

CABINET – 24 SEPTEMBER 2013

ITEM 4(b) - PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Public Questions

Question (1) from Mr Mike Giles, Chairman Westhumble Residents' Association

In answer to a question on costs, Surriya Subramaniam answered that "Surrey County Council has not received, nor will receive, payment from any partners in relation to the Prudential RideLondon-Surrey for closure of the roads on 4 August 2013. The event is being run in Surrey on the basis that it will be delivered at zero cost to local residents, with officer time being provided to liaise with the event organiser and ensure that delivery is safe and in the best interests of the residents and businesses of Surrey. The event organiser will be charged for costs relating to any road works over and above the road maintenance programme, and costs associated with preparation of the Traffic Orders for closing the roads."

If the event organisers pay no other charges than those mentioned, could SCC please clarify how "zero cost to local residents" can be achieved, considering the time and effort involved in liaison, preparation and placing of signage prior to the event plus subsequent removal, erection and removal of barriers, policing on the day, etc., etc., both in relation to this year's event on 4 August and over the next five years of proposed Ride London events, or in relation to other cycling events in the area which may require council involvement, and to arrive at any conclusion, has a cost/benefit analysis been conducted and made available for public scrutiny?

Question (2) from Mr Peter Crews

Who gave final approval to the draft minutes of the Cabinet Meeting on 23/7/13 before those minutes were published on the Council's web site?

Question (3) from Ms Jenny Desoutter

Regarding Road Closure Policy

In answer to my previous question (25 June 2013), you stated that the Ride London cycle event of 4 August 2013 was good for business, and you acknowledged that the closure of roads, and removal of the civil rights of movement along public highways would disrupt the lives of "tens of thousands" of people. You stated that an impact assessment had been done, and you also gave assurances that emergency services would be allowed access.

In actual fact, many legitimate Surrey businesses have lost money, and charities such as Wildlife Aid were affected. Also, in the event, several cases have occurred in which emergency vehicles were not allowed immediate access, aggravating risk. Many instances of suffering, hardship, loss of income and inconvenience to citizens' lawful rights to pursue their own lives, for example to return to their homes from hospital or from holidays, or to get to work, to visit sick relatives, or to attend family functions, have also been recorded. Many workers were "laid off" as businesses had to close, and lost money.

It was evident from the outset that through preventing lawful right of movement, and access to the highways infrastructure of the county over such a wide area, not only loss of freedom, and loss of revenue, but also loss of life could be precipitated where essential travel is disrupted. Not everything in life can be pre-planned around a particular event. Risk is increased where swift, flexible responses are impeded.

My question relates to your policy of imposing widespread, day-long road closures throughout the county for a non-essential sporting event, and issues raised by unintended outcomes. For clarity it is sub-divided into 4 parts:

1. Since 4 August 2013 was a prime holiday Sunday when many rural businesses such as pubs, and golf clubs, would expect to have good takings, and families spend money going out for the day, in making their judgements, have SCC ascertained, and taken into account, the extent of loss of revenue to private businesses in Surrey, due to inaccessibility because of road closures sanctioned by SCC, on 4 August 2013, and if so can SCC state what is the total sum in financial terms (in figures) lost to private businesses in Surrey on that day, and how many Surrey workers lost income on that day because of the road closures? If not when will this figure be available?
2. In the light of the many untoward incidents in Surrey which have been reported in the public domain (for example in The Surrey Advertiser, The Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser, and The Telegraph) - can SCC now state a) how many untoward incidents involving medical and similar emergencies occurred throughout Surrey due to road closures on that day, and b) how many notifications of objection and difficulty you have, to this date, either had expressed directly to you through letter, email or other, from individuals or organisations, including any you have become aware of through discussion or through the press or through the network of the internet, for example through the online petition called Stop Surrey becoming a Race Track?
3. Given that you have stated publicly that you would ensure that "*those who needed to get through*" would be able to have access, and given the issues surrounding prevention of access even to emergency services, can you state clearly HOW the need for access - bearing in mind that had it not been for SCC's decision to allow large-scale, day-long closures of roads all citizens could have made their own decisions regarding need to travel, and emergency services would have followed normal protocols - is judged, by whom these judgements are made; and by what legal right, and in the light of what training those who are making the judgements are empowered to do so?
4. How do these figures compare with those cited in the post Olympic Cost Benefit Analysis Report ("*public response to the Olympics had been very positive, with over 500 residents providing feedback. Of these 500 responses only 4 were complaints*" - I quote from the meeting of the Communities Select Committee, 16 January 2013, item 74/13). And are the responses and outcomes arising from the 4 August event in line with the impact assessment you had commissioned, or do they give rise to concerns you had failed to anticipate, and suggest that it is time to review a policy which, without due diligence, places the lives, freedom and safety of Surrey residents in a position of increased dependency and risk?

Question (4) from Mr Allen Widdowson

Children throughout Elmbridge Borough are finding it harder and harder to secure places at Local Schools within the Borough. This is particularly the case for children who live close to the borders of Kingston and Epsom.

At the Surrey CC meeting 23 April 2013 Linda Kemeny updated the Council on plans for an expansion of Esher High, adding a further 30 places in 2015. And in the light of this the Council was reviewing the Esher High's catchment area for 2015 to ensure that additional places are allocated fairly. These plans should go some way to alleviate the pressure in some parts of the Borough, particularly in KT10 (Claygate).

Given the recent attempt to vary admissions criteria at Hinchley Wood to give priority to applications from both KT10 (Claygate) and KT7 (Thames Ditton) over those from Long Ditton, Elmbridge, KT6. What assurance can the Council provide that action will be taken to ensure that ALL Elmbridge children will have an equal and fair opportunity to access local secondary schools, within the Borough, before any more children are placed at a significant disadvantage.