

Council
12 December 2023

QUESTION 1

Question from Councillor Julie Morris to the Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee, Councillor Steven McCormick.

What is the level of funds held by EEBC as a result of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and when is the next round of bids for these funds to commence?

Reply from Councillor McCormick:

As of March 2023, the Council held £7,228,000 in the strategic fund and £1,355,000 in the neighbourhood fund.

I am expecting a draft Spending Protocol to be considered as an item on the agenda for the next LPPC meeting in January. In terms of bidding rounds, the draft Spending Protocol item will include a suggested timetable, and subject to the support of LPPC when they consider the item, bidding rounds for the strategic and neighbourhood funds could open in May or June next year.

QUESTION 2

Question from Councillor James Lawrence to the Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Steve Bridger.

Can the Chair confirm that all future correspondence from either the LGO (Local Government Ombudsman) or the ICO (Information Commissioner's Officer) will be tabled at meetings of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee or circulated electronically to members of that Committee?

Reply from Councillor Bridger:

We have agreed that any adverse findings would be reported to the next appropriate Audit and Scrutiny meeting and that the LGO report (usually received annually in July) would be circulated to the committee members on arrival.

We will also report any details of Data breaches.

We cannot agree to reporting all future correspondence as much of this is to do with case investigation and as such would breach confidentiality.

As chair of the committee, I am working on a process with officers on how to address this for future meetings.

QUESTION 3

Question from Councillor Alison Kelly to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Humphrey Reynolds.

Can this council please review its policy/practice of informing "neighbours" concerning planning applications which might affect them, since in my experience

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councillors are asked by residents why they haven't been informed about an application when their neighbour was, as just meeting our legal obligations is not always satisfactory?

Reply from Councillor Reynolds:

Planning applications are subject to statutory consultation requirements which are primarily set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015. The Council complies with the legal requirements as set out in our Statement of Community Involvement, which is an adopted document setting out how the Council will ensure residents are involved in the planning process, including decisions on planning applications.

The Statement of Community Involvement states that:

- For developments requiring a press advertisement, the advertisements are placed in the local printed press to advise of new development proposals in the area. These appear in the newspaper on a weekly basis.
- For developments requiring a site notice to be displayed, the site notices are printed by the Council and displayed on the site for the period specified (usually 21 days).
- For developments requiring neighbour notification of an application, this is in the form of a letter giving brief details of the proposal, details of where and when the application may be seen, and the last date for. Letters are addressed to 'the occupier/owner'. Neighbour notifications are sent to any neighbouring property that shares a common boundary with the land subject to the proposed development. For major or significant schemes, officers may use discretion to notify the occupiers of more properties.

The Statement of Community Involvement was last reviewed and updated in July 2022 and therefore I do not currently see the need for another review.

QUESTION 4

Question from Councillor Julie Morris to the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Neil Dallen.

Can the Chair assure us that every effort is made in future to start official meetings, training sessions, briefings, panels and working groups after 6pm and preferably at 7.30pm and to give as much notice as possible when an "emergency" meeting is found to be necessary, in order that it does not preclude those councillors who work from being involved?

Reply from Councillor Dallen:

I can assure Members that apart from limited exceptions (e.g. Licensing Sub-Committee hearings and meetings of Panels) the vast majority of meetings and other commitments requiring the attendance of elected Members are scheduled for an evening start time. As you will appreciate there are times where in response to

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urgent matters, it may be necessary to schedule a meeting either at short notice and/or within office working hours and where that occurs, all reasonable efforts are made to provide as much notice as is possible as well as starting meetings at a time that allows as many Members as possible to attend.

QUESTION 5

Question from Councillor James Lawrence to the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Neil Dallen.

Would the Chair please confirm the status of the replacement "Martial Arts" building in Alexandra Recreation Ground, the previous building having been demolished some months ago?

Reply from Councillor Dallen:

The previous modular building was purchased almost 25 years ago by the Council's tenant, a popular local martial arts club providing classes for young children to the elderly. The building reached the end of its serviceable life last year and for safety reasons, had to be demolished.

The Council agreed terms for a new lease with the martial arts club which in turn, led to capital bid funding being secured to replace the old modular building. Planning permission was approved on 5 October 2023.

The replacement modular building works were tendered in October 2023 in compliance with the Council's Standing Orders but regrettably, the tendered cost significantly exceeded the capital budget available.

The Council is currently working with the martial arts club to explore all avenues to allow the project to progress. These include adapting second-hand modular buildings as well as exploring potential funding opportunities.

QUESTION 6

Question from Councillor Alison Kelly to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor John Beckett.

Can this council please investigate with Surrey County Council the possibility of increasing the number of local recycling facilities in the borough, especially for small electricals (the pink bin scheme), with a view to installing them in locations accessible to pedestrians, as access to the Blenheim Recycling Centre excludes cyclists and pedestrians.

Reply from Councillor Beckett:

About four years ago, Surrey County Council offered to provide free small electrical recycling banks to boroughs and districts that expressed an interest, Epsom & Ewell

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responded positively and was allocated three such banks. These were placed on Stoneleigh Broadway, the car park of Christ Church, Christ Church Road, and in Depot Road car park near to Epsom town centre. Regrettably, the Stoneleigh Broadway bank was recently vandalised beyond repair and had to be removed.

Over the years the number of small recycling bring-sites provided by the Council around the Borough has declined. The three key factors behind this have been complaints from residents about the fly-tipping that habitually occurs around recycling banks, a general decline in the use of local bring-sites as kerbside collections have recycled more and driving sight-lines, where banks have been located near roads.

Some councils and major retailers have even taken the decision to remove all local recycling bring-sites, due to the high cost of running them versus their limited performance. For those reasons, a proposal was even made by the Surrey Environment Partnership that all Surrey councils should remove and stop providing local bring-sites. For these reasons, officers would advise against expanding the current network of general recycling bring-sites.

As Councillor Kelly points out, while electrical items can be recycled at the Community Recycling Centre at Blenheim Road, for safety reasons the CRC does not have pedestrian access.

Surrey Waste Partnership has asked the boroughs and districts to consider whether small electricals could be added to kerbside collections. While this would not be possible within Epsom & Ewell's current service configuration, officers are considering whether that might be an option in the future.

QUESTION 7

Question from Councillor James Lawrence to the Chair of the Standard and Constitution Committee, Councillor Liz Frost.

Can we please circulate a list of official meetings and panels which includes information if they are transmitted via Youtube or another means, if they are to be recorded and how long these channels or recordings are available in the public domain.

Reply from Councillor Frost:

I'd like to thank Cllr Lawrence for his question.

The Council publishes a list of its scheduled meetings (which includes Council, Committee and Panel meetings) each new municipal year in May, after it is agreed at the Annual General Meeting. It can be found on the Council's website – [link](#). Any

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in-year changes or Special meetings are displayed on the live calendar of meetings also available on the Council's website – [link](#).

The Council streams its public meetings that exercise decision making powers. This includes Council, Committee & sub-Committee meetings, and Epsom and Walton Downs Conservators and Consultative Committee meetings. For each such meeting, the link to the live streaming is provided on the first page of the agenda reports pack. After the meeting, the recording is then available on the Council's YouTube Channel until the minutes are agreed at the next meeting.

QUESTION 8

Question from Councillor Alison Kelly to the Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, Councillor Clive Woodbridge.

How many properties in the borough are charged an empty property premium and have we explored the options to use these properties via the council's Private Sector Leasing scheme?

Reply from Councillor Woodbridge:

I thank Councillor Kelly for her question. We are committed to reducing the number of empty properties in the Borough. Currently we have 49 properties that have been empty for more than two years and which are being charged the long-term empty Council Tax premium (The premium is 100% for properties empty for 2-5 years; 200% for 5-9 years and 300% for over ten years.). Officers are actively looking to expand the Private Sector Leasing (PSL) Scheme and the Empty Property Group is assessing the number and status of such long-term empty properties in the Borough to check whether there are any that could be added to the PSL portfolio and what actions might be required to achieve such an outcome.