

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Meeting of Council 24 September 2020

Questions by Members

Number	Question by	To be answered by	Subject
1	Councillor Walsh	Councillor Knight, Executive Member for Housing and Benefits Councillor Humphreys, Executive Member for Place and Economic Prosperity	Developments at Marketfield Way, Cromwell Road and Pitwood Park
2	Councillor Sachdeva	Councillor Knight, Executive Member for Housing and Benefits	Homelessness
3	Councillor Feeney	Councillor Humphreys, Executive Member for Place and Economic Prosperity	Reopening High Streets Safely Fund
4	Councillor Ritter	Councillor Bramhall, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services	National Government Support to Deliver on Carbon Emissions Reduction Targets
5	Councillor Brown	Councillor Knight, Executive Member for Housing and Benefits	Welfare Arrangements
6	Councillor McKenna	Councillor Biggs, Executive Member for Planning Policy	Response to Government Consultation on Planning System
7	Councillor Sinden	Councillor Schofield, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance	COVID-19 Second Wave

Councillor Walsh will ask the **Executive Member for Housing and Benefits, Councillor Knight and the Executive Member for Place and Economic Prosperity, Councillor Humphreys** the following question:

Question 1: Developments at Marketfield Way, Cromwell Road and Pitwood Park

Whilst recognising the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions that have been imposed upon the nation it would be appreciated if the Council could be advised of what actions the executive members have taken to maintain the borough's investment in the key developments at Marketfield Way, Cromwell Road, and Pitwood Park and what the current status is and progress is being made on each of the schemes.

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

Question 2: Homelessness amid COVID-19

Could you please let the members of the Council and members of the public know how the Council has approached the problem of homelessness over the last 6 months amid COVID-19 and the plan going forward considering housing eviction has been resumed on 20 September and the relaxation on furlough scheme will be over by end of October 2020?

Councillor Feeney will ask the **Executive Member for Place and Economic Prosperity, Councillor Humphreys** the following question:

Question 3: Reopening High Streets Safely Fund

Earlier this year the government announced the creation of the 'Reopening High Streets Safely Fund'. Councils across England shared £50m of additional funding to support the safe reopening of high streets and other commercial areas. The money was to allow local authorities in England to put in place additional measures to establish a safe trading environment for businesses and customers, particularly in high streets, through measures that extend to the end of March 2021. Reigate & Banstead Borough Council was allocated £132,263.00 from this fund.

Can we please have an update on how much of this funding has been spent, how much has been spent in the north of the Borough and what the funds have been spent on. If there is a sum from this allocation still remaining, please can we have an indication of how it is likely to be spent, and can members have an input into funding options for their wards?

Can we also have an update on what plans the economic development team has for supporting our business community in the coming months and what plans the communications team have for encouraging residents to shop local?

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

Question 4: National Government Support to Deliver on Carbon Emissions Reduction Targets

When the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan was brought to Executive on 28th July the Executive member for Neighbourhood services stated that we needed to call on the national government to support local councils with funding and legislation to deliver on our carbon emissions reduction targets.

With this in mind please can you share what responses you have had from government to date and also share the council's submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review which was due in by 24th September (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/comprehensive-spending-review-2020-representations-guidance> for more details)

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

Question 5: Welfare Arrangements

During the first lockdown there was a sharp rise in benefit claimants, with places like Redhill particularly badly hit. From March to June, an increase in 128% was reported for Redhill, that is more than doubling its rate of universal credit claimants, the fifth highest impacted location in the country (see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53697256>). This is before any impact of the end of the furlough scheme (for which there are still 20,300 people, that is 28% of those eligible to be furloughed in Reigate and Banstead, as of 31st July 2020).

Please can you provide details of what additional welfare arrangements the council is putting in place to prepare for the end of furlough in October to help the increasing number of households who find themselves increasingly reliant on Universal Credit going forward.

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

Question 6: Response to Government Consultation on Planning System

Over recent years the planning system has become more complex and in some respects more difficult to operate, such as highlighted in the current failure to provide adequate affordable housing, even more necessary as a result of COVID-19. A simplification of the system as set out in the Government's new White Paper Planning for the Future, could introduce some benefits. However it also includes significant factors that could adversely impact our area if implemented such as the end of the five year housing supply, the imposition of binding housing targets by Government without any scope for our Council to challenge or negotiate revised figures (previously decried as Stalinist by Eric Pickles former Environment Secretary) and, most importantly, the automatic grant of outline planning permission for growth zones once the new simplified Local Plans have been adopted. The Government are proposing to directly allocate a national target of say 300,000 units of housing a year – that's like a new Birmingham every 5 years.

We appreciate there is a meeting scheduled for Members on 24th September to examine and discuss this proposed enormous redesign of the planning system. If Councils like Tandridge (largely designated as Green Belt on over 97% of their area) are going to be forced to find land for substantial growth this means no areas will be sacrosanct and it surely behoves our Council to ensure that these potentially authoritarian changes in favour of major housebuilders and developers are resisted. Can the Council therefore agree that "Build Build Build" should not mean a free for all in favour of the market and a loss local council autonomy on planning decisions and ability to set our own housing numbers, and confirm here tonight that a robust response will be made to the consultation to ensure that any major relaxation of the planning system will not undermine protection of our key assets and communities and neither will undermine local decision making and transparency.

Councillor Sinden will ask the **Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance, Councillor Schofield** the following question:

Question 7: COVID-19 Second Wave

As we head towards the winter, and new shielding and a local or national lockdown is possible I am concerned that we must improve things here compared to the last lockdown where there was a lack of PPE and testing, especially for those working in care and the NHS. The first wave of the COVID-19 had a big impact, especially for older residents in care homes and those receiving home care. Surrey's new Local Outbreak Control Plan says that we have the fourth oldest population in the country, and Reigate and Banstead had more people shielding than the other parts of Surrey.

Can you say what we are going to improve locally this time? And also, can we please call on the county and government for us to have much more local testing places - you still have to go to Gatwick rather than local testing like in other countries where you can walk up and get tested in the street, in Germany and Italy - and also can we make sure that those working in care and living in care homes are tested regularly and have all the PPE they need this time.