 people took part, and critically, form a representative sample of the county's population. Many were also new to engaging with the Council, with some requesting feedback and/or ongoing involvement. Overall, the responses received were in line with those of others who had commented in the initial consultation process; however, the results provide the Council with a richer picture of how we might engage with different demographic groups in implementing the aims of the LTP4.

The research reveals high levels of support for tackling climate change across the wide range of participants. There is also support for the transport hierarchy, and there is clearly an awareness that reducing carbon will require a mix of both popular and unpopular policies, although inevitably there is a tendency to favour the former.

Further engagement and consultation will naturally take place with communities as and when specific initiatives are progressed. Experience shows that this is when greater responses from the community are generated on more locally specific proposals.

Matt Furniss
Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure
26 April 2022

Question (8) Lance Spencer (Goldsworth East and Horsell Village):

The Public Accounts Committee said that there is 'no reliable estimate of what the process of implementing the net zero policy is actually likely to cost British consumers, households, businesses or government itself'.

They said that certainty for business and consumers is critical and have noted repeatedly in recent reports that the government has 'too often pursued stop-start strategies'.

According to the committee, this undermines confidence for business, investors and consumers in committing to measures which would reduce carbon emissions, especially when some green alternatives are still significantly more expensive than current options.

To deliver the Greener Futures Delivery Plan in Surrey it is estimated a total of £3.4 - £4.2bn is required by 2025 to ensure that we are on track to deliver both the 2030 and 2050 targets.

In the absence of clear direction and associated funding from Central Government, what alternative funding approaches is the Cabinet Member looking at to create the funding required to deliver the plans?

Reply:

The first Greener Futures Finance Strategy (2021) included an evidence-based, estimated cost based on current knowledge, data and modelling for the net zero pathways set out in Surrey's 2050 Climate Change Delivery Plan 2021-25 and SCC's 2030 target. A more comprehensive second version of the Strategy will be completed by end of this financial year.

The capital costs of the Council's 2030 net zero carbon programme are estimated to be between £65m and £71m. It is expected that the capital costs will be offset over the lifetime of the measures through operational energy savings (resulting from energy efficiency measures within buildings and fuel reduction from switching the Council's fleet to EV) as well as energy generated by renewable energy installations (from roof mounted solar and larger ground mounted solar arrays). The cost to the Council will be reduced by the attraction of grant funding; for instance, to date £4.3m has currently been secured through the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund (PSDF). A further 31 buildings attracting potentially £16.6m have been identified and this is an ongoing process.

The Greener Future Finance Strategy also included the estimated costs required to achieve the county's carbon reduction target by 2025, which, as referenced by Councillor Spencer, is in the region of £3.4bn to £4.2 bn. While it is important to note that the majority of this cost will fall to the consumer, there is a role for the Council to facilitate the financial mechanisms and policy drivers at a local level to support partners, residents, businesses etc to make the necessary changes to their homes, buildings and transport, as well as lobbying Government to put in place financial mechanisms and policies at a national level. This is a key element of the Greener Futures Lobbying Strategy.

To that end, the Council is positioning ourselves to be able to draw in funding from public, community and private sector investors. In the last two years, the Council has drawn in £65m grant funding for programmes which will result in carbon reduction including active travel schemes, local cycling and walking infrastructure plans (LCWIPs) and the decarbonisation of low income housing. To maximise these external funding opportunities, we are continually developing a pipeline of investment ready projects.

In addition, the Council is exploring a number of new finance mechanisms and a framework to generate investment opportunities and develop a range of co-benefits to unlock decarbonisation investment across agendas, organisations and sectors. This includes;

- Launching a support programme to enable community groups to develop their own local energy schemes which could include a community energy investment fund or green bond mechanism harnessing both public and residents' money;
- Exploring the development of interest-free loans and a revolving loan fund for decarbonisation measures for schools and private sector landlords;
- Launching a roof top solar scheme to offer residents access to solar PV at a subsidised rate
- Exploring the development of a renewables investment fund open to local authority partners to develop renewables on non public sector land, brownfield sites and industrial estates in partnership with business, land owners
- Exploring the developing a carbon offset and biodiversity nature recovery fund – linking climate, carbon and nature

With regard to private sector finance, the Council has recently been chosen to represent the Enterprise M3 LEP area in a South East Energy Hub funded programme to explore the development of a Net Zero Development Vehicle. The concept is that the Vehicle will be a service that connects private sector lenders, investors and financial institutions to a pipeline of bankable net zero and clean growth investments from the public sector. Although the work is still in its infancy, there are huge opportunities to develop an approach which aligns with the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund.

Finally, the Council has now recruited a Carbon Economics Programme Manager, who will be leading on this work and is developing a longer-term Greener Futures Finance Strategy, which will be completed by the end of this financial year.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
26 April 2022