

Addendum

Council

Dear Councillor,

Council - Thursday, 30 July 2020, 7.30 pm

I enclose, for consideration at the meeting of the Council to be held on Thursday, 30 July 2020 at 7.30 pm, the following reports which were unavailable when the agenda was published.

4. Urgent business (Pages 3 - 10)

To consider an urgent report on Local Government Reorganisation.

5. Public questions (Pages 11 - 12)

To consider any questions received from members of the public under Council Procedure Rule 2.14.

6. Questions by Members (Pages 13 - 20)

To consider any questions received from members of the public under Council Procedure Rule 2.15.

For enquiries regarding this addendum;

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SIGNED OFF BY	Chief Executive
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TO	Council
DATE	30 July 2020
EXECUTIVE MEMBER	Cllr Mark Brunt, Leader of the Council

KEY DECISION REQUIRED	No
WARDS AFFECTED	All

SUBJECT	Local Government Reorganisation – July 2020
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RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>That this Council</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supports further investigation into the future structure of local government in Surrey; 2. Agrees that the Leader, supported by officers, should work with other authorities across the County to develop a proposal which is place-based, close to local communities and continues to provide residents with the support and services they need; and 3. Agrees that the Leader establishes a cross party member working group to feed into the above work
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>To ensure that Reigate & Banstead Borough Council is able to contribute to the current debate about the future shape of local government in Surrey and to ensure that the interests of the borough and its residents are represented in any proposals that are developed.</p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>The Government has confirmed its intention to publish a Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper in the Autumn, setting out plans for expanding devolution, creating more elected Mayors in England and more unitary authorities with stronger town and parish councils.</p>

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On 10 July, the Leader of Surrey County Council, Cllr Tim Oliver, wrote to Robert Jenrick MP requesting that the Secretary of State ask Surrey County Council to submit a business case setting out proposals for a single-county unitary council for Surrey.

There are clearly some merits of local government reorganisation, including economies of scale and the opportunity to combine collective resources and expertise to deliver high quality services in a cost effective way. However, these merits need to be balanced against other important considerations, including local democratic accountability, and ensuring service delivery takes account of local knowledge to maximise its effectiveness.

It is the view of senior leadership and management within this Council that the full range of options for the future of local government within Surrey should be properly investigated before any decision is made. This view is shared by other boroughs and districts in Surrey.

It is therefore recommended that this Council supports further investigation into the future structure of local government in Surrey, and agrees that the Leader (supported by officers) should work with other authorities across the county to develop proposals which are place-based, close to local authorities and continues to provide residents with the support and services they need.

Council has authority to approve this recommendation.

DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL RECOVERY WHITE PAPER

1. The Queen's speech to Parliament on 19 December 2019 announced that a forthcoming White Paper on devolution would set out the Government's plans for local government reform.
2. The Government has now confirmed its intention to publish a Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper in the Autumn, setting out plans for expanding devolution, creating more elected Mayors in England and more unitary authorities with stronger town and parish councils.
3. At the Local Government Association (LGA) conference, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick MP outlined his objectives for devolution, including empowering local communities to lead the economic recovery and facilitating local government reorganisation where there is local demand.
4. At the same conference, the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, Simon Clarke MP indicated that the White Paper would connect local areas' recovery from the Covid-19 crisis with a 'levelling up' of opportunity and prosperity; and would help remove complexity from local government whilst reducing costs to the taxpayer.

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S POSITION

5. On 7 July 2020, the Leader of Surrey County Council (SCC), Cllr Tim Oliver, announced the County Council's intention to work with Government ahead of the publication of the White Paper to develop a proposal for the reorganisation of local government in Surrey. He subsequently wrote to Robert Jenrick MP requesting that

the Secretary of State ask Surrey County Council to submit a business case setting out proposals for a single-county unitary council for Surrey.

6. It is understood that the preferred option of the County Council is to have one single tier unitary council, responsible for all the functions and services that are currently provided by the County Council and the eleven Boroughs and Districts. A report from the SCC Chief Executive to its Cabinet on 21 July suggests that the County Council intends to submit its proposal to the Secretary of State by the end of September.

CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Under current legislation, the Secretary of State may invite Councils to develop proposals for local government reorganisation, and then implement any such proposals (subject to consultation and Parliamentary approval). Recent proposals for new unitary authorities have been considered by the Secretary of State against the following criteria:
 - Improving local government and service delivery in the area
 - Having a good deal of local support; and
 - Having a credible geography
8. The Government has indicated that as a guideline, unitary authorities should usually represent populations of between 300,000 and 500,000 people per administration. A single unitary authority for Surrey (as proposed by SCC) would represent 1.2m people; equivalent only to the larger of metropolitan areas but with a vastly different geographical spread.
9. There are clearly some merits of local government reorganisation, including economies of scale and the opportunity to combine collective resources and expertise to deliver high quality services in a cost effective way. However, these merits need to be balanced against other important considerations, including local democratic accountability, and ensuring service delivery takes account of local knowledge and needs to maximise its effectiveness.
10. Our recent experience in responding to the Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of localised, responsive decision-making and service provision, and of having local government that has a strong relationship with the communities that it serves.
11. It is the view of senior leadership and management within this Council that the full range of options for the future of local government within Surrey should be properly investigated before any decision is made. It is considered premature to conclude that a single county wide unitary council is the most appropriate structure until this has been done. There may be other models that would be equally or more appropriate in balancing the range of wide range of considerations (for example, options that are more consistent with the government's guideline size criteria).
12. The other Boroughs and Districts in Surrey have also expressed concerns about the principle of pursuing a single-unitary solution for Surrey when no business case has yet been presented and when other options have not been fully investigated.
13. On this basis, the Surrey Leaders Group has also written to Robert Jenrick MP outlining this position and requesting that – if minded to invite a submission from SCC

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– he also invites business cases for one or more alternative models from the Boroughs and Districts of Surrey (Annex 1).

14. It is recommended that this Council supports further investigation into the future structure of local government in Surrey, and agrees that the Leader (supported by officers) should work with other authorities across the county to develop proposals which are place-based, close to local authorities and continues to provide residents with the support and services they need. It is proposed that a cross party member working group be convened to feed into this work.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 makes provision for the Secretary of State to invite proposals for the creation of single tier local government.
16. Legal implications will be considered as options for local government reorganisation in Surrey are explored in more detail.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. Work to develop proposals for the future of local government in Surrey will have resourcing and cost implications. Where possible, the Council will seek to work jointly with the other Surrey authorities to ensure that this work is progressed in a cost-effective way.
18. There is not currently any provision within the approved budget for this work. For now, it is assumed that it will be funded from a combination of existing reserves and budget contingencies for the remainder of 2020/21 and that a budget will be established as part of service and financial planning for 2021/22 onwards.
19. Initially, it is anticipated that a contribution of up to £10,000 from each authority will be needed to engage expert external support to assist in the assessment of options – it is proposed that this be funded from the Corporate Plan Delivery Fund.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

20. There are no equality implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report. It will be important that, in investigating options for the future of local government in Surrey, the implications for equality target groups is fully assessed and taken into account in any future decision making.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

21. **Communication implications:** As well as local government reorganisation being of interest to councillors and council staff, there has been some local public interest in light of the statement by Cllr Tim Oliver earlier this month.
22. It will be essential that appropriate communication is undertaken over the coming weeks and months to both internal and external audiences, to explain and support the work that is being undertaken.
23. **Consultation:**

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24. Discussions between the Leader and other Group Leaders has informed the content of this report.
25. Ongoing consultation and engagement with councillors, stakeholders, staff and residents will be important as future options are investigated. As a first step, it is proposed that a virtual seminar be arranged for members to consider the issues raised in this report in more detail.
26. Communications and consultation work associated with developing proposals for the future of local government in Surrey will have resourcing and cost implications. Wherever possible, the Council will seek to work jointly with the other Surrey authorities to ensure that this work is progressed in a cost effective way.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

27. The Council's corporate plan, Reigate & Banstead 2025, sets out the Council's priorities for its people, place and organisation. These priorities will continue to underpin the Council's work and will be an important consideration in assessing the most appropriate option for the future of local government in Reigate & Banstead borough.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. SCC Report to Cabinet, 21 July 2020, 'Recovery and Devolution White Paper: Opportunities and Benefits for Surrey':
<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/documents/s68594/RECOVERY%20AND%20DEVOLUTION%20WHITE%20PAPER-Cabinet%2021%20July%202020.pdf>
2. Letter from SCC to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 10 July: <https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/documents/s68595/Annex%201-%20correspondence%20to%20SoS%20Re.%20Public%20Service%20Reform.pdf>
3. Reigate & Banstead 2025: www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/rbbc2025

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My Ref: NP/mch

23rd July 2020

Rt. Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Secretary of State,

DEVOLUTION AND RECOVERY BILL

It is the stated intention of the Government to publish a White Paper and draft Bill on Devolution and Recovery from COVID in the early Autumn of 2020. District and Borough Councils in Surrey are aware of a letter sent to you by Councillor Tim Oliver, setting out the County Council's perspective on unitary government. This letter sets out the collective view of District and Boroughs at this stage of the debate.

There is a commitment by Surrey Boroughs and District councils to consider the merits of unitary government and a view that this represents a potential way forward. There are a number of principles however that need to underpin any future models for local government in Surrey and we believe it is essential that multi unitary models are fully analysed before any conclusions are drawn about the structure of potential unitary authorities in Surrey. Those principles include: -

- Delivery of place based local government which empowers local people to take more control over their local communities and enables swift, transparent decision making.
- Provision of value for money and efficient ways of using public resources as effectively as possible. This includes considering how demand led services such as adult care and children's services should be provided in the future.
- Creation of a structure and culture which encourages multi-agency working, sharing of strategies and budgets and makes optimum use of our collective resources.
- Facilitation of clear communication and negotiation channels between Surrey authorities and central government. In that respect, if a unitary structure were to be implemented, there could also be a form of combined authority where the collective views of one or more unitary authorities on priorities for economic growth and infrastructure can be articulated. The precise nature of this structure needs detailed analysis and discussion.
- The importance of retaining the representative and democratic basis of local government's relationship with its residents.

The Government has indicated that as a optimum guideline, unitary authorities should represent populations of between 300,000 and 500,000 people per administration. A single unitary authority for Surrey would represent 1.2m people and this would be equivalent to only the larger of metropolitan areas but without the clear sense of locality recognisable to residents

across a vastly different geographical spread. Further to this, it would be the largest unitary in England. This is one of the reasons why it is so necessary to evaluate other options which may represent localities (and the characteristics of Surrey communities) more appropriately.

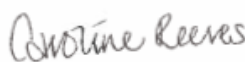
However, please be assured of our commitment to work quickly in seeking a preferred structure. Until a robust evidence base and options appraisal is available, we would urge you to retain an open mind as to the future shape of local government in Surrey. We ask that if minded to invite a submission from Surrey County Council, you also invite a business cases submission for alternative models from the combined Districts and Boroughs grouping of Surrey for the future of local government in Surrey.

Only in this way can you be reassured that any decision about local government reorganisation in Surrey also safeguards the wellbeing of our residents, maximises the future transformation of the area, and secures its contribution to national prosperity.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr. Nick Prescott
Leader, Runnymede Borough Council
Chairman, Surrey Leaders



Cllr. Caroline Reeves
Leader, Guildford Borough Council



Cllr Stuart Selleck
Leader, Elmbridge Borough Council
Deputy Chairman, Surrey Leaders



Cllr. John Ward
Leader, Waverley Borough Council



Cllr Alan McClafferty
Leader, Surrey Heath Borough Council



Cllr. Stephen Cooksey
Leader, Mole Valley District Council



Cllr. David Bittleston
Leader, Woking Borough Council



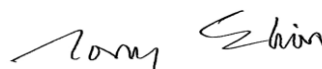
Cllr. Clive Smitheram
Leader, Epsom and Ewell Borough
Council



Cllr. John Boughtflower
Leader, Spelthorne Borough Council



Cllr. Mark Brunt
Leader, Reigate and Banstead Borough
Council



Cllr. Tony Elias
Leader, Tanridge District Council

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Meeting of Council 30 July 2020

Public Questions

Number	Question by	To be answered by	Subject
1	Mr Jonathan White	Councillor Bramhall, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services	Use of Helium Balloons on Council sites

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Mr Jonathan White will ask the **Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Mrs Natalie Bramhall** the following question:

Question: Use of Helium Balloons on Council sites

Will the council please consider a ban on the use and distribution, by third-parties, of small promotional helium balloons at events held on its land?

These kind of balloons are quite frequently given out by various organisations from their stands at events such as those in Priority Park for instance.

The reason for my request is that many of the balloons are deliberately or accidentally released and many then end up in the sea becoming part of the microplastics problem presenting a danger to birds and other sea life and, can end up the food chain.

As an example of the kind of thing the council may be able to do I refer to resolution passed by the Council of the Isles of Scilly, a coastal community affected by the problem.

They resolved that the intentional release of balloons, sky lanterns and non-biodegradable streamers are prohibited as part of any event on council land and property and for any council event held on non-council land, including the marine environment, or any event endorsed by the Council.

I should make it clear that I am not asking for any policy that is agreed to be subject to active enforcement, simply inclusion in the rules for use of council land backed up by written reminders to the hirers concerned if not followed.

In the scheme of things it is a small step but more public authorities taking similar action could begin to make a difference.

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Meeting of Council 30 July 2020

Questions by Members

Number	Question by	To be answered by	Subject
1	Councillor Brown	Councillor Humphreys, Executive Member for Place and Economic Prosperity	Communal Working Hubs (Written response)
2	Councillor Brown	Councillor Horwood, Executive Member for Wellbeing and Intervention	Theatre on Earlswood Common (Written response)
3	Councillor Essex	Councillor Knight, Executive Member for Housing and Benefits	Proposed Monthly Rents and Purchase Price at Council-led Housing Developments
4	Councillor Ritter	Councillor Bramhall, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services	Pollinator Action Plan
5	Councillor McKenna	Councillor Biggs, Executive Member for Planning Policy	Extension of Permitted Development Rights
6	Councillor Sinden	Councillor Ashford, Executive Member for Community Partnerships	Ground Floor Community Space – Former Youth Association Hall, Marketfield Way

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Councillor Brown will ask the **Executive Member for Place and Economic Prosperity, Councillor Humphreys** the following question, for a written response:

Question 1: Communal Working Hubs

The coronavirus pandemic is changing the way we live and work, with many residents of Reigate & Banstead moving to a pattern of homeworking for the foreseeable future.

In this context, the many building developments in towns such as Redhill being constructed and marketed to cater for an expected demand from commuters could become redundant or at least underused.

Has the council considered adapting to the 'new normal' by developing communal working spaces instead, or assigning part of a residential development for a shared working space?

Any such space could double up as a community hub promoting local arts initiatives, enhancing wellbeing in the community through creativity and collective purpose.

Examples of local residential developments where this type of communal working/leisure space are could be installed include Longmead centre, the former gasholder site in Earlswood, or the former golf clubhouse on Pendleton Rd. The pandemic has been a tragedy but there is now the opportunity to reshape the kind of town we want to live in.

A written response will be provided

Councillor Brown will ask the **Executive Member for Wellbeing and Intervention, Councillor Horwood** the following question, for a written response:

Question 2: Theatre on Earlswood Common

Could we have a free open-air, natural, theatre on Earlswood common? If not, what are the valid reasons for denying the community such an asset?

A written response will be provided

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Councillor Essex will ask the **Executive Member for Housing and Benefits, Councillor Knight** the following question:

Question 3: Proposed Monthly Rents and Purchase Price at Council-led Housing Developments

This question concerns the council-led plans to develop housing, at Pitwood Park, Cromwell Road and the Marketfield Way road (ex-car park) sites. Please can you confirm the monthly rents and purchase price proposed for the affordable rented and for sale units, and who will hold the freeholds for all of the homes, both for the properties to rent and the properties to be sold.

Councillor Ritter will ask the **Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Bramhall** the following question:

Question 4: Pollinator Action Plan

In September 2019 Cllr McKenna put a motion to this council about wildlife friendly verges and open spaces, seeking to address the urgent need to support the biodiversity of our borough by changing cutting regimes to enable seed setting by wildflowers, thus supporting vital pollinators. It also addressed the need to reduce the use of harmful pesticides and followed the motion passed by Surrey County council last July, which required the production and implementation of a pollinator action plan.

Residents have raised concerns this year about grass cutting being done too often and cutting down areas where lots of wildflowers were in bloom.

Reigate and Banstead website states the following: "The grass cutting programme starts in March each year and runs until October. Each verge cutting cycle takes about five weeks and the teams continually cut until the end of the grass growing season."

Can the Executive member for Neighbourhood services tell us what progress has been made in Reigate and Banstead towards producing and implementing a pollinator action plan?

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Councillor McKenna will ask the **Executive Member for Planning Policy, Councillor Biggs** the following question:

Question 5: Extension of Permitted Development Rights

Relaxation of permitted development rules from August 2020 will allow extra flats to be built above existing blocks of flats built between 1948 and 2018, which could impact on the quality of our urban environments in many areas of the borough. In addition, the government has signalled its intent on undermining local planning, potentially replacing it with some form of zoning. This together with plans to require district councils to be replaced with unitary authorities could further weaken local democracy if this leads to decision making on planning being weakened. In light of these agreed and potential future changes will the Executive Member confirm if they have already written, or if not will write to the government objecting to these further extension of permitted development rights to resist these pressures, and what can the Council do to resist these and future muted measures so that the Council stand up against an increasingly centralised government?

Councillor Sinden will ask the **Executive Member for Community Partnerships, Councillor Ashford** the following question:

Question 6: Ground Floor Community Space – Former Youth Association Hall, Marketfield Way

Please can you confirm what the future plans for use of the ground floor community space in the new block of flats on the site of the former Youth Association Hall on Marketfield Way, Redhill now that this building is nearing completion, including whether this includes evening and weekend use for activities that meet the needs of young people such as previous youth clubs and martial arts which took place in the earlier use of the site, and what support in terms of staff and funding the council will be providing to make this happen.

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