

## REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL: 26 SEPTEMBER 2019

### Questions by Members

No.	Question by:	To be answered by:	Subject
1.	Cllr S. Fenton	Cllr T. Schofield, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance	Preparations for Brexit
2.	Cllr J. Essex	Cllr E. Humphreys, Executive Member for Place and Economic Prosperity	Redhill Town Centre
3.	Cllr H. Brown	Cllr R. Biggs, Executive Member for Planning Policy	Redhill Golf Centre / Driving Range
4.	Cllr S. Kulka	Cllr N. Bramhall, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services	Coronation Meadows
5.	Cllr S. Sinden	Cllr N. Bramhall, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services	Street Cleaning
6.	Cllr R. Ritter	Cllr G. Knight, Executive Member for Housing and Benefits	Homelessness

**Council Meeting:** 26 September 2019

**Councillor S. Fenton** will ask the **Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Finance, Councillor T. Schofield** the following question:

**Question: Preparations for Brexit**

What does the council consider to be the worst-case scenario in terms of damage caused to the local economy, businesses and communities by the UK leaving the EU, and what plans are in place to mitigate the impact should we leave on October 31<sup>st</sup>?

**Response / Observations:**

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Cllr Fenton for your question.

The council has no formal opinion on what constitutes a “worst case scenario” as this is largely a matter of personal and political conjecture. To some it would be a “doomsday no deal “ Brexit, to others it would be any form of Brexit at all, whilst to yet others it would be ignoring the will of the majority of people who voted to leave the EU.

What this council is doing is to continuously monitor the advice and guidance issued by the Government and the local government association and then apply practical common sense in determining any actions to be taken. I would refer Cllr Fenton to the Government’s “Yellowhammer” report which relates to the most severe anticipated short term disruptions under a No deal” Brexit – known as its reasonable worst case scenario.

At the request of government we are directing the public and businesses to the “Get ready for Brexit” website on the front page of our own website.

Of relevance to the businesses in the Borough is the risk that some cross border financial services may be disrupted and there may also be some risks of disruption to the flow of data and goods into and out of the UK. To support our smaller businesses we are holding a business event at the town hall on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct with speakers from the Surrey Chambers of Commerce and the local business community. We are also signposting our local small businesses to government events held nationally.

With regard to the specific services this council provides to our communities, which are clearly listed in our 5 year Corporate Plan, we are continuously reviewing all emergency planning and taking any preventative measures needed to mitigate any potential disruption to service delivery. The councils Emergency and Business continuity plans provide an existing structure within which respond to any civil emergency regardless of cause. Two examples are that I can confirm that there is no threat to the renewal and ongoing maintenance of the refuse fleet and that we have reviewed the procurement processes with our existing suppliers.

**Council Meeting:** 26 September 2019

**Councillor J. Essex** will ask the **Executive Member for Place and Economic Prosperity, Councillor E. Humphreys** the following question:

**Question: Redhill Town Centre**

Please can you provide an update on the current plans and timescale for the development of major schemes in Redhill town centre, including the Marketfield Way scheme and the Redhill station redevelopment project?

**Response / Observations:**

Thank you for your question Cllr Essex.

I am pleased to say that excellent progress is being made to deliver a number of major schemes in Redhill town centre.

Crest Nicholson are now well advanced in their construction of 133 new homes on the old Liquid & Envy site. The first new residents will start to move in in April and the scheme is due to be completed in August 2020.

Lodgecrest have also commenced their build of 50 new homes and a community facility on the adjacent site, which is due to be completed in Autumn 2020.

The Council's plans to construct 32 new shared equity homes for local people along with new commercial floorspace at Cromwell Road is expected to be on site by the end of this year, with a planned completion by February 2021.

Our flagship Marketfield Way scheme, which includes a cinema, restaurants, shops and new homes is also making good progress. Our compulsory purchase of the land will be completed by Christmas and we will commence demolition in January. We anticipate that this important scheme will be completed by May 2022.

Finally, while the Council continues to have regular conversations with the developers of the Redhill Station site, unfortunately I cannot at present provide a timeframe for bringing this forward.

As I think this update demonstrates, real progress is being made to deliver a number of major schemes and shows an increasing confidence in Redhill as a place to live, to visit and to do business.

**Council Meeting:** 26 September 2019

**Councillor H. Brown** will ask the **Executive Member for Planning Policy**, **Councillor R. Biggs** the following question:

**Question: Redhill Golf Centre / Driving Range**

Redhill golf driving range at the back of East Surrey Hospital has closed down. An application was made by the owner of the land to take it out of the Green Belt, presumably with a view to developing it.

Can you provide an update on the status of this land, and future plans for it?

**Response / Observations:**

Through the Development Management Plan (DMP), East Surrey Hospital – including the land previously occupied by the golf centre which is also owned by the Trust – is proposed to be removed from the Green Belt and allocated to enable the sustainable growth of the hospital to meet increasing needs within its service area.

There are no specific proposals at this stage; however, the allocation within the DMP sets out a number of uses which may be appropriate, including hospital accommodation, associated medical uses and key worker accommodation. Any proposals would therefore be expected to conform to these policy requirements and could be resisted if they failed to.

The DMP allocation also requires that any future development should be in accordance with a comprehensive masterplan which should be in place prior to any planning applications. This approach will help to ensure that there is a clear long-term framework for development of the hospital, taking account of the constraints, opportunities and infrastructure requirements associated with the site.

There will be further opportunity for members and residents to engage as part of the masterplanning process as well as any future planning applications in the normal way.

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**Council Meeting:** 26 September 2019

**Councillor S. Kulka** will ask the **Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor N. Bramhall** the following question:

**Question: Coronation Meadows**

I believe everyone is aware of the consequences of the loss of valuable habitat for bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects. It is a matter of public record that in the last 75 years, an estimated 97 % of our wild flower meadows have been lost to development, agriculture and leisure activities.

The Coronation Meadow scheme headed by Prince Charles and supported by 3 major charities is looking to recreate these important flower meadows. All they need is the land.

I have seen small areas of wildflowers across the borough, but this council has more parcels of land in its ownership, such as parts of Earlswood Common where Golf is no longer played, or the redundant allotment site adjacent to Redhill Football club as examples that may be suitable for supporting such a scheme.

Would the executive member be willing to investigate the use of some of our under-utilised open land, which would not only benefit nature, but would also be of educational use and a colourful attraction for our residents and visitors?

**Response / Observations:**

RBBC is open to the Coronation Meadow scheme as we recognise the importance of enhancing wildflower habitats. It would be prudent to investigate whether we would want to nominate a meadow as either a donor site or a recipient site and the choice will impose significant maintenance requirements.

For example, the redundant allotment site next to Redhill Football club would require an extensive mowing regime spanning several years if it were to be nominated either as a donor or a recipient site as it is in a degraded state.

As another option our newly acquired Tanyard Meadows open space in Horley could potentially be used as a donor or recipient site. Since taking ownership in 2018 we have undertaken three meadow cuts and the wild flower diversity is visibly improving. Furthermore, the educational value of the meadows here would be maximised which is an objective within the current management plan, and this is something we are keen to develop.

**Council Meeting:** 26 September 2019

**Councillor S. Sinden** will ask the **Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor N. Bramhall** the following question:

**Question: Street Cleaning**

How often does the Redhill town centre get cleaned: firstly, after the market and over the weekend; and secondary how often is there a 'deep clean', such as to clean the town centre seating which has grooves that collect cigarette butts and small bits of paper, planters that collect rubbish, and the area around the bus station?

**Response / Observations:**

Following Cllr Mrs Bramhall's appointment to executive portfolio holder for Neighbourhood Operations she requested a management review of the Redhill Town Centre Cleansing Operation. The review was carried out 12-17 Aug 19 and a comprehensive set of objectives were identified, and an action plan put in place to deliver these.

The review identified that the cleansing schedule for Redhill town centre was inadequate on Saturdays, the busiest trading and market day. Previously a cleansing team were deployed between 6-10am only. Following the review Redhill now has an additional cleansing team from 4-8pm on Saturdays.

Cleansing operative's clean Redhill Town Centre during the following times.

**Monday – Friday:** A team empties bins and litter picks at 6am each morning and a Mechanical sweeper sweeps around the town centre. A Town Centre beat cleaner is deployed from 10am-6pm to maintain cleanliness throughout the day.

**Saturday:** Operatives empty bins and litter pick the town centre 6-10 am and 4-8pm

**Sunday:** Operatives empty bins and litter pick 6.30am-9.30am.

The design of the seating and street furniture is challenging to keep clean, the following was implemented following the cleansing review

- 5 wooden slated benches are jet washed in rotation, one per week, all benches are deep cleaned over a 6-week period.
- The 5 street furniture planters were all deep cleaned at the end of August We are exploring the options available to provide an appropriate 'cover' for the planters and we have several options to trial. We will ensure the trees are unharmed in whatever solution we choose. Currently under consideration are welding mesh and/or tubing to fill the gaps. Filling with bark was considered and rejected as a viable option.

The area around the bus station is included in the schedule of cleaning outlined above.

In addition, the Cleansing Team have proactively identified 'eye sore' areas in prominent areas of the town and have cleared these. For example the area around the Abbot Pub and the overhanging vegetation on the station wall coming down from Lakers Hotel.

**Council Meeting:** 26 September 2019

**Councillor R. Ritter** will ask the **Executive Member for Housing and Benefits, Councillor G. Knight** the following question:

**Question: Homelessness**

This council supports the Winter Night Shelter run by Renewed Hope Trust and local churches to give a bed for the night to homeless men and women from December to March. These are some of the most vulnerable people in society often with complex mental health and other needs who need specialist support.

As there are homeless people and rough sleepers in the borough all year round, some of whom sleep in tents, tucked away in woodland, often on council owned common land, can the council inform us where these people are now supposed to go, since a recent High Court injunction taken out means that making an encampment or temporary shelter on Reigate and Banstead Borough Council-owned land is now a criminal activity with liability for arrest?

**Response / Observations:**

The injunction was taken out to stop illegal encampments involving vehicles on some Council owned land. As a volunteer with the Winter Night Shelter I know some of those who have lived in tents, and I know some of their stories, which are often terribly sad. Those who are homeless, whether they are sofa surfing, eking out a precarious existence on the streets, or living in tents or in a garage, are not there by choice, which is the fundamental difference between them and those who precipitated the application for the injunction. In this Council, in common with the Renewed Hope Trust, our mission is to help the homeless into permanent accommodation and I would like to pay tribute to those hard-working officers in the Housing and Homelessness Department who do their job so conscientiously. Mr Mayor, I can assure Cllr Ritter the injunction will not be used to target homeless people who use tents locally. It would run contrary to our mission.

Reducing rough sleeping is a priority work stream for the Council across all departments and in cooperation with other agencies and the voluntary sector. It requires joint work and cooperation by both officers and the rough sleeper. Anyone who finds themselves homeless in the Borough should seek advice and assistance from the Housing Team at the Town Hall. Following a detailed interview they will be provided with a written and hopefully agreed housing plan which will cover actions for both officers and the applicant to undertake in order to relieve their situation. In some circumstances emergency accommodation is provided.

The Council jointly funds East Surrey Outreach Service with our neighbouring East Surrey local authorities. eSOS carry out outreach work with local rough sleepers, assisting them into emergency hostel beds when available, accessing GP's/health



care and other support services both statutory and non-statutory. RBBC has recently led on a successful bid to the Department of Housing, Communities & Local Government to fund an outreach 'complex case navigator' to join the eSOS team. This post will carry a small case load to assist the most complex need rough sleepers in East Surrey. We very much also support the Winter Night Shelter and I would like to take this opportunity to applaud their work both in providing accommodation during those cold nights to come when it is both dangerous, and even more unpleasant, to sleep out of doors; and their Drop-In Centre, open all year. The work of the YMCA in this Borough both practically and in raising awareness of this issue does not go ignored. This Council, eSOS, the Night Shelter and YMCA are all working so hard to address the failure of society to look after the homeless. Can we do more? Possibly, but as you are aware, Mr Mayor, complex and long-standing problems like this are difficult to resolve.

I will also take this opportunity to refer Cllr Ritter to the draft housing delivery strategy. Members were briefed on this initiative, a key plank of our new Corporate Plan earlier this evening. In its action plan the Strategy defines an objective to develop supported housing for complex needs single people. And finally, as in my previous answer to Cllr Ritter, I and the Housing Development are always available to speak with her and work together on a problem which transcends political consideration.