

## CABINET – 25 OCTOBER 2022

## PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Public Questions**Question (1): Malcolm Robertson**

Over the years I have had several discussions with Surrey officers and Members over whether the incinerator and anaerobic digester at Charlton Lane, Shepperton are value for money.

Both processes have now been in operation for some time, so would you please tell me - from the date of the start of each operation (please specify), how much electricity has been generated by each process, the quantity of waste supplied to each plant, how much gasoil has been used in each case, together with the quantities of materials used for filtration and to prevent pollution.

**Reply:**

The Eco Park development at Charlton Lane is an important contributor to meeting the strategic waste objectives of Surrey County Council as set out in the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy. The anaerobic digester and gasifier at the Eco Park treat waste which would otherwise be landfilled (or incinerated elsewhere) and both facilities generate electricity in the process.

As well as avoiding landfill, the Eco Park generates enough electricity to power 4000 homes, and the Council is also benefitting from the sale of electricity. Also, now that the Eco Park is fully operational, the Council's contractor, Suez, will be seeking to re-engage with the local community to support positive reuse and recycling initiatives and sponsor community events and ensure open and transparent engagement with the local community and local community representatives.

In term of your specific requests for information, the most readily available information we have is for the period 3 January 2022 to 31 August 2022 as follows:

Gasifier item	Quantity
Tonnes of waste into Pre treatment	26,595T
Tonnes of RDF into gasifier	18,322T
Electricity generated	10,824 MWh
Electricity exported	5,835 MWh
Rate of Urea usage	10.05 Kg per tonne of RDF
Rate of lime usage	6.48 Kg per tonne of RDF

Anaerobic digester item	Quantity
Tonnes of food waste received	19,271T
Electricity generated	7,314 MWh
Electricity exported	4,823 MWh

Reagent usage

Not available

During this period 670,466 Litres of fuel oil were used for both the anaerobic digestion back up boiler and for start-up of the gasification plant. There is no separate metering and therefore it is not possible to split usage between each facility.

**Natalie Bramhall**  
**Cabinet Member for Property and Waste**  
**25 October 2022**

**Question (2): Jenny Desoutter**

The importance of trees for climate health and biodiversity is undisputed yet many species of UK trees are facing unprecedented threats from drought and disease, locally in particular from ash dieback.

Dealing with ash dieback is often represented as being primarily a health and safety issue for humans, whereas in fact, given that ash trees make up approximately 20% of our tree cover, it is primarily a massive calamity for climate change and biodiversity: it will take a long time before even 1.2 million newly-planted trees can even begin to restore tree cover to former levels, let alone increase carbon capture.

SCC's ash dieback programme is scheduled to start this autumn. Can SCC assure us that in planning to address any perceived potential Safety issues posed by ash dieback, you will adopt a sensitive and proportionate approach which prioritises climate health and protection of biodiversity; and that you will

a) seek to conserve diminishing wildlife habitat and biodiversity in the face of this natural tree calamity by undertaking meaningful ecological assessments prior to any felling to minimise adverse impacts on associated species and ecological disturbance; and

b) appropriately and transparently balance potential short-term risk to individual humans - or their property - (the Tree safety Council assess risk of accident to humans from trees as 1 in 20 million, or 1 in 10 million in a public place) against longer-term certain benefits to the environment from retaining established, functioning trees for as long as possible, even if living with disease, and in particular by avoiding compounding the release of carbon through use of heavy machinery which not only removes affected trees, but also results in further counterproductive carbon release through soil disturbance and damage to ancillary undergrowth?

**Reply:**

Ash Dieback on Highways

The effect of ash dieback is significant and far reaching. Ash mortality is already having an impact on highway management across Surrey, and we are working extremely hard to keep the roads safe. However, we also recognise the impact that ash dieback and the associated loss of habitat is having on our ecosystem services, including potential disturbance to the carbon stock and we have amended our approach to ensure it is focused on low intervention and clear steps before any decision making on removal of trees.

By adopting this low intervention tree policy, the very nature of the way we manage trees on the highway seeks to minimise any felling. This ensures that we are targeting individual trees and groups which are at the highest risk of failure and allows for the retention of ash trees which are less hazardous. It should be noted that the number of trees being removed this year as part of the ash dieback programme is estimated to be just 0.0027% of the overall number of trees on the highway network.

Where infected trees can be left in situ without risk to the highway they will be allowed to decay, providing valuable standing and ground level deadwood habitat and locking carbon back into the soil. This has the added benefit of reducing the carbon footprint and cost of SCC Highways' tree management service. We understand that it is better to leave a tree to decay than to transport machinery to cut it down and remove it.

Any net change to the carbon flux will depend largely on the rate of natural regeneration, as vegetation regrows in place of the removed ash tree. Succession of natural regeneration will also provide an opportunity for diverse habitat creation and linkages. However, as noted above, we are also working with the Natural Capital team to identify planting opportunities on the highway network for additional trees.

Where trees do have to be removed, we commit to being extremely cautious to ensure that protected species are not harmed and that any impact to surrounding habitat is minimised. The operations have been timed so that the bulk of work can be carried out during the winter, outside of the nesting season. Notwithstanding this, all our contractors are aware of the legislation protecting wildlife and careful checks are made both prior to and during felling operations to ensure that protected species are not harmed.

### Ash Dieback in the Countryside Estate

Ash Dieback Disease is wide spread across the Council's Countryside Estate and has significantly increased the risk to public from tree failure. SCC has a legal obligation to safeguard the public visiting our sites and manage the risk resulting from Ash Dieback appropriately.

All areas of our Countryside Estate with significant numbers of Ash have been surveyed by qualified arboriculturists and recommended interventions have been made that take into account a range of issues, including the potential impacts on habitats and species. For all work:

- Appropriate ecological surveys to be undertaken to identify protected and vulnerable species and assess potential negative impacts from tree safety work. The Council is in the process of recruiting an additional member of staff to undertake ecological surveys and support our work programmes.
- There will be regular liaison with Natural England and the Forestry Commission on the tree safety work programme to gain any necessary consents required for particular sites and packages of work, but also to ensure any other issues that might not be apparent are picked up.
- A strong partnership approach will be taken with our contractors to establish the most sensitive way to undertake work

- There will be high level officer sign off before work begins.

**Marisa Heath**  
**Cabinet Member for Environment**  
**25 October 2022**

**Question (3): Paul Kennedy**

Further to the email from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety serving notice that Surrey County Council would be withdrawing from local community engagement through its Local and Joint Committees in Surrey boroughs and districts, please can you confirm:

- a) the identities and contact details of the new Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) who we have been informed are now active across the county and working closely with communities to co-ordinate Surrey County Council's work more coherently around local geographies and help communities set their own priorities;
- b) whether, and if so where, Surrey County Council will be maintaining a public register of the CLOs' activities as well as the exercise of county councillors' delegated decisions and annual funding allocations, so that these can be effectively scrutinised by the public and secure the Cabinet Member's hoped-for strengthening of Surrey County Council's relationship with its residents and partners?

**Reply:**

A Community Link Officer (CLO) has been aligned to each District and Borough to work with local communities. The CLOs will initially focus their time in the 21 key neighbourhoods identified by the Health and Wellbeing Board. CLOs will work closely with County Councillors, District and Borough Officers and wider partners to develop deeper conversations with our communities, to understand their priorities and to help them to shape their local areas. As part of this new approach to community engagement, District and Borough councillors are encouraged to work with their County Councillor. To further support this work, public facing webpages are being developed and will be launched shortly with all CLO contact details.

The council is committed to ensuring that decisions taken and allocations made are done transparently and publicly reported through appropriate and agreed channels. This includes our website. CLOs will continue to discuss with residents and partners how best to share information on engagement work happening locally.

**Denise Turner-Stewart**  
**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety**  
**25 October 2022**