

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Meeting of Council 10 December 2020

Questions by Members

Number	Question by	Answered by	Subject
1	Cllr Sinden	Executive Member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery, Cllr Biggs	Retrofitting of High-Rise Buildings
2	Cllr Essex	Executive Member for Corporate Policy, Councillor Lewanski	Surrey County Council Energy Reduction Funding
3	Cllr Essex	Leader of the Council, Councillor Brunt	Surrey Fire and Rescue Service
4	Cllr Ritter	Executive Member for Investments and Companies, Cllr Archer	Proposed Crematorium
5	Cllr Kulka	Executive Member for Investment and Companies, Cllr Archer	Reigate Priory Building and Museum

Councillor Sinden asked the **Executive Member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery, Councillor Biggs** the following question:

Question 1: Retrofitting of High-Rise Buildings

Please can you confirm whether there are any buildings over 11m high in the borough that need to be retrofitted to reduce their fire risk, including those that have aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding, as in the Grenfell Tower or High Pressure Laminate (HPL) cladding which was identified as having a similarly unacceptable fire risk in the Grenfell Tower phase 1 report. The reason for this is because the height of a standard fire engine is a 11m? So, I'm a bit concerned about that.

Response:

Following the Grenfell disaster in 2017, the MHCLG established the Building Safety Programme. One of its tasks is to identify buildings over 18 metres in height that may be at risk of fire due to their height, external wall systems and materials so that their owners can be contacted to discuss retrofitting works for which Government funding has been made available.

Our planning and housing officers have together provided the Government with details of relevant buildings within this Borough and have contacted building owners on behalf of the MHCLG to request the information.

I appreciate that 11 metres is the height to which standard fire equipment can reach, but within Surrey there is specialist equipment that can reach to 18 metres and above. Whilst the Government has had to prioritise the tallest buildings, it is agreed that the programme would ideally be extended to buildings over 11 metres and I shall ask the Ministry whether this is something they are able to do.

Councillor Essex asked the **Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Resources, Councillor Lewanski** the following question:

Question 2: Surrey County Council Energy Reduction Funding

Surrey County Council have just been awarded around £6.2 million pounds from the government to help around 600 households reduce their energy bills. Please confirm how this will be targeted and promoted in Reigate and Banstead and how this forms part of our wider plan for 'energy makeovers' for all of the existing homes across the Reigate and Banstead Borough Council area.

Response:

By way of clarification, the funding in question has been awarded from the Government's Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme to a consortium of local authorities across Surrey, including Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.

The £6.2m fund has been used by the consortium to establish the [Green Jump Surrey](#) project, which is now being delivered by Action Surrey on behalf of the local authorities.

Grants are available to those who meet the Government's eligibility criteria, that is, low income households living in hard-to-heat properties, and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. The Council has been promoting the scheme to residents via a [press release](#), social media promotion and details on the Sustainability page of the website.

As funding is time-limited there is a contact telephone number and a website link on the website which we would urge all residents to contact as soon as possible in order to check their eligibility for support. Grants are available to those who meet the criteria and currently living within one of the 10 local authorities participating in the Green Jump Surrey project. Grants will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis and will be monitored by Action Surrey, who is delivering the project on behalf of the local authorities.

The Council will continue to explore and promote funding opportunities to support existing homes and residents to decarbonise in conjunction with relevant partners, including other local authorities and social housing providers.

Councillor Essex asked the **Leader of the Council, Councillor Brunt** the following question:

Question 3: Surrey Fire and Rescue Service

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is bringing in changes, including to the number of fire crews and fire engines at different fire stations. These changes started from April 2020 with further reductions including to the fire station in Banstead proposed for this month. This question is to formally request that the council request that SFRS share a report for each month from July 2020 to see how this is impacting our borough council area, based on information that the fire service collect:

- Firstly, for each month, how many fire and rescue incidents occurred in Reigate and Banstead, how many of these were attended by neighbouring fire services (e.g. London), and for each Critical Incident that occurred within the borough, please list the response times for the 1st and 2nd appliances that attended for incidents where the SFRS Critical Incident Response Standard was not achieved.
- Secondly, the Monthly Average Call Handling Time (from the 999 call to alerting the crew), Turn-out Time (from the crew being alerted to leaving the fire station) and Monthly Average Surrey Response Time (from alerting the crew to appliances arriving at the incident).
- Thirdly, the percentage of time during each month, that each of the frontline appliances in Reigate and Banstead's fire stations were for available to respond to emergency calls (compared to the required availability in the Making Surrey Safer Plan).
- Fourthly, please confirm the number of Competent On Call firefighters expressed as FTE (Full time Equivalent) employed to provide cover at Reigate and Banstead fire stations on the 1st October 2018, 2019, 2020.

Response:

Thank you for your request, I say request rather than question because what this, is a request. A request for me to request information from Surrey County Council on your behalf. Surrey County Council, as the Fire Authority for Surrey Fire and Rescue, have the overall responsibility for fire and rescue services in Surrey. Information relating to the provision of the fire and rescue services in Reigate and Banstead should be requested directly from Surrey County Council. As a serving County Councillor, you are much better placed than I am, or anyone on this Council to ask to for this information directly. Prior to this meeting I took a look at the minutes from the October County Council Full Council meeting, where you asked a very similar question, for which I think you've had a reply. So therefore, I would suggest respectfully that you direct your question to Surrey County Council using the channels that are available to you as a County Councillor. This would seem to be a more effective route than using me and the Council as a middleman.

Supplementary Question:

The reason I am asking this question via Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, is it would seem to be a more effective route. Although some of this information and the answers have been released in freedom of information requests, none of it's been released in questions from me asking as a Councillor, directly to Surrey County Council. As the detail of the Making Surrey Safer Plan and the phased role out of changes to fire station cover affect all parts of Surrey differently, and although promises were made that it wouldn't negatively impact the service, the evidence as to what is actually happening hasn't been shared publicly. So that's why I'm requesting via you, as Leader of our Council, to request formally to Surrey County Council, so we can see what's happening in our area on this issue. So, I'd be grateful if it was possible to make a request and see if it's possible for you as Leader of this Council to acquire a better response from Surrey County Council than I can as a County Councillor?

Supplementary Question Response:

It would have been helpful to understand that in the bulk of the question. I am more than happy to work with any County Councillor or any member of this Council to seek any additional information that is in the interest of residents of this borough and I am happy to pick this up later.

Councillor Ritter asked the **Executive Member for Investment and Companies, Councillor Archer** the following question:

Question 4: Proposed Crematorium

Following the announcement of the Council's proposal to build a crematorium bordering Woodhatch and Earlswood Lakes and the considerable feeling from local residents, can the Executive member for Investment and Companies explain why building on the Green Belt is considered to have less impact here in terms of people and wildlife than in other parts of the borough?

Response:

New crematoria are almost always built within Greenbelt due to the requirements of the 1902 Cremation Act which sets minimum distances to dwellings and highways.

In order to justify the development of a crematorium in the greenbelt the application will need to demonstrate that it meets the Very Special Circumstances test in terms of planning.

Broadly this will mean that it will have to show that there is a need for the new facility (via a needs assessment), that there are no alternative sites available outside of the greenbelt, as well as a number of other factors like biodiversity and ecology impacts.

The Woodhatch site was judged to be most favourable in terms of the siting of a facility within the landscape, the feasibility of development and the potential to minimise environmental impacts.

We have looked very carefully at the site, the area the building would cover has been judged by an independent ecology survey to be of low rating due to it mainly being of scrub grass. Our proposals would look to improve the ecology and biodiversity of the site by making a significant investment in it, including new hedging, grassland with wildflower planting, planting of new woodland and a new area of wetland. The Council believes the Woodhatch site provides the opportunity for a positive improvement to the setting and biodiversity of the area whilst delivering a much-needed benefit for residents. Thank you.

Supplementary Question:

Is it possible for the Council to share with the public, the feasibility document whereby this decision was made and the range of reasons that have been made, as on the Council website there is a picture with lots of circles, obviously where the greenbelt and possible other sites were marked, but no explanation of what gave preference to the Woodhatch site and how much money has been spent to date?

Supplementary Question Response:

Absolutely, of course, in the process of the planning application that we are looking to bring forward, we will as a part of that be publishing our needs assessment, which will

include all the detail around why we believe this will be an important facility for the borough. It will also identify why we think this is the right site and it will also look at the other sites we considered, and the reasons that we have selected the Woodhatch site in particular. All of that documentation will be provided as part of the planning application. At this stage, it wouldn't be appropriate for me to say anything more about the costs that have been spent so far, it's a commercial activity, but of course as you will understand, all of the costs are carefully reviewed by the Commercial Ventures Executive Sub-committee and no doubt will be published in due course once they are no longer of a commercially sensitive nature. Thank you.

Councillor Kulka asked the **Executive Member for Investments and Companies, Councillor Archer** the following question:

Question 5: Reigate Priory Building and Museum

It is now fairly common knowledge that Reigate Priory School will move to a new building on the Canon site in Reigate.

Could the Executive member please explain what this Council plans to do with the listed Reigate Priory building including the museum, once this has happened?

Response:

Reigate Priory building is the centre point in the beautiful Reigate Priory Park; very much the jewel in the crown of the Park. The building itself is grade 1 listed and surrounded by 65 acres of open parkland. The Priory has been home to a school since 1948. The County Council are supporting a move for the school to the Canon site from September 2023. At present, the County Council have a long lease over the Priory from this Council. And that remains the position at this time.

The Council is committed to protecting the future of the Reigate Priory building after the school has moved to the Canon site and we will work with both the County Council and the Museum Committee to ensure that the heritage of Reigate is suitably protected and available for use by the community. Thank you.

Supplementary Question:

I did ask what our Council plans to do with the Reigate Priory building because as I understand that we are responsible for it even we've managed to get somebody else to actually pay for the maintenance. What I'd really like to find out for the residents that have asked this question is what the Council will be doing with the building and the museum once that's happened? Thank you.

Supplementary Question Response:

Absolutely, we will of course, as you would expect, enter into a dialogue with Surrey County Council around the future use of the building. I think I really do have to emphasize that we are of course the landlord of the building, and that there is a long-term lease in place to Surrey County Council. Surrey are the tenants of the building and have the right to use the building for the duration of the lease as long as they maintain the requirements of the lease. At the moment, that is the situation, we are not in possession of the property on a day to day basis, it is in the possession of Surrey County Council as per the lease. But of course, we will no doubt be having conversations with Surrey around what their future intentions is towards the building. Thank you.