

REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL
COUNCIL: 12th February 2015

Questions by Members

Question by	To be answered by	Subject
1. Councillor G.L. Norman	Leader of the Council, (Councillor V.W. Broad)	School Places
2. Councillor J.C.S. Essex	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Parks and Recycling (Councillor A.J. Kay)	Implications of Airport Commission decision on Housing requirements

Council Meeting: 12th February 2015

Councillor G.L. Norman will ask the **Leader of the Council, Councillor V.W. Broad** the following question:

School Places

The statement by the leader of Surrey County Council that they do not know how they will provide or even fund the required number of future new pupil places across East Surrey , is causing considerable concern to many families .

Is the Executive member able to advise whether discussions are taking place with Surrey County Council as the education authority to ensure that all children in the borough have a school place for when they come of age .

OBSERVATIONS

I personally find it disturbing that a position has seemingly been reached where the County Council may not be able to guarantee school places for local children.

It is unacceptable for our residents and families to suffer perennial uncertainty in getting their children into local schools and I agree with you entirely that it must cause considerable concern to many families who are desperate to secure places for their children.

After I became aware of the statement by the Leader of Surrey County Council I immediately wrote a letter to our local MPs to ask for their support in raising this most important local issue at this highest level. I have yet to receive a reply.

Essentially, there are two issues driving the shortage of places: forward planning and funding.

On the first issue, the Borough Council is continuing to support the County Council in every way possible to assist in their planning for school places. Officers are sharing information to enable the County Council to forecast, more accurately, future needs for school places.

We continue to support the County Council in their search for, and efforts to bring forward new school sites and accommodation to address the acute need for places over the next few years. I would however say that certain members of the opposition, not yourself I would add, have in the past objected to school development proposals by Surrey County Council on the grounds that they encroached on the Green Belt. These objections caused yet more unwarranted uncertainty. Whilst this Council has an absolute commitment to protect the Green Belt, I'm sure we all recognise that there may be occasions when the legitimate needs of local families and children have to take precedence. We just cannot have it both ways.

We are working closely with the County Council to address longer term needs by encouraging them to identify sites for schools for inclusion in our Local Plan. As it stands, it is a matter of some regret that we cannot refuse legitimate planning applications for new housing that comply with planning laws and policy based on the pressure this may place on local school provision or the ability of Doctors surgeries to accommodate additional numbers of patients. Instead we work with service providers to help them plan to meet the needs of a growing and changing population.

We are also working hard to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy in the borough as quickly as possible which may go some way to help fund these critical projects. All too often these measures come after the event and not before, but working with service providers to plan ahead will help us to ensure better provision through the plan-making process.

Council Meeting: 12th February 2015

Councillor J.C.S. Essex will ask the **Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Parks and Recycling, Councillor A.J. Kay** the following question:

Implications of Airport Commission decision on Housing requirements

We note Reigate & Banstead Borough Council's submission to the Airports Commission which states, among other things, that additional assessment is needed of the potential impact on air quality, water and flood risk, that Government spending on infrastructure is required and that the Government should allow full public engagement in the development plans. We applaud the Council for clearly setting out many of the local impacts that this development would cause, and the extent of measures needed to address these, as far as practicable.

We note that the Airports Commission estimates around 130 additional homes per year would need to be built in our borough, above our current agreed Local Plan figure, necessitating 'some' Green Belt release.

However, we note that Reigate & Banstead Borough Council remains neutral on whether Gatwick should be expanded, on the basis that 'the inevitable negatives impacts are minimised.'

Please can the Deputy Leader confirm how he believes we can mitigate the harmful impact of the 130 additional homes per year, on top of our current plan commitments?

OBSERVATIONS

A great deal of work went into the preparation of the Council's response to the Airports Commission's recent consultation, and I am glad that you are able to support the final submission.

The decision about where to locate additional runway capacity in the South East is a one that will be driven by national political and economic considerations. It is for this reason that the Council has decided not to support or object to a new second runway at Gatwick but to focus on how the impacts of any new runway should be managed.

It is important to note that no conclusions have yet been drawn about the amount of housing that individual authorities would need to provide to support a second runway at Gatwick Airport.

(The figure of 130 homes per authority is suggested by the Airports Commission as a proxy only.)

In the event that the Government decides to locate a second runway at Gatwick, local authorities around the airport will need to work together to identify the most sustainable solution to delivering the new housing required.

It has been well established, through the Core Strategy, that constraints in this borough limit our ability to meet the high levels of demand for housing.

The Airports Commission's consultation does not change that fact.