

SERVICE DELIVERY EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

1 April 2021

- * Councillor Angela Goodwin (Chairman)
- * Councillor Ramsey Nagaty (Vice-Chairman)

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| * Councillor Paul Abbey | * Councillor Bob McShee |
| Councillor Dennis Booth | * Councillor George Potter |
| * Councillor Andrew Gomm | Councillor Jo Randall |
| * Councillor Diana Jones | * Councillor Pauline Searle |
| * Councillor Ann McShee | * Councillor Fiona White |

* Present

Councillors Chris Blow, Julia McShane, Tony Rooth and James Steel were also in attendance.

SD19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dennis Booth and Jo Randall. No substitutions were notified.

SD20 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests.

SD21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Advisory Board held on 18 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record, and would be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

SD22 SHALFORD COMMON LAND MANAGEMENT

The EAB considered a report concerning ongoing and increasing issues associated with parking on Shalford Common, which was registered common land subject to statutory regulation in the Council's freehold ownership. The Council received on a regular basis complaints regarding cars being parked on the Common, (including on access tracks) which was in breach of commons legislation. Meetings with Shalford Parish Council (SPC) and residents identified the need for a project to resolve the issues in consultation with the public. Accordingly, on 7 January 2020, the Executive agreed that the Council should consult on a set of proposed actions to achieve the following three outcomes:

- (1) Compliance with the Council's landowner obligations to protect Shalford Common from encroachments in line with the Commons Act 2006.
- (2) Reduction of conflicts and complaints regarding unauthorised car parking on the Common.
- (3) Provision of car parking areas compliant with the Commons Act 2006.

A total of 42 residents responded to the consultation online or by a hard copy paper version of the survey. The consultation results in respect of the management of seven priority areas relating to Shalford Common were outlined in the report together with the proposed next steps for consideration.

The report recommended that the Executive:

- (1) Considered the consultation results.
- (2) Agreed the options for seven priority areas to carry out the next steps.
- (3) Agreed to introduce new byelaws for Shalford Common to support the proposed actions.
- (4) Sought to protect the biodiversity on Shalford Common which was a designated Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI).

The Lead Councillor for Environment introduced the report commenting that it represented many months of work around addressing some of the local parking concerns, included the outcome of the related consultation and proposed the next steps for the Council to pursue being mindful of the needs of local businesses. The EAB's views were sought in relation to the areas under discussion.

The Countryside Manager gave a supporting presentation which addressed the management of the Common, the areas which the EAB was invited to consider and options for the seven priority areas:

- Huber's Garage / Mitchell Row
- Kings Road
- Pound Place
- Parrot Pub Car Park
- Recycling Car Park and Dagley Lane Access Road
- Dagley Lane / Juniper Terraces
- Approaches to Ashley Gardens and Christmas Hill

Three public speakers attended and addressed the meeting to put forward their views which favoured protection of the Common, a consistent approach to any changes to local residents' parking facilities, resources to enforce new byelaws, an imaginative mixed use solution to the recycling car park, and the creation of car parking spaces to serve the Kings Road shopfront safely and support local businesses.

The following points and views arose from related questions, comments and discussion:

- The management of the Common was directed by legislation which aimed to protect it for the enjoyment of residents as a green space for recreational use and the Council's proposals sought to introduce measures to reflect this by protecting it from encroachment whilst recognising the need for some parking provision. Some of the proposals, particularly those relating to the Kings Road shopfront, would be subject to commons consent from the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).
- There was a clear boundary demarcation between common land and the highway at the Kings Road shopfront where the responsibility of this Council as land manager commenced and that of Surrey County Council as the Highway Authority (HA) ceased. In addition to the requirement for consent from PINS, the creation of parking spaces in the area would be subject to the HA assuming responsibility for the land and adopting it as public highway. As the County Council had not recognised the need for parking spaces in this area, the cost of providing them was likely to fall to this Council unless further exploration identified an alternative approach and funding. To date, this Council had introduced protective measures in certain areas of the Common where it was anticipated that they would meet with general approval whilst the consultation had related to other aspects where it was felt that a consultation exercise was necessary to obtain local views.

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- Although commuter parking on local roads had been an issue prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, it was suggested that proposals should take account of the impact of possible ongoing lifestyle changes following the pandemic such as increased working from home which may reduce parking demand and traffic movements. Conversely, the pandemic had created an increase in the number of visitors to areas of countryside.
- The removal of common land without justification was a cause for concern and therefore a land exchange to provide additional common land to compensate for the Parrot Pub car park remaining and being transferred from common land to regularise the situation was welcomed.
- Risks were identified in relation to the Kings Road shopfront, namely, that an application to de-regularise common land to provide car parking may be unsuccessful following the investment of time and resources without benefit to the community. This Council should not commit to the work and cost associated with bringing the land up to an adoptable standard to provide parking and the necessary safety measures without the County Council undertaking to cover the cost and adopt the land which was a HA responsibility. In the event that parking was provided, it could be subject to restrictions to prevent commuter parking and support local businesses. Adoption would be required to implement Traffic Regulation Orders or parking restrictions. More work in respect of this proposal would be required prior to a decision regarding the merits to pursue it. An alternative option following common land de-regulation was to retain ownership of the land and operate it as an off-street parking area within this Council's control.
- SPC had highlighted a number of areas of concern, namely, there was a preference for Huber's Garage to be a designated parking area, the recycling car park to be controlled parking and option 2 for the Kings Road shopfront to become adopted parking spaces. There was concern regarding the access to Ashley Gardens, particularly in view of the proposals to re-open and extend the care home. Therefore byelaws to prevent parking on the Common and track was the preferred option recognising the need for large vehicles such as ambulances to gain access. Visiting the shopfront required parking and crossing a busy slip road which constituted a safety issue that should be borne in mind. A shortage of car parking provision was a general issue in Shalford where solutions were sought and, in the event that parking spaces opposite the shopfront were introduced, parking controls would be required to prevent day long commuter parking. As The Parrott pub car park was located on common land, a land swap would regularise the position. SPC and some residents had indicated a willingness to contribute towards the costs of proving parking opposite the shopfront, possibly via crowd funding, and SPC had suggested joint working with the Borough Council to progress matters.
- Risks associated with the proposals should be identified and borne in mind during the process to avoid potential liabilities around sequencing of actions and the impact of elements of the proposals not being pursued.
- Any introduction of parking controls at the recycling centre should be considered in line with possible parking provision in Area 2 opposite the Kings Road shopfront.

Having considered the consultation responses, the Board supported the options set out in the report to the Executive for the seven priority areas to carry out the next steps and agreed to the introduction of new byelaws for Shalford Common to support the proposed actions. In addition to making the above points, the Board emphasised the following points for submission to the Executive:

- Proposals should take account of the impact of possible ongoing lifestyle changes following the Coronavirus pandemic such as increased working from home which may reduce commuter parking demand and traffic movements. The creation of unneeded parking provision should be avoided as it may encourage further parking.

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- The possibility of retaining any parking spaces provided opposite the shopfront in Kings Road within the ownership of this Council allowing it to introduce its own parking restrictions should be explored.
- The safety of pedestrians crossing Kings Road to access the shopfront should be considered and addressed.
- Shalford Parish Council should be involved in any working group to progress the proposals or benefit from regular consultation.

SD23 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES MANDATE

In his introduction to this agenda item, the Lead Councillor for Environment, whose portfolio included the operation and maintenance of the Borough's public conveniences service, advised that the mandate before the EAB sought to explore possible options to reduce this service and related funding to other authorities with a view to contributing savings towards reducing the Council's current budget gap.

Having reiterated the challenging financial position that the Council was facing and its need to examine some of its services, particularly non-statutory services such as public toilet provision, with a view to identifying savings, the Head of Operational and Technical Services gave a presentation regarding the proposed mandate to review public conveniences. The presentation explained the following aspects of the mandate:

- Strategy
- Options
- Considerations
- Resources
- Issues, assumptions and risks
- Dependencies, constraints and opportunities
- Internal stakeholders
- CMT consideration (2 February 2021)
- Executive Liaison Group consideration (3 March 2021)
- Public conveniences usage
- Impact of charges

The presentation highlighted the aim to secure a cost reduction in the region of £75,000 and recommended that Option 3, consisting of the removal of grant funding of £14,000 to Ash and Shere Parish Councils towards the operation of their toilets, and Option 4, seeking limited closure aligned with a redistribution of work, be pursued. This would allow for a saving of one post with the closure of only 4 toilet facilities, selected from a long list of 6-8 toilets following consultation.

The following points arose from related questions, comments and discussion:

- Public conveniences were seen as part of the public service provision to residents and visitors and whilst there was some support for Option 5, which would result in current provision continuing unchanged, it was recognised that this was unrealistic for a discretionary service given the Council's current financial position. Accordingly, it was agreed that Options 3 and 4 should be pursued.
- No indication was being given at present as to the individual toilets which may be closed and decisions could be based on the availability of other facilities in the area in addition to usage levels.
- As the last use survey of public toilets had taken place three years previously, another survey was suggested as a means to update information and ascertain whether the

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Coronavirus pandemic had altered patterns of usage. However, usage figures had tended to be static historically.

- Charging for the use of public conveniences, which had been previously considered and ruled out, was not supported and the resulting reduction in use could lead to other issues. It was felt that introducing a voluntary charging system was unlikely to generate significant income. However, alternative revenue streams such as toilet sponsorship and business / community group operated facilities were possibilities which were supported and should be explored with local businesses and organisations. The latter had proved to be successful in other local authority areas.
- In terms of running costs associated with the Council's public conveniences, approximately 20% equated to utilities whilst the remainder comprised of staffing and vehicle costs. Opening and closing times of facilities did not drive costs.
- It was considered necessary to maintain the present levels of facility cleaning as any reduction could lead to health and safety issues.
- The pop-up urinal in North Street, for which no usage information was available, had been in position for fifteen years and was becoming in need of replacement which would be costly. However, the toilet had significantly reduced previous issues with public urination. Such health and safety issues should be monitored following toilet closures.
- Water bottle refill stations had been installed by the Council at some public conveniences, such as that at the junction of North Street and Ward Street which currently served the Library, and it was requested these be borne in mind when decisions regarding possible closure were made.
- Some support was expressed for inviting Ash and Shere Parish Councils to consider covering the costs of the public conveniences located in their areas and it was hoped that this would not lead to the closure of the toilets.
- It was noted that the toilet facilities currently provided by Debenhams would close when the store ceased to exist and there was a possibility of other shops with toilet facilities closing as shopping patterns changed as a result of COVID-19. However, there was alternative provision in the Baptist Church near to Debenhams which would be opened to the public following the pandemic and Surrey County Council was looking into the provision of public toilet facilities in the refurbished Guildford Library.
- It was requested that the review include exploration with developers of the possibility of public toilets being provided at sites being redeveloped in Guildford such as the North Street, Bus Station and St Mary's Wharf (Debenhams) sites. It was felt that facilities at or nearby the Bus Station may encourage bus use.
- In addition to the public convenience location details included on the Council's website and the free applications providing this information, a location map of facilities and signposting were welcomed.

In agreeing that the above points be forward to the Executive, the EAB confirmed its support for the mandate to be pursued and the business case to be developed with a view to identifying a long list of possible public convenience closures for consultation before the matter was brought back to the Board for further consideration later in 2021.

SD24 EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Forward Plan was noted.

SD25 EAB WORK PROGRAMME

In this connection, the Service Delivery Director advised that, following Phase B of Future Guildford, all seven service heads in his Directorate were now in place and he planned to share the new structure, including names, responsibilities and key changes, with the EAB. Implementation of Phase B would require significant work in some service areas. This move

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was welcomed as a means to inform the EAB's work programme in the future and lead to meaningful discussions amongst its members.

The Board was reminded of the special Joint EAB meeting scheduled for 20 September 2021 to discuss Local Plan Development Management Policies.

The meeting finished at 9.23 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman