

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 13 October 2022 Advance Questions

Agenda Item 4 – Quarter 1 2022/23 Performance Report

Question 1

Budget Monitoring Summary 2022/23 Page 32 on street cleaning

The budget amount has stayed the same for some time, but the streets / not including the town centres, should ideally be cleaned more often, especially when the leaves fall. RBBC have an elderly population, many disabled, so ideally the paths and road areas at the edges should be kept clear to prevent falls on the wet leaves and prevent blocked drains.

Firstly can RBBC increase the budget to help with this.

Secondly how often is this done.

The street cleaning used to be done on a regular basis, so hopefully you can tell us when the cutbacks occurred, as residents do complain about this.

Written Answer

To increase the budget for any activity, a growth bid would need to be submitted and approved by Executive and Council as part of the annual budget setting process. Growth bids are considered each year.

No reduction in service has taken place and the frequency of cleansing is unchanged. This is evidenced by the KPI's relating to Local Environmental Quality surveys (LEQ's) reported to this committee.

Each autumn, sweeping routines are adjusted to take account of leaf fall and resources are deployed accordingly. Details of the enhanced leaf sweeping schedule appear on the Council's Website and priority is given to areas of high pedestrian use, road junctions and those roads on hills.

Agenda Item 5 – Annual Environmental Sustainability Strategy Progress Report

Question 2

Page 50 What measures are being looked at to reduce the carbon emissions and reduce overall energy usage from buildings?

Written Answer

In relation to the Council's operational buildings a wide range of measures is being considered. Examples include:

- Energy efficiency measures: eg LED lighting, antiglare film, glazing upgrades, wall / loft insulation, gas boiler replacement

- Energy management and behaviour change measures: eg building energy management systems, heating controls, sub-metering, motion sensors
- Renewable energy opportunities: eg transitioning from gas to electric heating, solar and battery storage

Question 3

- a) Page 53 Great that we have reached Bronze level Carbon literacy. What proportion of officers is 20 who are now carbon literate and what does it take to get to Silver?

Written Answer

The Council has over 500 employees in total, so 20 carbon literate staff is clearly only a small proportion of this.

However, there is already good representation of carbon literate staff across a range of service areas including at the senior management level. Service areas that have participated include communications; democratic services; corporate policy, projects & performance; fleet; place delivery; property; data & insight; licensing & regulation; economic prosperity; revenue, benefits & fraud; community partnerships; waste & recycling. Trained managers and staff are able to promote sustainability within their teams until more staff are able to be trained.

The Silver level award requires a greater proportion of staff to be certified carbon literate, and carbon literacy to be integrated in various ways in organisational procedures, eg recruitment, performance management etc.

Other forms of sustainability training, briefings and updates are also provided to staff, recognizing that carbon literacy training may not be appropriate for everyone. These include online training, briefing sessions and staff news items.

- b) Would it be possible to increase ambition and plan to train all Councillors to be carbon literate?

Written Answer

All Councillors have been offered the opportunity of carbon literacy training, and further training will be offered in the future. However, we are very aware that the format of certified carbon literacy training may not work in practical terms for all Councillors, so (as for staff) other forms of training and briefings are also made available.

- c) What are the reservations about the ranking methodologies applied by Climate Emergency UK in ranking district and boroughs strategy and action plans?

Written Answer

Our concerns were primarily methodological, and included:

- Only looking at a single published strategy document rather than the wider range of information published by the Council over a period of time
- An expectation that operational details would be provided in said strategy document, which is not usual practice
- A simplistic (tick box) approach to assessment scoring

It was however positive that Climate Emergency UK engaged with local authorities on their draft assessment, and we took this opportunity to communicate our concerns to them.

Question 4

Page 53 What scope is there for the tree strategy to include anything to reduce instances of pre-emptive felling of mature trees by developers on sites not owned by Council?

Written Answer

This would unfortunately not fall within the scope of the tree strategy; instances of pre-emptive tree felling by developers is a planning issue, with council powers defined by legislation.

Question 5

Page 59 What progress has been made on investigating the potential for PV on Council operated assets? Mentioned in Actions but not in progress.

Written Answer

Opportunities for PV have been considered as part of the Energy Audits project (see Question 1 above). Surrey County Council also commissioned consultants to do a desktop assessment of potential opportunities.

However no detailed feasibility assessments have yet been carried out – where appropriate this will be done as part of our ongoing work to retrofit our operational buildings.

Question 6

Page 59 What is the measure used to decide if moving to Green tariffs is financially viable?

Written Answer

We use the energy management consultancy 'Beond' to manage our energy contracts; with bids invited from all types of suppliers, and the ability to then select based on cost or other considerations. Clearly financial cost to the Council is an important

consideration at this time and a number of our electricity contracts are coming up this Autumn.

Question 7

Page 60 What is the progress on car club provisions? (I have personally asked for conditions re Car clubs to be added to Planning applications, so this doesn't seem to be done by Planning team and I have investigated with Surrey for one in my area and have struggled to get a response from SCC)

Written Answer

The Development Management Plan policy TAP1 encourages consideration of car pools/car clubs but does not mandate them, and such measures are only likely to be suitable to require on larger developments.

SCC offers discounted car club membership – we promote this via our website, and we continue to work with officers at the county in relation to how this could be further enhanced.

Question 8

Page 63 How is it possible that we cannot measure the waste generated in the council offices and facilities? How is this being addressed?

Written Answer

Organisational waste generation can be measured in two ways, by:

- a. weighing the waste at the time of collection, or
- b. weighing on-site before it is collected (either as business-as-usual or by undertaking quarterly or annual 'snapshots').

In relation to (a), the way in which the Council (as collection authority) collects commercial waste (ie waste from businesses) does not allow for it to be weighed at the time of collection, this is due to not all vehicles having the technology to weigh the waste that is collected.

In relation to (b) options to do this are currently being scoped, however resource availability within the Waste & Recycling team (and the need to prioritise waste & recycling collection from residents) means that this is unlikely to be possible to introduce in the short term.