

COUNCIL – 20TH OCTOBER 2022 – SO 30 QUESTIONS

Question from Councillor Jones

Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Sayer)

With the shocking news that Natwest plan to close both branches in Tandridge in the near future, will the Leader of the Council undertake to write to Natwest on behalf the Council requesting that they reconsider their decision? These are vital services for residents in our communities.

Question from Councillor Gray

Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Sayer)

Will the Leader of the Council write to the Leader of Surrey County Council to raise an objection to the effective discontinuation of our Local Area Committee prior to the publication, discussion and scrutiny of any alternative mechanism for community engagement?

Question from Councillor Prew

Question to the Chair of the Planning Policy Committee (Councillor Sayer)

In response to a Standing Order 30 Question asked by Councillor O'Driscoll at Planning Policy Committee on the 23rd June; the Interim Chief Planning Officer acknowledged that there was a delay in validating planning applications as a result of *“staff changes in the planning department and the increased number of applications being received”*.

The Interim Chief Planning Officer went on to say that steps were being taken to urgently reduce the number of applications awaiting validation including: increasing the number of validation officers from within existing staff numbers; recruiting a new validation officer; retaining an interim validation officer.

I was approached as recently as last week by a resident who had submitted a planning application via the Planning Portal on 12 September and but had still not had an acknowledgement from the Council. When I enquired on his behalf, I was told that it is currently taking 6 to 8 weeks to process an application through to validation.

Can the Council please tell me:

- 1. Has the size of the validation team increased since June and what is the current staffing level in this department?**
- 2. What is the current average time taken to process an application from receipt to validation and how many applications are awaiting validation?**

Questions from Councillor O'Driscoll

1. Question to the Chair of the Planning Policy Committee (Councillor Sayer)

There are concerns about the level of planning appeals to the Inspector and the associated costs to the Council. With applications in recent years being allowed by appeal in Felbridge, Coulsdon Lodge in Westway and the possibility of another appeal relating to a refused application in Croydon Road, Caterham. The cost to the council for all of the allowed appeals is in the millions of pounds. **What mitigations are being taken to reduce the possibility that local planning applications are decided by Bristol bureaucrats and not by local members and officers?**

2. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Sayer)

The World Cup is in under a month's time and I want to take the opportunity to celebrate the work of our grassroots football teams in Tandridge, particularly the Caterham Pumas and AFC Whyteleafe. **Will the Leader of the Council join me in congratulating and celebrating the work of all of our grassroots football teams and will she work with me to ensure this Council fully supports the work they do in their communities?**

3. Question to the Chair of the Community Services Committee (Councillor Wren)

Residents are keen to see more Terracycle stations in local shops in Caterham to recycle contact lenses cases and cheese wrappers among other items you can't usually recycle. **Will this Council provide support to local businesses in Caterham to host Terracycle facilities?**