

CABINET – 26 SEPTEMBER 2023**PROCEDURAL MATTERS****Members Questions****Question (1) Catherine Baart**

What annual attrition rate is assumed by Ringway for temporary, reusable metal road signs. How does this compare to other counties? What annual cost is assumed for provision of such signs by Ringway, which is passed on in the contract with SCC, and what downward pressures exist to reuse signs rather than commission new ones?

Reply:

Ringway do not measure the attrition rate of temporary metal road signs; however, they would expect to replace less than 15% of these types of signs each year due to normal wear and tear, or damage. This would also be the assumption for other similar local authority contracts.

There is no direct relationship between the cost of the provision of signs to Ringway and the costs incurred by Surrey. The provision of temporary traffic management is charged via the agreed schedule of rates that form part of the contract between Ringway and Surrey CC, so no direct costs are passed on with regards to signs in isolation.

Ringway do use a few different sign types and reuse them until they have reached the end of their serviceable condition. When a sign reaches the end of its serviceable life, the sign is recovered into our depots for recycling.

Kevin Deanus**Cabinet Member for Highways and Community Resilience****26 September 2023****Question (2) Catherine Baart**

Please explain whether a “designated conservation verge” is the same as a Blue Heart verge. Please can the list of Blue Heart verges/ conservation verges be published on the council’s website, so members of the public know where they are. How are contractors informed about BH/conservation verges in their area and what sanctions are available if such verges are accidentally mown along with none-BH verges?

Reply:

Designated conservation verges normally make up part of the rural verge network where a conscious decision has been made to not cut the grass. These areas may be enhanced through seeding wildflowers and or other initiatives that are promoted by our Greener Futures team. In the main, these verges are not currently signed. Blue heart verges are usually not quite so extensive in size, may form part of an urban

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verge and in general have been promoted by residents. Many Blue heart verges are currently signed by wooden blue plaques created by residents. Small signs are also being fabricated by the County Council and will be erected this autumn to support highlighting these areas to the public and contractors. In addition, we will look into the feasibility of making this information more publicly accessible and recorded in the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Our contractors are provided maps of where to cut. If an area is designated a blue heart or conservation verge, these maps will be updated to reflect this. The proposed signs will also act as a reminder on site for the grass cutters. None of our current contractors would deliberately cut areas where they shouldn't, but if mistakes happen, they are investigated, and additional training or other measures will be offered to minimise the risk of repeating it. Should any contractor wilfully or repeatedly ignore the measures needed to protect these sites, we would look to end any contractual relationship.

Kevin Deanus
Cabinet Member for Highways and Community Resilience
26 September 2023

Question (3) Catherine Baart

What percentage of bus stops are damaged in Surrey? How many do not have real time bus information screens? How many should be shelters but are just poles? We have a Task and Finish group for Surrey streets – does the state of bus stops need a Task and Finish group too?

Reply:

There are circa 6,500 bus stops located in Surrey. Only a very small percentage (less than 0.25%) have any element of damage to the bus stop pole, flag, timetable case or clearway restriction plate. If any of these do become damaged, they are repaired, or if beyond repair replaced. There is therefore no backlog of bus stop repairs, noting that Members and residents can report damage to bus stops using the well-established 'highways' reporting channels available to everyone.

There are circa 1,000 passenger waiting (bus) shelters at bus stops in Surrey. The provision of bus shelters is slightly more complex, as they are provided by several bodies, including the County Council, Borough and Districts Councils (often through long term advertising contracts), Parish and Town Councils, developers, as well Transport for London on some cross boundary routes. The Council maintains the bus shelters that it owns, and if officers see or are notified of damage to a bus shelter that is not the County Council's, we ensure that the 'owner' is informed so that they can repair it.

If a request is made for a new shelter where none exists at present, we will assess passenger demand and whether there is sufficient space available to install a bus shelter, alongside how it might be funded. Funding sources include developer

funding, Community Infrastructure Levy and external funding. Local Member allocations are also a potential funding source.

There are circa 500 Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) displays in Surrey. The vast majority of these are at bus stops, helping to support passengers make more informed travel choices. Some RTPI displays are also located in busy shopping areas and at train stations, such as Wolsey Place shopping centre in Woking town centre and at the town's busy railway station.

The Council has already agreed to invest significant sums of money to improve the public transport offer to residents, working in partnership with the bus industry. This includes a £49m investment to support our Climate Change Delivery Plan objectives through an investment in more zero emission buses and minibuses, more RTPI and more bus improvement and priority measures. This serves to demonstrate the Council's commitment to improving public transport. Within this programme, we are specifically investing £1.4m to deliver up to another 150 RTPI displays in Surrey. This approach was supported in the Future Bus Service Network Review public and stakeholder consultation that ran from 3 November 2022 to 6 January 2023, and was subsequently endorsed by Cabinet on 28 March this year.

Given there is no evidence of widespread damage to bus stops, no maintenance backlog, alongside an agreed programme of investment that includes RTPI, I don't believe this warrants a specific Task and Finish Group.

Matt Furniss

Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth

26 September 2023

Question (4) Catherine Powell

1. Whilst the investment in new children's homes is welcome, the need for more places is still outstripping what is available. The costs of social care placements are rapidly rising, with a significant overspend against the budget already forecast for this financial year and increasing pressures going forward.
 - A. How are the proceeds from the sale of assets such as the former children's home Karibu in Epsom being allocated? Are they being used to buy land and property to address areas of increasing capacity need, such as for more children's homes?
 - B. How is the land available within the SCC portfolio allocated for development to address capacity requirements, for example the decisions between allocation for children's homes versus more SEND provision?
 - C. Is there a full list of SCC assets which has been reviewed to determine which assets have no potential for use to address SCC land requirements, for example Sunnyridge and Woodside in Capel? What is the process for deciding

which assets to sell, and what is the priority criteria and timescale for disposing of these?

Reply:

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- A. The Council has committed significant capital support to the development of in-house provision but is also mindful of the need to progress at a pace which can lead to actual placements for children. Accommodation is an important strand but workforce in the Children's homes sector is a significant challenge, and this is reflected nationally, contributing to the shortages. In addition to expanding in-house provision, the Council works closely with third sector providers to encourage an increase in their provision in Surrey.

With regards to capital receipts received from the sale of assets, these are generally set against the entire capital programme to reduce overall borrowing costs which benefits the Council as a whole. Purchases or new builds are then partially funded from the general capital budgets. The current budget for new children's homes is £24.9m, this figure would far exceed any capital receipts generated by the sale of any former children's homes.

- B. In the first instance, and in line with the Council's Corporate Landlord model, a Service's particular requirements for a new building are reviewed and assessed (via a business case) to inform whether it is best value for the Council to develop or purchase a building. In the event that a building purchase best serves Service needs, then a search within the target area is carried out for suitable sites or buildings which meet Service criteria.

Council-owned assets are reviewed first, and if none prove to be suitable, then a wider search is undertaken to review available properties in the private market which fulfil Service needs.

- C. The Council's Land and Property department holds, for internal purposes, data on the Council's vacant and surplus assets; this data is comprised of key sites being marketed (or being prepped for marketing) and assets being retained pending Service or Corporate decision for use.

Where a property is declared as surplus to Service requirement, it is automatically considered for disposal. Properties marketed for disposal undergo a governance process (via Capital Programme Panel) up to Cabinet or Cabinet Member Decision before contractual terms are put in place.

Timetables for disposals are dependent on the particular asset and current market conditions and may be held back to allow added value to be secured through town planning processes.

The Sunnyridge and Woodside at Capel assets referred to, are being retained as part of the Highways A24 road alignment and improvement scheme. These assets are recommended for demolition.

Sinead Mooney
Cabinet Member for Children
and Families
26 September 2023

Natalie Bramhall
Cabinet Member for Property and Waste
26 September 2023

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