

**Council Meeting:** 10th April 2014

**Councillor Mrs P. Shillinglaw** will ask the **Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs J.M.A. Spiers** the following question:

### **World War 1 Commemorations**

I have great pleasure in asking this question.

Since my autumn question the Leader has given her full support to the Reigate and Banstead Borough Council World War 1 Commemoration Project, which has a top team involving officers of great commitment and enthusiasm led by Tom Kealey, Manager Leisure Services.

Can the Leader give an up-date to Council, Councillors and the residents of the Borough on how we are to commemorate World War 1?

### **OBSERVATIONS**

I am very grateful to Cllr Shillinglaw for her question as it provides me the opportunity to update Council on the excellent work that officers have undertaken thus far, in order to appropriately commemorate the centenary of WW1.

An extensive programme of restoration works on the Council's War Memorials (6) has already begun. Works will be completed in late spring/early summer. This work will be complemented by an extensive programme of restoration works to all War Graves in the borough.

Council officers working in partnership with community groups and residents have undertaken a mammoth task to restore all the War Graves in the borough (206), not just those relating to WW1. Working in partnership with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, with local residents, community groups and schools, an "Adopt-A-Grave" scheme will be introduced once restoration works have been completed, in order to maintain the graves in an appropriate manner.

In addition, an extensive research project is underway to identify the names of all those from within the existing Reigate and Banstead Borough boundary who fell or subsequently died from their wounds during the conflict. This research will be vital to the delivery of planned Armistice Day events (2014 - 2018) at which the names of the fallen will be read out by local school children at suitable locations across the borough.

A number of funding applications have been submitted to help support this extensive programme of works.

Other events being organised, include historical talks, a "Show and Tell" event at the Harlequin, where local residents will display their WW1 memorabilia and relate the stories behind each artefact to members of the public. Other events include theatrical productions and film screenings.

Officers are also currently working with local historians and residents in order to produce a series of five commemorative brochures one for each year of the war. (1914-1918). These brochures will recall the main events of the conflict and will have a particular focus on the impact to local residents at that time. Further projects are currently being developed.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those Councillors who have contributed part or all of their Community Fund, in order to support all the work that the project team have undertaken.

**Council Meeting:** 10th April 2014

**Councillor C.T.H. Whinney** will ask the **Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Spiers**, the following question:

**Core Strategy: Implications of Delay**

The Core Strategy was found sound by the Inspector in writing on 30<sup>th</sup> January and it was to be recommended by the Executive on 20<sup>th</sup> March for adoption by this Council this evening. I understand that there are implications if there is any delay in adopting the Core Strategy. At best, if it is still to be approved in future without any revision, any delay will be costly.

I request please that the Executive Member outlines what are the likely implications and costs of delay, particularly in terms of:

1. The introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy as this tariff can only be set with an adopted Core Strategy in place.
2. The adoption of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document. This is due to be considered alongside the Core Strategy and the associated receipt of funds for affordable housing, most needed by those residents seeking help from this Council.
3. The Council's vulnerability to developers in the absence of a more detailed policy setting out how this Council plans to meet its five year housing land supply, and therefore the likelihood of being swamped by a deluge of planning applications from developers and the cost of defending appeals against refusals of permission and on grounds of non-determination.

I would ask as well, please, the cost to this Council of having to take further legal advice from a top QC to address very late questions about the Core Strategy, bearing in mind that this Council had already agreed it and amendments to it at different stages last summer and the previous year. Is there any danger that this and other unwarranted expenses incurred in relation to the Core Strategy will attract the attention of the District Auditor?

**OBSERVATIONS**

There are implications and costs associated with any delay in adopting the Core Strategy. If the Core Strategy is adopted in July 2014 rather than April 2014, this represents a delay of three months:

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): A three month delay in adopting the Core Strategy is likely to result in a similar delay to the implementation of CIL. Based on current estimates of CIL receipts, this delay will result in lost CIL receipts and knock-on implications for the delivery and upgrading of local infrastructure.

- Affordable Housing: The Affordable Housing SPD was due to be adopted in April 2014, to provide guidance on the implementation of the Core Strategy policy on Affordable Housing. It is clearly very difficult to place any reliable estimate on the amount of any foregone receipts, both for CIL and Affordable Housing
- Five year land supply: The Council currently has a five year land supply. However, lack of a Core Strategy will create uncertainty about the Council's overall strategy for growth. This may result in an increase in speculative planning applications from developers on greenfield sites, challenges to the Council's five year land supply position, and the risk that such applications would be allowed at appeal. Implications associated with defending appeals will depend on the number and nature of those appeals, but would include legal costs, and staff time and resources.
- Recent legal advice and associated staff costs: Recent legal advice in relation to the Core Strategy has cost £7,500; in addition to this, it has been estimated that associated Council staff costs, including senior management costs, have been in excess of £10,000. It is unlikely that a short delay to the adoption will attract the attention of the Council's external auditor, however a longer delay may be a material issue that could give rise to a negative comment in the annual audit report.

Delay beyond the three month period anticipated above would have increased financial implications for the Council. It would also further extend the period of uncertainty for the Council. It would run the risk of the evidence on which the Core Strategy is based becoming out of date, and would result in more delay to the timetable for the Development Management Policies planning document.

In summary, the further delay to the Core Strategy may cost the Council in terms of lost receipts, plus increased costs we might face through dealing with additional planning applications and fighting appeals. This is on top of the cost of preparing the Core Strategy, which is some £3.5 million.

The Core Strategy Inspector found our Core Strategy sound and legally compliant. Our Counsel's advice is clear. We should proceed to adopt the Core Strategy without further amendment at the next cycle of meetings.

**Council Meeting:** 10th April 2014

**Councillor N.D. Harrison** will ask the **Executive Member for Planning and Development, Councillor M.J. Miller** the following question:

### **Core Strategy**

Could the Portfolio Holder advise the Council:

- a) why the Core Strategy was deferred from the agenda of the last Executive meeting on 20th March;
- b) when it will now be presented to the Full Council for approval; and
- c) will there be any changes from the version published for the 20th March Executive meeting?

### **OBSERVATIONS**

- a) The report on the Core Strategy was deferred from the meeting of the Executive held on 20 March to allow time for Members to read, understand and discuss the Addendum report which had been published together with related correspondence and legal advice.
- b) The Core Strategy, including the latest information and legal advice, will now be considered at the Executive meeting to be held on 19 June and, subject to recommendation by the Executive, will be considered for adoption by Full Council on 24 July.
- c) The advice that the Council has received from Richard Harwood QC is clear. The Core Strategy cannot be altered at this stage. If we wanted to make any changes to it, we would need to start again which is what Counsel has described as 'the nuclear option'. The Core Strategy will be put forward for approval and adoption without further amendment.

### **Additional information**

Why can't the Core Strategy be adopted sooner than July 2014?

The Council meeting on 24 July is the next scheduled Council meeting at which the Core Strategy could be adopted. The June Council meeting is the Annual Council meeting, which is primarily ceremonial. It would not be appropriate to take the Core Strategy to that meeting.

**Council Meeting:** 10th April 2014

**Councillor Mrs D.T. Ross-Tomlin** will ask the **Executive Member for Communities, Councillor Mrs R. Mill** the following question:

#### **HORLEY CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU**

In view of the concerns expressed for two years or more on the diminishing level of service provided in Horley by the CAB and your promise to monitor the situation, can you please tell me how often the CAB have occupied the office provided by the Borough in the Regent Hall since the 1st of December, 2013 until the 31st of March, 2014?

#### **OBSERVATIONS**

Reigate & Banstead CAB currently operate an appointment service from Regent House from 10am to 3pm on Tuesdays and between 2pm and 4pm on Wednesday afternoons.

They also provide a drop-in service on Wednesdays between 10 and 1pm. A case worker and administrator are present at every drop-in session.

In answer to your question, over the specified period the CAB delivered a service from Regent House on 29 separate occasions. The only Wednesdays during this period the drop-in service hasn't run was on the public holidays, Christmas and New Years Day.

Over the last year 2013-14 (50 weeks) they dealt with 414 new issues at the Horley drop-in. The main categories being:

- Benefits c24%
- Health c19%
- Employment c13%
- Housing c10%