

# Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Meeting of Council on 20 February 2024

## Questions by Members

Verbal responses to be given at the meeting			
	Question by	To be answered by	Subject
1.	Councillor Essex	Councillor (A) King, the Executive Member for Commercial & Community Assets	Reopening of the Harlequin Theatre
2.	Councillor Buttironi	Councillor Mosses, the Executive Member for Environment & Sustainability	Potholes in the car park at Riverside Park
3.	Councillor Ritter	Councillor Mosses, the Executive Member for Environment & Sustainability	Biodiversity Duty
4.	Councillor Chester	Councillor Mosses, the Executive Member for Environment & Sustainability	Replanting trees at Meadowcroft
5.	Councillor Smith	Councillor Neame, the Executive Member for Housing & Support	Rise in Council House Rents
6.	Councillor Khan	Councillor Michalowski, the Executive Member for Place, Planning & Regulatory Services	Article 4 Directive & Permitted Development Rights
7.	Councillor Ashford	Councillor Michalowski, the Executive Member for Place, Planning & Regulatory Services	Anonymous Planning Objectives
8.	Councillor Torra	Councillor Biggs, the Leader of the Council	Incentivising local business to go green
9.	Councillor Sinden	Councillor Biggs, the Leader of the Council	Targeted Youth Services
10.	Councillor Thorne	Councillor Biggs, the Leader of the Council	Spillages by Thames Water

11.	Councillor Chandler	Councillor Biggs, the Leader of the Council	Community Transport
<b>Written responses to be given after the meeting</b>			
12.	Councillor Khan	Councillor Biggs, the Leader of the Council	The limits of Health & Social Care Services

**Councillor Essex** will ask the **Executive Member for Commercial & Community Assets, Councillor (A) King**, the following question:

**Question 1: Reopening of the Harlequin Theatre**

Please can you give an update to residents on the likely re-opening date of the Harlequin and what is being done in the meantime?

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

**Question 2: Potholes in the car park at Riverside Park**

The car park at Riverside Park in Horley is plagued with potholes, which make parking vehicles to use this amenity quite a challenge, especially after very rainy weather. Can the Executive Member tell us what the plans are to resurface the car park in Riverside Park in Horley to enable more residents to get safely to this amenity?

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

**Question 3: Biodiversity Duty**

As the Government has required local authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take on their Biodiversity Duty by 1 January 2024, is this council compliant with this process and what is the timeline for completing the Green Spaces Strategy on preserving and enhancing biodiversity in the Borough?

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

**Question 4: Replanting trees at Meadowcroft**

Following the illegal felling of mature trees on part of the Horley Business Park LLP land at Meadowcroft off the Balcombe Road in Horley. I contacted the Forestry Commission to request updates on the actions they were taking. In December 2022 the Forestry Commission stated that, "The site was inspected two years ago and a restock notice to ensure the replacement of the trees was issued, which remains in place." The land has since been sold and the Forestry Commission have subsequently stated that the restocking order cannot now be carried out because the land has changed hands. Please can you confirm when the land was sold, if any restocking order details were received and/or actions carried out before it was sold; or if not, what did the Council do to expedite these actions and what reasons were provided for delays.

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

**Question 5: Rise in Council House Rents**

How many residential rental properties does the Council now own and how much in total the additional revenue from the increase in residential rents of 7.7% will generate for the coming year?

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

### **Question 6: Article 4 Directive & Permitted Development Rights**

At September's Full Council meeting the Executive Member for Place, Planning and Regulatory Services reaffirmed assurances that had already been given that an Article 4 Direction would be considered to provide protection to the Borough's shops and local centres. The Executive Member also stated an Article 4 Direction was not easily approved by the Secretary of State and this was demonstrated by the fact only a handful of local authorities had been successful in securing an Article 4 Direction.

When speaking in favour of the motion, I stated that Councils up and down the country were securing Article 4 Directions, implying many planning authorities were using an Article 4 Direction to remove Class MA permitted development rights requiring landlords and developers to submit a planning application for change of use from retail to residential.

'Many' and 'handful' are quite different. In view of this difference, I sent in a Freedom of Information Request in October to DLUHC. The response confirmed what I suspected, that 42 local planning authorities had already secured an Article 4 Direction, including Crawley Borough Council.

Given the Council has stated that it can take 18-24 months to consult on a Retail Needs Assessment to make an Article 4 Direction, this would mean other local planning authorities have recognised the risks to their shops and local centres and started the process years ago, whereas Reigate and Banstead Borough Council has only just started a process that can take 2 years.

To compound matters, on 12th February DLUHC announced, "Every council in England will be told that they will need to prioritise brownfield developments and instructed to be less bureaucratic and more flexible in applying policies that halt house-building on brownfield land."

Can the Executive Member advise councillors if securing an Article 4 Direction is deemed a "bureaucratic" measure as defined by Government, and whether by the time the Council secures the Article 4 Direction it will be too late to implement?



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

### **Question 7: Anonymous Planning Objectives**

It seems every time we turn on television news there are reports of violence in our communities. Following a recent public meeting about a particularly contentious planning application in my ward I have been contacted by a significant number of women who have expressed concern for the safety of themselves and their families if their name and address were to be published alongside their objection to the planning application.

In all cases the women have clearly stated they have no issue with verifying their comments by providing the council's planning officers with the required details however they are concerned publication of these details might put their families at risk.

My understanding is there is actually no statutory requirement for councils to publish details of those making objections to planning applications and it appears this council's current policy around publishing names and addresses has not been reviewed for some time.

Whilst I fully accept any change to our policy would require very careful consideration, would the portfolio holder agree to, at least review our current policy having heard the very real concerns expressed by these women?

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

**Question 8: Incentivising local businesses to go green**

Sutton Council have launched a successful "Go Green Scheme", which is the first scheme in the UK to incentivise local business in their borough to adopt greener practices in exchange for a lowered business rate. The scheme has already passed the 100 mark for the number of local businesses signing up. Can this council make a similar scheme work for the local businesses of this Borough?

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

**Question 9: Targeted Youth Services**

What steps are Reigate and Banstead Borough Council taking to stop young people getting involved in criminal activities and exploitation and how is the Council supporting targeted youth services across our borough.

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

**Question 10: Spillages by Thames Water**

There have been several recent serious incidents of sewage spilled onto public areas in Banstead Woods and Horley. Please can you specify what actions Reigate and Banstead Borough Council will be undertaking to: firstly ensure that Thames Water carry out adequate (both in timeframe and scope) clean-up operations and temporary mitigations to prevent further spills; secondly to put pressure on the Environment Agency to properly enforce against Thames Water's illegal spills; and thirdly to inform and protect the public from exposure to sewage contamination.

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

**Question 11: Community Transport**

Surrey County Council runs a digital on-demand bus service that is expanding its operation across Surrey. This 'Surrey Connect' service already runs in both Mole Valley and Tandridge, adjacent to our borough. This could support residents in rural areas and where bus routes are such that multiple buses are required for short journeys. Our existing taxi voucher scheme has been closed to new users for a couple of years. This could provide a service that extends secure and accessible transport to more residents with mobility issues than the taxi voucher scheme and would allow the use of bus passes, reducing costs for residents. Would the Executive Member use the taxi voucher scheme funds and additional money if required to extend this community transport scheme into our borough.

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

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

### **Question 12: Limits to Health & Social Care Services**

Is Reigate and Banstead Borough Council aware of any elements of health and social care services that are not available to residents who live within Reigate and Banstead but are registered with a GP in a different Primary Care Network outside of Surrey, such as in Croydon, and what action is the Council taking to help address this inequality?