

Council  
6 December 2022

### **QUESTION 1**

**Question from Councillor Julie Morris to the Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, Councillor Alex Coley.**

Subsequent to a Motion to Council in December 2021, this Council agreed to establish a programme of Heritage Tours to begin in summer 2022. The Minutes of the Community & Wellbeing Committee meeting on 17th March 2022, where agreement was reached, include reference to both officers and councillors and how they would progress the matter. There have been no Heritage Tours this summer to my knowledge. What progress has been made against the actions noted in the Minutes?

### **Reply from Councillor Coley:**

The Council undertakes a range of heritage events. On 11th of October, it was involved in organising the Eventbrite Emily Davison Walk , and on 20th November, a Days of Steam Walk by the Countryside Team. From 30 November there will be free museum tours for the duration of an hour every Wednesday

The Council allocated £10,000 in this year's budget to enable it to acquire software to digitise heritage tours. An application to the Cultural Development Fund was submitted to secure additional resource to implement this but this was unsuccessful. Further funding has been applied for through the Community Improvement Fund and the outcome is awaited.

Key to delivering a programme of heritage tours is the appointment of a Cultural and Heritage Officer and the Council is currently recruiting to this role with interviews taking place before Christmas. One of this officer's key tasks will be to develop the current programme of Heritage Events and Tours.

### **QUESTION 2**

**Question from Councillor Julie Morris to the Chair of the Environment and Safe Communities Committee, Councillor John Beckett.**

In March 2019 this Council agreed to phase out its use of single-use plastics. The first of five pledges in the policy document says

**“we will conduct an audit of our use of single use plastics both as an organisation and as an employer to produce a priority improvement list”**

I therefore ask whether this audit has been carried out, is it available to the public (and if not why not) and is there a plan to stop using plastic capsules containing milk which are still widely available in the Town Hall?

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### **Reply from Councillor Beckett:**

Since adopting the Single use Plastics Policy as part of the Climate Change Action Plan, the Council has been working to support the reduction in the use of single use plastics within its own operations and across the Borough. We have utilised our communications channels and public events to improve awareness and to support wider behaviour change of our residents and businesses. We installed refillable water stations in 6 of our parks and opens spaces and in our Market place, to encourage use of reusable water bottles,. We have also supported all non-food stall and dry food greengrocers at Epsom Market to stop using single use plastic carrier bags, run a reusable Tote bag giveaway event, and committed to making the Market place Single use Plastic free by April 2024.

We have also reviewed the Council's own operations to understand where we can reduce single use plastics. We have removed all plastic cups from our operational buildings, encouraging staff to use reusable bottles and cups. We replaced the depot's old container-based water cooler with a plumbed-in version. We have also introduced segregated office recycling bins to enable improved recycling of plastics in our buildings.

We have stopped buying plastic-based refreshment supplies where possible but where it hasn't been possible to find a viable alternative, we are unfortunately having to continue to use that option. This does not mean that we will just accept the products but will continue to look at alternative options now and in the future.

As the Climate Change Action Plan is a living document and with changes to industry constantly evolving, we will continue to review our operations for further opportunities to reduce the need for Single use Plastics. This work will also involve partnership working with Surrey County Council, through the Surrey Environment Partnership, to support the delivery of the Single-use Plastics Strategy for the whole of Surrey.

Regarding the small milk pots which are currently used at the hot drink's machines in the members room, council chamber and committee rooms, alternative options are being looked at with the intention for these to be discussed at the January Climate Change Working Group meeting. After an initial conversation with the councils recycling officer, it is believed that the material used in the pods might be the same as yogurt pots and the solution might be as simple as removing the foil lid and having a separate container for these to be recycled at these locations.

Whilst we acknowledge it wasn't called an audit a review has taken place of Single use Plastic use and subsequent action taken as highlighted in this reply. Since then, the issue of SuP and the 5 pledges have been incorporated into the climate change action plan and will continue to be picked up through delivery of the plan. These

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actions are also now robustly supported by incorporating SuP consideration into all our procurement processes.

The climate change action plan has member oversight and officer resource attributed to secure its delivery and continuous review.

### **QUESTION 3**

#### **Question from Councillor David Gulland to the Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee, Councillor Steven McCormick.**

There have been various instances recently where it appears residents/landowners have not adhered to required replacement tree planting following a Tree Replacement Notice being issued. I therefore ask:

- 1 – does the Council have a robust monitoring programme to ensure all such TRN's are adhered to?
- 2 – if so, what is the % adherence to TRNs over the last 3 years (or readily available timescale), and
- 3 – where there is NOT compliance, what actions has the Council taken against the resident/landowner to ensure the trees are replaced?

#### **Reply from Councillor McCormick:**

Taking formal enforcement action in respect of replacement trees is discretionary and Government advice is that if the local planning authority believes that replacement trees should be planted, it should first try to persuade the landowner to comply with the duty voluntarily. As well as voluntary compliance, there may be situations where it is considered not expedient to take action, or, for example, where a subsequent planning permission effectively overrides the requirement to provide replacement planting. There is also often a high-degree of self-regulation i.e. developers replacing trees without prompting, especially as missing trees can often be picked up by Land Searches which can reveal when there are gaps in Tree Preservation Order records and unfinished replanting obligations can be picked up by conveyancing solicitors. It is understood that voluntary compliance is a favoured method of many other authorities. Serving formal notices should be considered a last resort.

As such, the serving of TRN's is very rare within the Borough and amongst our neighbouring authorities. The Council does report many formal enforcement activities to central government but are not required to report on TRN's and accordingly there is no record of how many have been served over the past 3 years.

Ensuring compliance in this area can be difficult and time consuming and the Council does not have the resource to actively monitor compliance with Tree Replacement Notices (TRN). We are extremely grateful to individuals and bodies, such as the

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Epsom & Ewell Tree Advisory Board, who provide information in relation to potential cases for TRNs.