

CABINET – 29 NOVEMBER 2022**PROCEDURAL MATTERS****Public Questions****Question (1): Paul Kennedy**

On Monday 21 November, Surrey's Police and Crime Panel considered Surrey Police's "Call it Out" survey of over 5,000 women's perception of safety across Surrey, which highlighted women's concerns about the lack of street lighting late at night in town centres, where just 17% of women feel safe. A number of Panel members expressed their frustration at the bureaucratic hurdles, and confusion over the apparent requirement for police support, before they can apply to reverse Surrey County Council's decision to switch off street lighting in their areas.

Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner said she shared Panel members' frustration, and emphasised that decisions to reinstate street lighting to address residents' concerns lie with Surrey County Council not Surrey Police, and Surrey County Council should not impose a requirement for police support as an extra layer of bureaucracy to hide behind. She called on all Panel members to raise their and her concerns about the lack of clarity on this with the Leader and Cabinet of Surrey County Council.

As Mole Valley's representative on the Police and Crime Panel, I would like to ask the Leader and Cabinet, will you please review Surrey County Council's approach to street lighting in the light of the "Call It Out" survey, and remove the existing bureaucratic and discriminatory restrictions, including the purported requirement for police support, which prevent street lighting from being reinstated where women and other vulnerable residents feel unsafe?

Reply:

The County Council always takes resident safety seriously, and much work was undertaken prior to the introduction of the part-night lighting, in order to ensure it was introduced in a manner consistent with this need to maintain the safety of our communities. Part-night lighting is not universal across the county and only applies to a limited number of roads from 1am. All town centres are excluded from the scheme, as are busy roads.

When the changes were first introduced, there were several requests for lights to be switched back on, and as a result of this feedback, some minor policy changes were made – such as ensuring all lights near and around railway stations stay on until local rail services finish. The process for considering further requests was agreed with Surrey Police and helped to ensure a consistent approach is applied across the County.

The benefits of part night lighting are not limited to saving the Surrey taxpayer money in energy costs; in fact, it plays a role in contributing to our wider Greener Futures

ambitions. In 2021/22, the scheme saved 268 tonnes of carbon dioxide, the equivalent emissions estimated from over 370 average homes. The County Council will always look at developments in the industry and where they will benefit our residents, embrace these. For example, we are nearing completion of our LED conversion, upgrading approximately 90,000 streetlights to the latest and most efficient technology.

Your comments attributed to the Surrey Police & Crime Commissioner are noted, and I will ask that Officers engage with her direct to better understand any frustrations.

Kevin Deanus
Cabinet Member for Highways and Community Resilience
29 November 2022

Question (2): Julia Dickinson

Would Surrey County Council be prepared to follow councils like Cambridge in protecting our chalk springs and streams and if so, within whose portfolio would it fall please?

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/chalk-streams>

Reply:

Thank you for this opportunity to highlight the importance of Surrey's river network and the very special characteristics of chalk streams and the pressures they face. This work falls within the Environment Portfolio.

In Surrey, chalk streams are found in the North Downs, or flow in from neighbouring Hampshire and include parts of the River Mole, the Tilling Bourne west of Guildford and the River Wey through Farnham. Chalk streams are incredibly rare aquatic habitats, and the south of England is home to 85% of the world's total. In healthy condition, they have crystal clear waters and support high biodiversity and their aquifers supply water to thousands of Surrey residents, when extracted at sustainable rates.

However, chalk streams are being adversely affected by several factors. These include unsustainable abstraction levels from aquifers meaning reduced flow volumes, pollution from agricultural runoff and nutrient enriched water from sewage works (even after currently required levels of treatment occur) and the legacy of physical channel modifications. Added to this, they are increasingly under pressure from climate change resulting in drier summer periods.

Following new legislation in the Environment Act, the Council will be producing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Surrey in conjunction with a wide variety of partners across Surrey. Through this, the Council will identify the measures necessary to support healthy rivers and will certainly draw on the great work undertaken in Cambridge concerning chalk streams. This also links to our climate change adaptation and mitigation planning, where the protection, improvement and increased use of green and blue infrastructure is a key part of action on climate change.

Current work Surrey County Council are already involved in includes:

- the river Catchment Partnerships working across Surrey to identify and tackle catchment related issues, such as those mentioned above, in particular on the Mole and the Wey. The Partnerships include Environment Agency, Surrey Wildlife Trust, the County Council, borough and district councils, private land owners and water companies
- co-ordinating conservation volunteering work to manage habitats for biodiversity and water sustainability, for example the Downlands Partnership and Lower Mole Partnership restore and manage chalk downland habitats and are reviving the Rye brook in Ashted.
- checking that new major developments adequately treat polluted runoff and control runoff rates by using Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). This also includes regulating works on smaller 'ordinary watercourses' preventing the loss of open watercourses, which provide greater biodiversity, amenity and water quality benefits over piped systems.
- working with the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is engaging farmers and other landowners in environmentally sensitive farming and nature- based solutions such as slowing down water flows to tackle both flooding and drought.

The council welcomes the recently launched call to land owners and river enthusiasts to help identify all chalk streams via the South East Rivers Trust mapping initiative and will consider its own land holdings in relation to this. [Help us identify all South East chalk streams - South East Rivers Trust](https://www.southeastriverstrust.org/help-us-identify-all-south-east-chalk-streams/) (<https://www.southeastriverstrust.org/help-us-identify-all-south-east-chalk-streams/>)

And finally, returning to water abstraction, let's remember that as residents and businesses, we can all do our bit for the health of our rivers and streams by reducing our water use. This is most obviously important in summer, but by continuing water saving habits into winter, this helps reduce demand on aquifers and reservoirs, aiding recovery ahead of next summer.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
29 November 2022

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