

**Reigate and Banstead Borough Council**  
**Meeting of Council 1 December 2022**  
**Questions by Members**

	<b>Question by</b>	<b>Answered by</b>	<b>Subject</b>
1.	Councillor Booton	Councillor Brunt, the Leader of the Council	The climate emergency
2.	Councillor Essex	Councillor Brunt, the Leader of the Council	Home Upgrade Grant
3.	Councillor Baker	Councillor Lewanski, the Executive Member for Corporate Policy & Resources	The Armed Forces Covenant
4.	Councillor Proudfoot	Councillor Schofield, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance & Governance	Energy Bill Support Payments
5.	Councillor Ritter	Councillor Neame, the Executive Member for Housing & Support	Winter support for those who are homeless
6.	Councillor Chandler	Councillor Archer, the Executive Member for Investment & Companies	Horley Business Park
7.	Councillor Sinden	Councillor Archer, the Executive Member for Investment & Companies	Community space at the Marketfield Way Development
9.	Councillor McKenna	Councillor Biggs, Executive Member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery	Surrey Development Forum
<b>Written responses given after the meeting</b>			
8.	Councillor Torra	Councillor Sachdeva, The Executive Member for Leisure & Culture	Swimming pools
10.	Councillor Sinden	Councillor Biggs, Executive Member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery	Marketfield Way Development

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

**Question 1: The Climate Emergency**

The Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, stated in his recent Autumn Statement that climate change was an "existential vulnerability we face".

Can this council's portfolio holder for climate change explain to the residents of this borough why this council is digging its heels in when it comes to declaring a climate emergency, not only flying in the face of the Chancellor's statements but leaving us trailing behind the numerous other councils that have already made such a declaration?

**Response:**

Thank you, Councillor Booton.

I do not recognise a number of parts of your question. Firstly, that the Council is digging in its heels. As Members are aware, this Council has continued to make a commitment to the priority of tackling climate change. Your accusation is not founded when the issue of climate change is a critical priority for this Council and the whole of the Borough.

I also note that you feel that the Council is trailing behind numerous other Councils. Again, I find this statement difficult to recognise when our Environmental Sustainability Strategy was agreed in 2020, since when good progress has been made towards its implementation. This was reported to both the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Executive at their respective meetings in September 2022.

Our focus is on action. This is more appropriate than just making a declaration. Whilst many other councils have made this declaration, they have made less progress in addressing climate change than has been achieved by our Council.

My question to you is how does making the declaration of a climate emergency add to the sum of what we are already doing? This Council is committed to tackling climate change within both this Council and the Borough. Additionally, if there is a need to declare a climate emergency, why would we not be declaring, for example, an affordable housing emergency or a fuel poverty emergency?

I have no objection to declaring a climate emergency if you can demonstrate what it actually would actually achieve; how it is going to provide the Council with more funding or unblock some of the issues we face when tackling climate change. If we can understand this then we can make an informed decision on making a declaration rather than responding to what feels like rhetoric.

**Supplementary Question**

Do you personally agree that we are currently in a state of climate emergency?

**Response**

I would note, and I'm sure that other Members will note, that Councillor Booton did not try, even attempt to try, to answer the question I posed to him. Maybe it is a little

bit unorthodox for someone who receives a question to ask a question, but I think it is an important one.

We have stated as a Council that we are tackling climate change and the impacts of climate change. The things that are affecting climate change are a priority for this Council and that has not changed. We have all made this commitment. I am happy to renew my personal commitment, and the commitment on behalf of this Council, to do everything within our power to ensure that climate change and its impact on our communities and our planet are tackled by this Council.

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

### **Question 2: Home Upgrade Grant**

Please provide an update on the Council's plans to bid for the government's Home Upgrade Grant which closes in January 2023 and to what extent the Autumn statement has changed the amount of money allocated by government to retrofit of homes going forward.

### **Response:**

Thank you, Councillor Essex.

The Homes Upgrade Grant Phase 2 is a government grant funding scheme that has been set up to provide energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating systems. It is specifically targeted at low-income households living in hard to heat, off-gas grid homes.

Consistent with previous rounds of government funding, Surrey County Council has submitted a consortium bid for the County as a whole, to be delivered by Action Surrey, as was previously explained by Councillor Lewanski in reply to the public speaker.

In the meantime - on behalf of this Council and other Surrey councils - Action Surrey is coordinating the roll out of £11.9m worth of grant secured from the Government's Sustainable Warmth Fund and Home Upgrade Grant Phase 1. This fund is still open for applications from local households, and I would encourage members to promote it in their wards. I have already had a number of applicants who have in my own ward who have benefitted. It is a really good scheme.

In relation to the second part of your question, information about the content of the Autumn Statement is freely available via the Treasury website. It confirms what the Chancellor announced on 17 November, that is (and I quote):

“New government funding worth £6 billion will be made available from 2025 to 2028, in addition to the £6.6 billion provided in this Parliament.”

I am committed to sharing with the Members of the Council more information on this as it become clearer.

### **Supplementary Question:**

I agree with the Leader; the real detail of what was announced in the Chancellor's statement is yet to come forward. It is my understanding that the £6 billion of funding announced to be available from 2025 does not represent an increase on the funding available from now until this point. If it transpires that this is not an increase in the available funding, will the Leader commit to personally writing to the Government to raise this issue?

This is a priority for this Council and, frankly, the amount of funding available from the Government is clearly not on the magnitude needed to deal with the scale of the problem.

**Response**

Yes, I will write to the Government. It needs to do more and give more funding if we are to make a significant impact. I have recently written to the Prime Minister and I am happy to continue to do that if we do not get the information that we want.

**Councillor Baker** asked the **Executive Member for Corporate Policy & Resources, Councillor Lewanski**, the following question:

**Question 3: The Armed Forces Covenant**

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or have served are treated fairly.

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council have successfully achieved Bronze Employer Status under the Armed Forces Covenant guidelines. Will the Council commit to further development in achieving the Silver and eventually Gold employer awards?

**Response:**

Thank you, Councillor Baker.

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council is committed to its work and support to the armed forces in honouring the armed forces covenant, ensuring that the Borough of Reigate & Banstead remains an inclusive and welcoming home for military personnel and civilians alike.

As you rightly say, the Council already has achieved its bronze status in 2018.

I am personally supportive of this work. I am sure all Members are. I look forward to exploring this further through the Employment Committee's forward plan.

Also, I would like to commend Councillor Baker for all his work as the Armed Forces Champion for this Council. I am sure this would be supported by all Members. We give you our thanks.

No supplementary question was forthcoming.

**Councillor Proudfoot** asked the **Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance & Governance, Councillor Schofield**, the following question:

**Question 4: Energy Bill Support Payments**

What action is the council taking to ensure all residents are receiving the Energy Bills Support payment? In particular in relation to residents who do not have a direct relationship with their energy supplier, such as those living in mobile home parks.

Can the council advise how many people are affected and if RBBC is the landlord for any establishments affected by this issue and what support the council is giving to those residents before they receive this payment.

**Response:**

Thank you Councillor Proudfoot for asking the question on behalf of Councillor Chester.

Since April the Council has been delivering the Council Tax Energy Rebate scheme, which is a payment of £150 to all households in Council Tax bands A to D. Additionally, a discretionary scheme has provided support to eligible households in Council Tax Bands E to H.

Since April, we have made payments of over £5m to more than 34,000 households. Under government rules, the recipient must be registered for Council Tax, rather than having a direct relationship or contract with an energy provider. Those with a direct relationship, the government deals with directly.

The government has also been providing support to households directly where they have a contract with an energy provider. In November, the government announced a new scheme, the Alternative Support for Household Energy Bills. Local authorities will be delivering these payments, which will include households which do not have a direct relationship with an energy supplier, such as residents living in mobile home parks. We will endeavour to deliver these payments in a timely manner. As we have done to date with the other schemes.

Tenants of homes owned by Reigate and Banstead qualify for the main support being provided, as all tenants have a direct relationship with an energy provider. There are approximately 100 homes on parks which will be benefiting.

No supplementary question was forthcoming.

**Councillor Ritter** asked **Executive Member for Housing & Support, Councillor Neame**, the following question:

**Question 5: Winter support for those who are homeless**

Can the Executive member for Housing and homelessness share what this council is doing to ensure that residents who find themselves homeless this winter are able to access warm spaces in the day and what they are doing to support rough sleepers who would (pre-pandemic) have been given an overnight stay by the local winter night shelter?

**Response:**

Thank you, Councillor Ritter.

Any person who is street homeless and approaches the Council will be assessed and offered reconnection if from another area, or if local and officers have reason to believe the applicant has a 'priority need' under homeless legislation, they will be offered a placement in emergency accommodation where they can stay 24/7.

For those homeless that do not have a 'priority need', they will be offered emergency accommodation during the worst of the winter and given advice and assistance in securing alternative accommodation. Advice will also be offered on locations offering warm hubs including the services of the Renewed Hope Trust and the Redhill Library as well as others.

No supplementary question was forthcoming.



**Councillor Chandler** asked **Executive Member for Investment & Companies, Councillor Archer**, the following question:

**Question 6: Horley Business Park**

Can you confirm how much the Council has spent on its Horley Business Park venture to date, where that leaves the Council now, and when the Council will update residents on its plans going forward.

**Response:**

Thank you, Councillor Chandler.

Joint venture costs are exempt information and cannot be discussed in public. Councillor Chandler has already had access to this exempt information.

The Horley Business Park was allocated in the 2019 Development Management Plan to provide the employment floorspace necessary to meet demands across the Borough and wider sub-region. Delivery of the scheme was always likely to take time and the allocation Policy HOR9 acknowledges that it may be beyond the end of the current plan period in 2027.

The site remains allocated for a business park and there is no change of plans in that respect and so nothing to update residents on at this time.

**Supplementary Question:**

When will it be possible for the information to be made public?

**Response**

In the fullness of time, the information will become public. At the moment, the Council is in a period of restricted commercial negotiations. This means that we are not able to release the information that I think you seek, but which you do have access to on a confidential basis. While on the subject of the Horley Business Park, I would add that our long-term vision is for a world-class green and sustainable facility providing much needed investment in Horley and employment opportunities for local residents. I think this an ambition that is worth pursuing

**Councillor Sinden** asked the **Executive Member for Investments & Companies, Councillor Archer** the following question:

**Question 7: Community space at the Marketfield Way Development**

When will the community space at the ground floor of the Marketfield Place development be opened, and what will it be used for?

**Response:**

Thank you, Councillor Sinden.

We are currently at the final stages of finalising plans for two tenants to take joint occupation of 13 Marketfield Way on a long-term lease.

The first tenant, from the third sector, will provide community services focused on charitable and community activities including delivery of a community workspace for third sector organisations; the second will provide a community health care hub offering a range of health care services.

The timing for occupation is yet to be confirmed as it is dependent on completion of the lease and tendering for internal fit out works.

**Supplementary Question:**

Will community space only be open Monday to Friday or will it be open every day?

**Response**

Negotiations are still ongoing with the finer detail still to be confirmed. I would be happy to confirm these details once this is known and will commit to writing to you when I am in a position to do so.

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

**Question 9: Surrey Development Forum**

The Surrey Development Forum (see [surreydev.co.uk](http://surreydev.co.uk)) says it is bringing developers together and working in unison to build homes in Surrey. It includes all Surrey's councils and currently has 29 housing developer partners. What are the benefits to the Council of its participation in the Forum and what meetings has the council taken part in through the Forum over the past year?

**Response:**

Thank you, Councillor McKenna.

The Surrey Development Forum is in its second year now and as you say, includes membership of all Boroughs and Districts across Surrey as well as the County Council and a number of developers.

The Forum meets quarterly with the respective Heads of Planning of each of the Boroughs and Districts normally attending.

There are no case specific discussions and each meeting will normally include a presentation from a relevant organisation, such as from the Surrey Wildlife Trust or Environment Agency.

Overall, my officers tell me it has been beneficial, tackling issues such as biodiversity net gain, first homes, utilities challenges and the building beautiful agenda. The development industry is expected to abide by new environmental and other legislation and the forum is helpful in improving understanding across all sectors and for the respective parties to learn from one another's experiences and understand each other's challenges.

The Forum has allowed us to set out what we as a Borough expect from developers wishing to invest in our Borough and hopefully will lead to improved applications and/or developments as a result. And any proposed development will continue to go through the detailed scrutiny provided by our Planning Committee.

**Supplementary Question:**

As a public body, it would be helpful to have sight of agenda and minutes from the meetings of Surrey Development Forum. Please would it be possible for these to be circulated.

**Response**

The Surrey Development Forum was actually set-up by the developers and therefore it is not a public body. However, I will certainly ask my officers if we can share the minutes or other information from the forum.

## **WRITTEN RESPONSES TO BE PROVIDED AFTER THE MEETING**

**Councillor Torra** asked the **Executive Member for Leisure & Culture, Councillor Sachdeva**, the following question:

### **Question 8: Swimming pools**

Having seen the news and councils saying they may close swimming pools are our local pools at our three leisure centres affected and will the temperatures of our swimming pools be reduced?

### **Response:**

Thank you, Councillor Torra, for raising the issue of utility costs and their effect on Leisure centres across the country.

We have been working with our delivery partner, GLL, to reduce the impact of the energy crisis, and I am confident that we will be able to keep our 6 swimming pools in 3 Leisure Centres open for our residents.

RBBC supports GLL's measures to reduce the financial burden of the energy crisis, which has significantly increased the operational costs. To date, GLL has:

- Reduced all pools by 1 degree (in operation since August 2022)
- Changed all old lighting to LED
- Installed new light sensors used in areas of the centres
- Switched lights & heating off if rooms are not in use
- Begun to reduce the operational hours of the pools. A total of 23 hrs per week will be taken off the timetable across all 3 Leisure centres. This, typically at the end of the day, does not affect swimming lessons.

My officers and I will continue to work with GLL to ensure that any further changes to the operation of the centres are kept to a minimum, and we will monitor the impact of the changes on the delivery of the service and our resident's experience.

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

**Question 10: Marketfield Way Development**

Please provide an update on the development plans at Marketfield Way in Redhill.

**Response**

Thank you, Councillor Sinden.

The Council is making very good progress in bringing forward our flagship mixed use development – the Rise - in Marketfield Way.

Our Principal Contractor VINCI is due to complete their works (Practical Completion) in the next few months, which will be a major milestone for the project.

Once VINCI finish their works the development will be handed over to the Council and the new homes to Kooky.

During this time and before the development is open to the public in 2023, the Council, as building owners, will be putting everything in place that it needs to ensure that the development operates as it should, such as building and estate management services.

As you know we have already secured a number of important pre lets with two major tenants and we are currently finalising lettings with a number of other leisure, food and drink operators, so that the units can be passed on to the new businesses and they can begin their own fit outs. Tenant fit outs are scheduled to begin in January.

We will work with our new tenants like the Light and Tesco to ensure that new jobs created in the development are made available for local people and to make sure The Rise will be a great success for Redhill and for our Borough.