

CABINET – 30 October 2018**PROCEDURAL MATTERS****Members Questions****Question (1) Hazel Watson (Dorking Hills):**

The County Council's policy is to reduce the amount of money it provides to maintain and protect the countryside estate with a view to it being self-financing by 2021. However, the actions being taken and proposed to be taken to raise funds from the countryside estate including car parking charges, glamping and major events are opposed by significant numbers of Surrey residents as these actions and proposals are discouraging the use of the car parks and encouraging activities which are detrimental to the environment, wildlife and tranquillity of the countryside estate.

As it appears that the County Council's policy is having a detrimental effect on the countryside estate will the Cabinet reverse its policy of making the countryside estate self-financing by either ensuring that sufficient funds are provided to maintain and protect the countryside estate or consider whether another organisation would be better placed to do so?

Reply:

The Council is committed to ensuring that the Countryside Estate is conserved and enhanced for future generations to enjoy. In order to do that the Council needs to have the resources to continue to manage the Estate, which includes staff, funding for improvements to the infrastructure and habitats and to support the large number of volunteers who work on the Estate. Last year alone there were 639 new volunteers registered. The Countryside Estate consistently comes out as important to the residents and visitors to Surrey, however the Council cannot continue funding it in the way it has been done.

The Council has had to make some difficult decisions in the light of increasing demand and reduced Government funding both of which Council has lobbied the Government on. The Council has saved £540m over the last seven years and need to continue to make further savings, therefore Council need to make difficult decisions on what to fund. Making the management of the Countryside Estate self-funding will make it less susceptible to future public sector funding cuts and able to provide the wildlife haven, landscape and public access that the people of Surrey expect.

The Council agreed with Surrey Wildlife Trust that it would move the Countryside Estate to a self-funding position by 2021, making the most of income from the buildings on the Estate, permits and licences for activities and looking at new sources of funding that would reduce the reliance on the public sector. The Council decided to introduce car parking charges on the basis that they are commonly charged across the county and vehicles require specific facilities to be provided and maintained and it is not unreasonable to make a charge for their use.

The income from those charges and other income generating activities on the Estate will enable the Council to manage our countryside for future generations.

Mr Mike Goodman
Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport
30 October 2018

Question (2) Jonathan Essex (Redhill East):

Please provide details of the proposed changes to front-line service provision proposed in each of the five areas that public consultations are proposed in response to the recommendations to approve the organisation strategy, preliminary financial strategy and transformation programme included in agenda item 9 being recommended for approval today:

- i) Children's centres;
- ii) Libraries and culture;
- iii) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND);
- iv) Community recycling centres: and
- v) Concessionary travel funding.

Please could you confirm the extent to which these details were included in the two participatory budgeting workshops on October 26th and October 29th 2018?

Reply:

Members are being provided with links to the consultation materials on 29 October. To ensure as many people as possible can access the consultations and share their views, all consultations will be hosted on a single page on the Surrey County Council website. As well as all the consultations there are also links to more detailed strategy documents that support the consultations. While we encourage people to fill in the questionnaires on line, paper copies are also available in libraries and children's centres and by calling the contact centre.

The two participatory budgeting workshops in September looked at the broader budget challenges faced by the council and considered a variety of scenarios and options for change and transformation across the council's areas of responsibility. In doing so the exercise covered the service areas we are consulting on and possible future scenarios, rather than any specific proposals.

Until the consultations are completed and the feedback is analysed it is premature for any member to speculate on the outcomes resulting from the consultations. Outcomes will be agreed as part of the established processes of the county council.

**Mr David Hodge CBE
Leader of the Council
30 October 2018**