

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 8 December 2022 Advance Questions

Agenda Item 2 – Q2 2022/23 Performance Report

Question 1

Homeless approaches have now risen quarter by quarter over the last year but those with the support threshold being met has remained similar. What is the support threshold and what is being done assuming that both of these trends continue? P28

Written Answer

A homeless approach is recorded when the Housing Team receives contact from an applicant advising that they are facing homelessness. The case hits the 'support threshold' if following further investigation, the applicant is facing homelessness within the next 56 days or has received a valid section 21 Notice Seeking Possession. This threshold is defined in homelessness legislation. Other advice and assistance is often provided to those contacts that do not meet the support threshold.

This information is monitored monthly, and we are reviewing our staff capacity and some of our processes to help manage any sustained increase in the future.

Question 2

- a) When does a planning permission given get classed as a commencement and classed as 'total under construction'?
- b) How much housing has planning permission but is not either of these?
- c) For clarity, what would the Hockley Industrial Estate site on Hooley Lane be classed as (permission but no activity on site) and what about the St Johns/Emlyn Road site where work has started but now stopped due to an amended planning application? P30

Written Answer

- a) The Council records all planning permissions for housing and each permission has one record to represent the entire site; recorded as either 'not started', 'under construction' or 'completed' based on the status of the development at time of recording.

The 'Number of commencements' refers to the number of plots that have commenced construction within a specific quarter. The 'Total number under construction' refers to a total number of plots that are under construction during the same reporting period. To get this information, the database query pulls out all sites that have the main record listed as 'under construction' and then counts all individual sub-records that do not have a completion date.

It should be noted that the Council doesn't always receive commencement notifications, particularly on smaller sites or sites permitted via prior approval, therefore the commencement data may be subject to some variation between quarters.

- b) As of 5th December, there are 531 net additional dwellings potentially coming from sites with planning permission where the construction on site has not yet commenced.
- c) If construction on site has not yet commenced, the site would be recorded as 'not started'. Once a development on site has commenced, the site would be recorded as 'under construction'. If a replacement permission is granted for the site, the new permission will be recorded in the database as 'under construction' once granted and the old permission will be substituted, meaning the old permission would no longer count when reporting on total number of units under construction, only the new one.

Question 3

- a) How are the measurement spots for these surveys of litter, detritus, fly tipping etc chosen?
- b) Can we recommend locations that should be chosen?
- c) What happens if there are environmental quality 'black spots' that don't correspond to the sites used to assess performance?
- d) Are these identified and brought in by the service so that it is the council's performance at the worst locations is monitored going forward? P32

Written Answer

- a) Sites are picked at random and on the basis to ensure that all types of locations are represented: i.e., industrial, footpaths, commercial, etc. This done in alignment with the Keep Britain Tidy methodology.
- b) Sites are chosen via random selection to ensure fairness of scoring and to ensure that scoring is representative of the whole borough. This is in accordance with the Keep Britain Tidy methodology.
- c) This would be reported and picked up outside of LEQ surveys and would be actioned as part of business-as-usual for the service.
- d) Given the random selection of sites, it is not possible to consciously include environmental 'black spots' in the LEQ surveys. However any such areas brought to the attention of officers will be monitored via usual processes.

Question 4

The recent Surrey Environmental Partnership training for Councillors highlighted the key importance to increase food waste collection. Do we know how much food waste is still being thrown away in Reigate and Banstead?

How are we encouraging residents to improve use of the food waste containers and what is the plan for this service to be made available for all of our households?

The report notes that, "The continued roll out to flats, reduction in contamination and a rationalisation of bring sites is expected to further improve upon these results."

In each of these areas please identify the scale of improvement opportunity and actions being taken to address these. P32

Written Answer

The compositional analysis undertaken by the Surrey Environment Partnership (SEP) last year shows that RBBC has a capture rate of 45%, meaning we collect about 5,300t of food waste per year for anaerobic digestion; 6,400t remains in the residual waste stream.

We have been part of the SEP trial food waste improvement program. We are currently awaiting results of this trial to help shape future food waste intervention in the borough (trial was across Surrey).

The continuing roll out to flats will increase the number of residents able to recycle food waste from their homes, whilst a reduction in contamination and rationalisation of Bring Sites will ensure that quality recycling is collected. A review of Bring Site provision is in progress and a project to intervene and support residents in areas subject to higher levels of contamination is being planned for early in the New Year.

Question 5

a) What are the current number of R+B properties without food waste recycling and without mixed recycling collection, and what is the schedule for reducing this going forward?

b) What is the level of contamination of our recycling now and what is to be done going forward?

c) What is the rationalisation of bring sites, and how is it related to the completion of full recycling roll-out, and what benefits will it bring about? P34

Written Answer

a) There are 6,000 properties remaining to be upgraded to the full recycling service, with the current schedule of rollout reducing this to about 5,750 by the end of this financial year.

b) Dry Mixed Recycling contamination is slightly improved compared to last year, at just under 7%. All flats to be rolled out with the full recycling service will have new design recycling bins (with appropriately sized apertures & locks) to reduce contamination. All new developments are also issued with these new design bins and the Council is providing user guides for all new developments, with containers marked up with what can/cannot be recycled in each. Flats also get internal recycling bags to help residents separate and store recycling in their property, plus starter pack of liners for their kitchen food caddy. We also continue to make improvements at recycling centers, upgrading bins to our new design (again apertured, reversed lidded and fitted with locks).

The Surrey Environmental Partnership (SEP) user guide is issued each year to all residents in the borough. We are also part of the SEP recycling improvement plan, which targets flatted properties, providing communications on recycling and using the new designed bins (with aperture and locks), which is a fully monitored program. We are currently awaiting the report from earlier this year on improvements on about 350 properties and will be looking at the next phase of properties for improvement in the new year.

- c) As the roll-out of full recycling to flats continues it is anticipated that reliance on recycling Bring Sites will decline and there may be an opportunity for efficiency savings by reducing the number of sites provided (currently 23) whilst maintaining, and improving on, current levels of recycling.

Question 6

Why are there higher housing benefit costs than forecast and why has the council received a lower Homelessness Grant than expected? Is the latter due to the number of people made homeless or the way claims are made in this area? P36

Written Answer

As explained in the 2023/24 Budget proposals that were reported to Executive in November, a number of factors are putting these budgets under pressure.

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) funding is lower than budgeted. The budget was based on prior year activity levels, whereas demand has increased during 2022/23, leading to higher net costs.

Housing benefit subsidy income is also expected to be lower than originally budgeted, mainly due to the shortfall in reimbursement from DWP for exempt accommodation claims.

The overall Homelessness Grant received by the Council has not reduced, however the sum allocated to support the work of the Revenues, Benefits & Fraud team is lower than in previous years.

Question 7

How much is the average per night paid for bed and breakfast accommodation? P39

Written Answer

Charges differ depending on supplier, location and size of household / property. The minimum is £35 per night and current maximum £92 per night.

Question 8

This sets out how we have allocated the grant received under the Ukrainian refugee scheme. Please provide a similar breakdown for the other refugee support grants that we receive (i.e. for Afghan and Syrian refugees). P43

Written Answer

The requested information will be prepared and circulated.

Question 9

The capital funds allocated to fund investment in new affordable housing (£30 million slippage) seems to be continually slipping - and seems more of a ring-fenced reserve than part of a capital programme at this time. How many units of housing is this expected to deliver and what timescale for delivery that is currently expected? P46

Written Answer

Business cases for use of the £30 million will be presented for approval when suitable development opportunities are identified.

Question 10

Please explain the reasons for the slippage of the Merstham Recreation Ground and Horley Public Realm Improvements and current anticipated start and end dates for these projects. P46

Written answer

Reasons for the delay at Merstham relate to issues identified regarding site drainage, sport pitches and ecology requirements. The current plan is to submit the planning application early in the new year. Additional information is available on the project website.

[Merstham Rec - a park for everyone | Merstham Recreation Ground refurbishment | Reigate and Banstead \(reigate-banstead.gov.uk\)](#)

We anticipate that the full funding required to deliver the High Street public realm improvements will be announced in March 2023 through the Surrey Infrastructure Plan and or Strategic CIL, without confirmed funding in place we have been unable to progress the delivery of the works however detailed design is nearing completion enabling us to work with Surrey to confirm the contractor and delivery route in 2023/24. Programme dates are kept updated on our website here:

[Delivering Change in Horley Town Centre | Delivering Change in Horley Town Centre | Reigate and Banstead \(reigate-banstead.gov.uk\)](#)

Question 11

The line item for Environmental Strategy Delivery in the capital programme is reported to be spending all of the allocated £250,000. What is this being spent on? P48

Written Answer

Detailed proposals and business cases for investment in the Council's buildings and fleet are in the process of being confirmed and remain a priority at this time of rapidly changing energy costs and supply chain prices. Where appropriate, the costs of these projects will be funded from the previously-approved £250k capital budget or through additional reports seeking approval for additional capital funding. It should be noted that some elements of building retrofit, for example, have to be classed as revenue expenditure.

Question 12

Please can you confirm the line items for CCTV rolling programmes and for Community Partnerships on this page? P49

Written Answer

The CCTV programme is the only capital budget relating to Community Partnerships within the programme; no expenditure is now envisaged in 2022/23.