

# Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Meeting of Council 21 September 2023

## Questions by Members

Verbal responses were given at the meeting			
	Question by	To be answered by	Subject
1.	Councillor Ritter	Councillor Biggs, the Leader of the Council	Community Development Team
2.	Councillor Chester	Councillor Biggs, the Leader of the Council	Gatwick Airport Planning Application
3.	Councillor Smith	Councillor Ashford, Executive Member for Communities, Leisure & Culture	Anti-Social Behaviour in Redhill Town Centre
4.	Councillor Essex	Councillor Ashford, Executive Member for Communities, Leisure & Culture	Anti-Social Behaviour
5.	Councillor Khan	Councillor Ashford, Executive Member for Communities, Leisure & Culture	Community Transport Service
6.	Councillor Tary	Councillor Ashford, Executive Member for Communities, Leisure & Culture	Household Support Fund
7.	Councillor Sachdeva	Councillor Moses, the Executive Member for Environment & Sustainability	Woodlands at Wray Common
8.	Councillor Dwight	Councillor Lewanski, Deputy Leader and the Executive Member for Finance, Governance & Organisation	The Council's finances
9.	Councillor Booton	Councillor Lewanski, Deputy Leader and the Executive Member for Finance, Governance & Organisation	Voluntary and Community Sector Reserve Fund
10.	Councillor Fairhurst	Councillor Neame, Executive Member for Housing & Support	Temporary Accommodation

11.	Councillor Buttironi	Councillor Michalowski, Executive Member for Place, Planning & Regulatory Services	The Local Plan
12.	Councillor McKenna	Councillor Michalowski, Executive Member for Place, Planning & Regulatory Services	Section 106 Monies
<b>Written responses were given after the meeting</b>			
13.	Councillor Khan	Councillor Ashford, Executive Member for Communities, Leisure & Culture	Merstham Mix
14.	Councillor Sinden	Councillor Ashford, Executive Member for Communities, Leisure & Culture	Support for charities

**Councillor Ritter** will ask the **Leader of the Council, Councillor Biggs**, the following question:

### **Question 1: Community Development Team**

This council takes great pride in its community development team and the increasing collaborative work with health partners in the new Integrated Care Systems and Place based Partnerships within the NHS, as shared in the Leader's update at Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6th September. Can the Leader of the Council share the Council's level of ambition going forwards for the community development team, including securing funding to keep existing posts and whether it is planned to be expanded to work across our whole Borough to align to the NHS's new Place-based partnerships of East Surrey and Surrey Downs, so that all residents and communities might benefit from the preventative healthcare/ community development and support work that they do so effectively?

### **Response**

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight the great work of our community development team, who work in particular in the more disadvantaged parts of our borough. As a Council we have invested in Community Development for approaching 20 years now, and expanded our investment 6 years ago to cover more areas of the borough. The team works tirelessly to help our communities to take the lead in developing local initiatives, works in partnership with over 200 local organisations and groups, and supports individuals in particular hardship.

Since the start of the pandemic, our partnership working with local NHS partners has grown exponentially, and I am proud to represent Surrey district and borough Leaders on the Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership. In 2022, the Council secured two years of funding from East Surrey Place, part of Surrey Heartlands, towards the community development team. The team's partnership working with local GPs and other health sector partners has helped our local NHS to link into our well established partnership working structures and to listen to local communities, with many positive impacts, such as an increased take up of Covid vaccinations in an area of the borough where take up was one of the lowest in Surrey, and the establishment of the Hublets Stay and Play at the Merstham hub. Whilst the Community Development Partner Networks led by the team focus on the areas of Redhill, Preston, Horley, Merstham, Woodhatch and Whitebushes, in reality the partners who attend and the issues discussed provide benefits to residents across our whole borough.

Our senior officers also play a leading role in the East Surrey Prevention and Communities Priority and work closely with the Banstead Primary Care Network in Surrey Downs, ensuring that the preventative healthcare benefits of partnership working and working with communities benefits all of our residents across the whole borough.

We are in active discussions with NHS partners regarding the crucial role that our community development team plays in the NHS's ambition to work at a neighbourhood

level, and the importance therefore of the NHS's funding contribution to the team being maintained over the long term. All the rest of the borough included in the discussions.

### **Supplementary Question**

There was no supplementary question asked.

**Councillor Chester** will ask **Leader of the Council, Councillor Biggs**, the following question:

## **Question 2: Gatwick Airport Planning Application**

Now Gatwick Airport's planning application for a second runway has been accepted by government, ignoring the Adequacy of Consultation call, from this and other councils, showing that Gatwick Airport's Consultation was inadequate, how will Councillors be briefed, and how will the Council engage with the residents to ensure they are correctly informed and supported to register before the 29 October deadline so they are able their say in this extremely important planning consultation?

### **Response**

This Council, along with others, will be a consultee in the DCO process, rather than being the decision maker or having a more formal role in its determination.

Gatwick Airport, as applicant, has a statutory duty with regards notification and publicity and on the 5<sup>th</sup> September they issued their Section 51 notice which invites interested parties to register their interest in the examination process, by the making of a relevant representation up until the 29<sup>th</sup> October.

Press notices have been made in both local and national newspapers and both Gatwick's and the Planning Inspectorate's websites have been updated with information advising interested parties how they can get involved.

Officers in the Planning and Communications Teams are working together to seek to publicise further, potentially to include a website news item, some social media posts, an item in Borough e-news as well as inclusion in the Members' e-newsletter, ReMember.

As Councillors, we have an important role to play in helping spread the word, especially to offline audiences and I know that Horley Town Council is actively involved in this too. Sharing of social media posts.

In terms of Member briefings, we will circulate the Council's responses as and when they are drafted, the next one being the submission of the Relevant Representation by October 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **Supplementary Question**

How will this Council ensure that Members and residents are fully informed of the details of the Gatwick Planning Application? Will engagement go beyond Horley Town Council to other local bodies?

## **Supplementary Response**

A Member briefing will be provided and the Portfolio Holder will make sure everything possible is done to inform residents and answer their questions. However, it is the responsibility of Gatwick Airport to answer any questions Members and residents have about the planning application.

**Councillor Smith** will ask the **Executive Member for Communities, Leisure & Culture, Councillor Ashford**, the following question:

### **Question 3: Anti-Social Behaviour in Redhill Town Centre**

There is a growing problem of Anti-Social Behaviour in Redhill Town Centre. Our local businesses, residents and visitors report threats, bottle throwing and general low-level harassment during the day and night.

The Redhill Development Plan, published in 2009, states that there is a 20-year plan for turning around Redhill Town Centre and developing it to become “a safe, people-friendly, desirable place to be...”. At present we are a long way from realising that aspiration the situation in Redhill Town Centre and Memorial Park is deteriorating and affecting everyone in the Borough. Redhill should, by 2029, be “the focal point for East Surrey’s, and one of the regions, major towns.”

I was surprised to hear from a JET member a few weeks ago where he explained that RBBC were unable to gather evidence of anti-social behaviour, to target resources and assist in prosecution, as the majority of cameras in Redhill Town Centre were not working. He informed me that when CCTV stopped working they weren't fixed and more worryingly hadn't been monitored for a very long time.

As the local councillor I've not seen a regular light touch policing presence in Redhill for many years, the lack of both regular neighbourhood policing and effective and monitored CCTV are at odds to the Town Centre Plan about creating a safe, people-friendly, desirable place to be which has just 6 years left to run.

Would Councillor Ashford please confirm for me and the residents, businesses and visitors how many working CCTV cameras there are in Redhill Town Centre now and if they are monitored 24hrs a day and 7 days a week.

### **Response**

Regarding CCTV, I will draw your attention to the Executive decision in December 2020 to rationalise CCTV in the borough, upgrading CCTV in Bancroft and Clarendon Road car parks, and in Lady Neville, Memorial and Priory Parks, and removing the other public realm CCTV across the borough. The Executive's decision was in response to losing the current Police CCTV monitoring arrangements, and recognises the developments in privately owned CCTV since the Council cameras were established.

Work to remove the redundant town centre cameras is being undertaken in the autumn, with the works to upgrade the cameras in the car parks and parks having been completed over the summer. I will notify ward members directly once the timescales have been confirmed.

More broadly in relation to Redhill the Council are currently reviewing the Public Space Protection Order that has been in place since 2017 and was renewed in 2020. I look forward to meeting with Redhill ward members on Monday to discuss this further.

### **Supplementary Question**

Please can the Executive Member confirm that there are zero working CCTV cameras in Redhill Town Centre.

### **Supplementary Response**

Yes. Please refer to the full details of Executive decision taken in December 2020. This includes information on a full consultation and discussion with the Police about the lack of need for its CCTV control room in the area and the preference for privately owned CCTV.



**Councillor Essex** will ask **Executive Member for Communities, Leisure & Culture, Councillor Ashford**, the following question:

#### **Question 4: Anti-Social Behaviour**

What more can the Council do, including through its joint enforcement team and its support to youth services and the voluntary sector to better tackle ASB, including Redhill, Merstham and elsewhere across the borough.

#### **Response**

Definition of what is anti-social behaviour.

The Council convenes a monthly Joint Action Group (JAG) at which partners meet to ensure that there is co-ordinated action around areas of the Borough where there have been concerns about anti-social behaviour (ASB). Redhill and Merstham have been on recent agendas and will continue to be considered.

The Council's Joint Enforcement Team (JET) proactively patrol all areas of the borough six days a week with special attention paid to areas discussed at the JAG and other forums. Intelligence is gathered by JET officers by visiting town centre businesses who are also given local officer contact details and advice. This intelligence is fed back into JAG and other channels for action where relevant. Alongside this JET deal with reports of ASB from Members, the public and partners, issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for instances of littering and fly tipping and Community Protection Warnings to individuals causing ASB in the town centres.

Prior to the Covid pandemic Council officers had been convening a youth partners network called "Get Connected". This work is now being re-invigorated to ensure there is co-ordination and support for young people across the Borough. A well-attended meeting last week with partners, including the police, Surrey County Council, YMCA and schools, demonstrated the wealth of existing activities in place but also the appetite to do more. Council officers will now be taking this forward.

#### **Supplementary Question**

What more can we do beyond what we are already doing? For example, what can the Council do to address the persistent issue of car cruising in Horley on Thursday nights and thefts from shops? Whilst it is accepted that in the round, addressing Anti-Social Behaviour in Reigate & Banstead is in a good place, what more can be done to address specific issues?

## **Supplementary Response**

I have been working with Councillor Avery and others for Horley to raise the issue of cruising cars with the Police. However, addressing this is difficult if it is not known in advance when and where exactly this will happen. Whilst the Council does not have the powers to address this directly, it does communicate regularly with the Police. I will be meeting with the Borough Commander and will raise these issues directly. I am also about to meet with Redhill Councillors to discuss the Public Space Protection Order which does give the Council powers to issue warnings and Community Protection Notices. I cannot stress enough the need to report all these incidents to the Police. This will enable the Police to target and ramp up their activity in specific areas. The Joint Action Group is showing a reduction in Anti-Social Behaviour in Redhill which means all incidents need to be logged. Let's get this raised at the Joint Action Group and discussed.

**Councillor Khan** will ask Councillor Ashford, the Executive member for Communities, Leisure and Culture the following question:

### **Question 5: Community Transport Service**

Earlier this month, following the success of a service launched in Mole Valley, Surrey County Council's Digital Demand Responsive Transport service expanded to cover Tandridge. This community transport service aims to, "improve access to services where there are fewer buses." Please provide an update as to what engagement this Council has had with Surrey County Council to extend this to our borough, to better support those with disability and serve those living in places that are inadequately served by public transport, such as Netherne On The Hill?

### **Response**

Officers at Reigate and Banstead Borough Council have liaised with officers at Surrey County Council (SCC) about the Digital Demand Responsive Transport Service.

Surrey County Council officers have confirmed that work was undertaken by independent consultants to identify those areas of Surrey that would most benefit from the Demand Responsive Transport Service. This included a review of bus services and a public survey.

Conversations are underway about whether areas within Reigate and Banstead might be included in future tranches of the scheme. However, this would be subject to budgetary considerations given our understanding is that SCC only funds the initial operating costs.

### **Supplementary Question**

I am curious to see that the neighbouring Boroughs of Mole Valley and Tandridge do have this services but we don't. What signal does this give to our residents; that we don't have the money or that we don't care?

### **Supplementary Response**

I am slightly concerned that you are referring to a Surrey County Council Service and think you should direct your question to your Surrey County Councillor, Councillor Kelly who is present at this meeting. I have myself already written to Councillor Kelly asking what more we can do to get a bus service for those residents. This Council has not started this service which is the simple answer to the question. Please consult with Surrey County Council and your Surrey County Councillor.

**Councillor Tary** will ask the **Executive Member for Communities, Leisure & Culture, Councillor Ashford**, the following question:

### **Question 6: Household Support Fund**

There have previously been 3 rounds of the government's Household Support Fund distributed to our most vulnerable residents. As we approach the winter months, can the portfolio holder for Communities, Leisure & Culture please outline the council's plans to distribute the 4th round of funding and confirm when this funding will be available to residents.

### **Response**

We have been allocated £512k from Surrey County Council for the 4<sup>th</sup> round of the Household Support Fund. This brings the total allocated to the Council for distribution to vulnerable residents to £1.52 million over the 4 funding rounds.

During the three previous rounds we have supported over 6,700 financially vulnerable households. The support has included supermarket vouchers, one-off payments and grants to voluntary and community organisations to provide direct support for residents for items such as winter clothing and top ups to gas and electricity meters.

In each round local voluntary and community organisations have established high quality support for our residents, ensuring that the way the fund is offered meets the needs of the residents they support. They have fed back on the significant difference this funding has made to residents who are struggling. I wanted to share some examples with you. Stripey Stork have been able to provide children with winter coats and onesies that families would have otherwise not been able to afford. East Surrey Domestic Abuse Service has been able to fund essentials for victims of domestic abuse, and say that helping people with their basic needs makes such a difference to their wider situation. Local older people's organisations have been able to fund lunch for those who attend their centres but have been choosing the snack because they can't afford the hot meal – they say that the knowledge that a hot, two course homecooked meal is available to share with their friends can really improve wellbeing. Our own teams involved in issuing vouchers have commented on how many residents express their gratitude when a food voucher is issued saying what a difference it will make to their families.

### **Supplementary Question**

There was no supplementary question asked.

**Councillor Sachdeva** will ask the **Executive Member for Environment & Sustainability, Councillor Moses**, the following question:

### **Question 7: Woodlands at Wray Common**

I would like to draw attention to the concerning state of the woodlands at Wray Common, which serve as a crucial path used by pupils of Wray Common Primary School and local residents. As the environment Portfolio Holder, can you please provide insights into the specific challenges leading to the decline of these woodlands, by Ash die back and what steps the Council intends to take to safeguard and revitalize this essential pathway and its surrounding ecosystem for the benefit of both the school children and the local community?

### **Response**

Thank you, Councillor Sachdeva.

We do have a newly appointed Trees and Woodlands Officer, an Arboriculturist and Environmental Scientist with 25 years of local government experience in Environmental matters and he is looking at woodlands as part of his role. He is very focused on practical and achievable works that result in enhancing habitat quality and thus biodiversity.

An inspection was carried out at Wray Common woodland following concerns raised around Ash dieback affecting the locality. An application was submitted to the Planning Team (due to the trees being in a conservation area) to carry out selective felling of diseased trees. There are a number of trees that have been inspected that unfortunately, require further works. We operate an industry wide approach to managing Ash Dieback, which unfortunately is an ongoing threat to Ash trees in the UK. This approach sees trees categorised on their crown functionality.

If a tree has lost 75% or more of its foliage it is marked for removal. The Forestry Commission encourages where possible the retention of Ash trees that are still alive as it is hoped that some remaining Ash will have a modicum of genetic resilience to Chalara (Ash dieback) and thus could be used to repopulate the species.

The trees marked for felling on Wray Common are those within striking distance of the school or footpaths so cannot be retained at this time. The trees earmarked for felling are not the only trees with the disease at this location but as mentioned above they are the trees that pose the most risk at this time. The site will be surveyed again this time next year, where I am sure others are likely to have deteriorated further and need removal.

As bleak as Chalara is, the removed Ash in woodland settings will allow light to reach the woodland floor and encourage ground flora from the soil seed bank. This will

promote patches and areas of diverse flora much like the shrub layers on woodland edges. Selective felling (an old woodland management technique) also does the same by creating glades within an area that were previously dark and lacking ground flora. As a result, in some cases tree loss will be beneficial for biodiversity in the longer term.

Regarding restocking of lost woodland, newly planted trees generally do not do well when planted in an established woodland setting unless a significant area of the wood has been cleared. This is due to competition for light and water. If the established trees are too close, they will outcompete the new trees very quickly resulting in high failure rates and wasted money and resources.

Successful planting projects require much planning and preparation, very good resourcing, space, ongoing maintenance, and significant amounts of watering per week for the first 2 to 3 years. To replace, for example a dozen individual ash trees in a mature wood would generally not be economical or successful, in these situations it is best to allow the woodland to naturally regenerate. Where we find extensive Ash woodland loss, the Tree Officer will be looking at resourcing the required replanting schemes following his initial survey throughout the Borough.

As an addition to the above we do actively promote leaving dead trees standing where they are away from footpaths or property as this provides a vital and rare habitat for a variety of species. We also leave stacked wood piles for invertebrates where standing deadwood is inadvisable.

Officers will be actively monitoring the progress of any natural regrowth from the seed bank. We will seek to fence off said areas to best preserve from disturbance. This is likely to be ongoing through the different seasons for the next three years. Should we notice any Ash regrowth, we would look to whip plant alternative species and continue to monitor progress.

I hope the above goes some way to answering your concerns.

### **Supplementary Question**

I would like to propose a site visit with officers and the Executive Member to explore interim safety measures and precautions aimed at ensuring the safety of residents. Additionally, I'm interested in discussing strategies for alerting and educating residents and woodland park users about potential hazards during the ongoing selective felling and regeneration efforts.

### **Supplementary Response**

I acknowledge your concerns and confirm that I will do a site visit including with officers.

**Councillor Dwight** will ask the **Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance, Governance and Organisation, Councillor Lewanski**, the following question:

### **Question 8: The Council's finances**

In terms of the recent financial difficulties experienced by a number of local authorities, what assurance can you give us that our Council is financially robust?

### **Response**

It's probably fair to say that Members and officers across the local government sector have been taken aback by the scale of issues that have been experienced over the past couple of years by local authorities of all sizes across England.

I want to start by reassuring all Members of this Council that Reigate & Banstead Borough is not facing similar challenges and will not find itself in the same position.

Many of the reasons for the issues experienced by the authorities that are now making the headlines stem from local circumstances and decisions in the past.

For example, several are now in the spotlight due their decision to borrow to invest in income-earning assets as a means of balancing their budgets. Indeed many authorities have such investments and there was a period where Government and the regulatory bodies were endorsing this approach.

However, it is the scale of those investments and the associated risks that are turning against authorities that now find themselves with many hundreds of millions, (and in a handful of cases more than a billion), in debt while the associated income streams have not materialised and asset values have fallen.

Once again, I can reassure Members of this Council that we are definitely not in that position. We have no long term debt and our assets are well-managed.

Turning back to Cllr Dwight's question about whether this Council is financially robust: as Members we always have to acknowledge that there is a degree of risk when managing the finances of a complex organisation like this authority.

And the underlying local government funding system is complex and long overdue for reform.

This makes it challenging to plan ahead when we are never 100% sure what the council tax increase and our share of business rates will be, or how many one-off

grants we might be awarded and for how long. And the current economic challenges mean that demands on our services are increasing.

But turning back to Reigate & Banstead - I can reassure Council Members that we have very effective controls in place to ensure we set a legal balanced budget each year, and that we monitor budgets in-year and take action where issues are identified. Also that we take a medium term perspective to ensure our finances remain under control. We are also in a particularly strong position due to holding a healthy level of Reserves to help us manage financial challenges when they arise.

So in conclusion, we must never be complacent, but we can certainly be more confident than many of our neighbours about the robustness of this Council's finances at this time.

### **Supplementary Question**

Residents welcome the investment across the Borough including the Council's work with the private sector to deliver projects like The Light. Would my colleague agree that this is a good example of the sound political leadership residents can expect from Conservatives locally, delivering public good alongside responsible financial management.

### **Supplementary Response**

I fully agree.



**Councillor Booton** will ask the **Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance, Governance and Organisation, Councillor Lewanski**, the following question:

### **Question 9: Voluntary and Community Sector Reserve Fund**

In February, the Council established a £150,000 reserve fund to support the local voluntary and community sector this year. How much of this has been spent to date and what plans are there in place to use it to increase support to local charities in the coming months?

#### **Response**

I can confirm that the Council did indeed establish a new earmarked Revenue Reserve amounting to £150,000 during budget setting for 2023/24. This was equivalent to 1% of this council's share of council tax income.

The Reserve was created in acknowledgement that there were likely to be increasing pressures on local residents, as a consequence of current economic challenges.

I would however point out that these funds were not specifically allocated for supporting the voluntary and community sector, although we may well opt to call on their help when distributing them to residents.

Over recent months we have been prioritising distribution of the £512,000 Household Support Grant funding received from the Government via Surrey County Council which has to be spent this year. These resources are being used to support residents in need with food and fuel vouchers, hot meals, household essentials, energy efficiency measures and to assist with some Housing costs. In many cases our voluntary and community sector partners have been helping us to distribute this funding.

We currently anticipate that the £150k in the Reserve will be used for providing similar ongoing support to residents in need as a supplement to the HSF funds.

We will report back to Members as part of budget monitoring as the Reserve funds are drawn down.

#### **Supplementary Question**

Could we commit that any monies earmarked in reserves for this purpose which are not spent in this financial year, be carried over and used for the same purposes next year?

#### **Response**

Yes. We can commit that any earmarked funds that have not been spent will be carried forward into the following year as I believe no time limit has been set.

**Councillor Fairhurst** will ask the **Executive Member for Housing & Support, Councillor Neame**, the following question:

### **Question 10: Temporary Accommodation**

Can an update please be provided on the Council's progress with regard to obtaining more temporary accommodation to assist local people who find themselves unavoidably homeless?

### **Response**

We are continuously funding, building and purchasing accommodation to support local people who find themselves unfortunately homeless.

In the last 12 months:

- We completed the build of 4 one-bed supported temporary accommodation. These properties are now used for applicants who need to move on from emergency accommodation. These remain in Council ownership. We spent £850k on the build of which £190k was secured from Government grant.
- We have part funded £240k towards the development of 4 one-bed supported flats for homeless young parents with a child. Purchased with Homes England and Transform Housing (who retain ownership and provide the support).
- In October, the Executive approved the budget of £4m for the purchase of a number of family-size temporary accommodations and one shared house for single homeless applicants. So far we have purchased 5 family homes of 2&3 bed properties and a large house for singles is also almost through conveyancing. Further properties will be purchased within this budget. All will provide desperately needed temporary and emergency accommodation in the borough. These properties will be owned and managed by the Council. We also expect to successfully claim over £500k in Government grants towards these and further purchases, which will be used to buy more properties.
- In March the government, through the Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities, offered a grant of over £2m to part-fund the purchase of 12 family homes (with only minor restrictions on the first let). To facilitate the purchase, the Executive approved a budget of over £1m to add to the fund. Funding from our partners Mount Green and Raven Housing has been added to the £2m Government grant for the purchase. Of the 12 family homes, 4 will remain in Council ownership and the other 8 owned by Mount Green and Raven with 100% allocation to RBBC.

- Last week, the Executive approved a further budget of just over £1m for the second government grant of £825k for the purchase of an additional 4 family homes that again will remain in Council ownership.
- The Housing team also regularly helps local residents by providing rent in advance and deposits to help households secure private tenancies in an area of their choice, in order to avoid homelessness.

### **Supplementary Question**

There was no supplementary question asked.

**Councillor Buttironi** will ask the **Executive Member for Place, Planning & Regulatory Services, Councillor Michalowski**, the following question:

### **Question 11: The Local Plan**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Place, Planning and Regulatory Services, Cllr Michalowski, inform members on the progress of the Local Plan and if the Government's proposed changes to the style of plan will impact this Borough?

### **Response**

Officers held a public launch event in February and have since started work on preparing a duty to cooperate framework and have undertaken procurements on some of the main evidence documents. However, progress has slipped from that anticipated when the Local Development Scheme was agreed last October.

This has been in part due to problems with procurement and in part due to the competing work pressures of the Gatwick DCO and Strategic CIL process. However, neither of these were critical to the timeframe and lost time could have been caught up.

A more significant factor in the Plan's progress is, as you say, the Government's proposed local plan reforms. These have been mooted for a while but further detail on the implementation was published at the end of July. For us, the proposals are significant because of the timing – no plans of the current style can be submitted for examination after 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025, whereas we were due to submit in late 2026.

Therefore, our plan must be prepared in the new style with different evidence requirements and different processes. Unfortunately details of the new requirements are only due to be published in autumn 2024, meaning a delay in the time until we can start preparing some of the key evidence documents such as the new environmental outcomes report.

There are some risks and some opportunities associated with this and Officers are preparing a report with further detail for the 12<sup>th</sup> October Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

Whatever new requirements and legislative changes are thrown at us I would like to assure you and other Members that we are committed to forge on to ensure we have a plan in place and continue to be a plan led authority.

### **Supplementary Question**

There was no supplementary question asked.

**Councillor McKenna** will ask the **Executive Member for Place, Planning & Regulatory Services, Councillor Michalowski**, the following question:

**Question 12: Section 106 Monies**

Please confirm total amount of section 106 unspent, held by the borough council. And provide a breakdown of this including a) affordable housing, b) transport and c) other.

**Response**

I can confirm the Council currently holds £14.72m of Section 106 developer contributions.

This includes a balance of £2.92 million for affordable housing and £11.8m for various community infrastructure projects.

A large proportion of the contributions we hold for community infrastructure projects will help us to deliver new and improved facilities for our residents in Horley, as a consequence of the new development that has occurred there.

These contributions will pay for new and improved facilities and for ongoing maintenance. This includes funding for a riverside green chain, play areas, outdoor sports and recreational facilities and allotments in Horley.

While we have collected considerable funding towards transport, highways and education, the vast majority of these contributions are paid directly to Surrey County Council as the local highways and education authority.

**Supplementary Question**

How much of Section 106 monies was spent on affordable housing over the last five years?

**Supplementary Response**

Obviously the amounts of Section 106 monies goes up and down. I am happy to provide Councillor McKenna with a breakdown.

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

**Councillor Khan** will ask the **Executive Member for Communities, Leisure & Culture, Councillor Ashford**, the following question:

### **Question 13: Merstham Mix**

How is the Council working with Surrey County Council to enable the reopening of the Merstham Mix café in the Merstham Hub as quickly as possible?

### **Response**

As you will be aware, the Merstham Mix closed on 3<sup>rd</sup> August. Whilst responsibility for letting the café space in the Merstham Hub sits with Surrey County Council, my Officers are working in partnership with SCC and the local Merstham community to inform the development of options for the future of the café space.

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council employs a Community Development Worker for Merstham, a role that Surrey County Council currently provides some funding towards. Alice, who works in this role, is working closely with Surrey County Council's Community Link Officer to gain insight from the community on what the space/offer should be going forward. Alice is also working with other local partners to find alternative avenues for the provision that the Merstham Mix provided, such as the Easter project and food waste volunteers. She is also working with Surrey County Council and Merstham Community Facilities Trust to provide interim arrangements in particular to support residents who used the café space for warmth and companionship

At a strategic level, senior officers in Community Partnerships have been invited to work in partnership with Surrey County Council officers to explore options for the future of the café space in the context of the overall Merstham hub.

**Councillor Sinden** will ask the **Executive Member for Communities, Leisure & Culture, Councillor Ashford**, the following question:

**Question 14: Support for charities**

How is the Council increasing its support to our local charities as winter is fast approaching to those most in need, including winter night shelters across the Borough.

**Response**

Our Housing team are working in partnership with Renewed Hope and our East Surrey Outreach Service to plan the safe reopening of the night shelter this winter. We also have procedures in place to trigger our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol which ensures any rough sleepers with a local connection to the RBBC area that will engage with us have a safe place to stay whilst we work with them to secure more settled housing. Those rough sleepers without a local connection are offered reconnection to the area where they have a connection.

Through round four of the government's Household Support Fund the Council is providing grants to a wide range of local charities for support to their vulnerable clients over the winter with essentials, particularly relating to the costs of food and fuel. The grants include funding for the administration costs relating to distributing the support, this means that organisations are able to cover these costs without affecting their core services.

Surrey County Council are currently confirming details of the warm hub offer for this winter. We will share this information through our networks as soon as it is available. In line with our approach last winter our three community centres will operate as warm hubs.