

COUNCIL – 9 February 2023 – SO 30 QUESTIONS

Question from Councillor Pursehouse

Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Sayer)

I was extremely distraught to hear, during a phone call with a TDC officer, that TDC has already given notice to Merton College, that the council will be withdrawing from its decades old lease on Farleigh Common. Considering Merton College's reputation as an absentee landlord, this will be of great concern to everyone in Chelsham & Farleigh, and Warlingham.

I can understand TDC's desire to not spend scarce money on land it does not own, but Farleigh Common is a large, ancient and environmentally important site, with much rare flora. Notice to end the lease has been given without any idea of how this environmentally important area will be looked after in the future.

I was told by a previous officer that this was under consideration, but that notice would not have to be given until March. Consequently, I was in discussion with officers on ways of achieving the looked-for savings while the land could continue to be looked after by TDC. Indeed Chelsham & Farleigh Parish Council had agreed to contribute £2,000 per year for at least five years, and discussions are underway with Warlingham Parish Council.

The decision to withdraw from the lease was taken under officer delegated power and has not been the subject of meaningful consultation with district members or the parish council.

Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that, while officers may officially have delegated powers, some issues are so sensitive that they should be brought to committee anyway?

Would she also agree that decisions such as this should be discussed with the relevant parish council, especially in a climate where we are asking PCs to step up and take on more responsibility across the board?

Further, would she also agree that the decision to end the lease should be rescinded until a proper conversation over the future of Farleigh Common can be had by the District, the two parish councils most closely involved and local district members?

Finally, would she agree that the final decision on this should be made by a TDC committee and Full Council?

Question from Councillor O'Driscoll

Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Sayer)

We are in the middle of the traditional fox hunting season. Despite there being a ban on this barbaric sport since 2004, hunting groups have regularly broken the law by illegally hunting foxes under the guise of "trail hunting", which has been evidenced by groups such as the RSPCA and League Against Cruel Sports.

Any suggestions it is a credible form of pest control is nonsense. Hunting groups chase foxes to the point of complete exhaustion and then die a horrific death at the hands of foxhounds, which themselves suffer injuries long-term from fox hunting. Chris Packham highlighted that you are 62 times more likely to be bitten by a human than by a fox so there is no justification for this ethically and morally wrong "tradition" to be allowed in civilised society.

What steps are being taken by the Leader of the Council to stop this happening in Tandridge?