

Full Council 21st October 2021 – Standing Order 30 questions from Councillor O'Driscoll and responses from relevant Committee Chairs

1. Concerns have been raised about the construction materials shortage and its potential impact on construction of new homes in the District. Indeed, in the Housing Committee reports pack, there was talk of forecast delays of the construction of new Council homes at both Uplands and Bronzeroak House. Is there a possibility that further construction delays could be caused by this shortage in the short and medium term and is there a possibility of increased costs for the Council as a result of this?

Response from Councillor Pursehouse:

The shortage of materials and consequent rising costs in the construction industry has been well-publicised in the sector, and officers have reported previously on delays to handovers at Uplands and Bronzeroak as a direct result of this.

In Tandridge, contractors are doing all they can to keep delays to a minimum, including reprogramming the order of works, where possible, and stock-piling materials where it is practical to do so. The Council uses 'design and build' contracts for the council house building programme, and these involve fixed contract sums where, in the main, any cost increases during construction are absorbed by the contractor rather than the Council. Therefore, the contractor carries the risk.

However, we are expecting the uncertainty around supplies and pricing to continue well into 2022; with steel, cement, blocks, glass and ceramics impacted the most, especially where these products involve import from outside the UK.

We can anticipate contractors building this uncertainty into their tenders and, as a result, we expect construction costs to increase and officers will be carefully monitoring existing budgets and increasing contingencies on new schemes in response.

2. Residents are concerned about the reduction of service by Southern Rail on the Caterham Branch Line serving Caterham and Whyteleafe that took effect earlier this week, reducing the number of trains an hour from 4 to 2. While I'm hopeful this is only temporary during the pandemic, residents are also concerned about the removal by stealth of the direct Caterham to London Victoria services, which is requiring residents to change at East Croydon to get to Victoria. I share these concerns residents have. Will the Leader of the Council join us in expressing concern at these service reductions and take steps to address these concerns with Southern Rail?

Response from Councillor Wren (on behalf of the Leader of the Council)

Myself and other Members have become very aware of the adverse impact of Southern Rail's service reductions upon Tandridge commuters. This is a District wide issue and the Leader will make representations to Southern Rail to express the Council's concerns on behalf of its residents. We will also seek the support of Claire Coutinho MP in submitting these representations and would encourage residents to write to Claire to demonstrate the depth of feeling within our communities.

3. Many in our District, myself included, enjoy watching and playing football. In recognition that next year is a FIFA World Cup year, what can this Council do to arrange an event in Tandridge to celebrate the World Cup next year?

Response from Councillor Wren

There are no plans at the moment to celebrate the World Cup but I would be happy to work with you, as Chair of the Community Services Committee, to pursue ideas ... officers are busy with key council priorities so it would be good to make this a Member led initiative, possibly including an in-house sweep stake(s) with proceeds being allocated to the Chair of the Council's chosen charities for 2022/23. Members are welcome to come to me with ideas and we could work together to raise some money and make it something to remember.