

Notes of the Virtual Residents' Forum Meeting held at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 27 January 2021

Panel Members:

Cllr Kay Hammond, Surrey County Council (Chairman)

Cllr Richard Biggs, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council (substitute for Cllr Graham Knight)

Cllr Samantha Marshall, Horley Town Council (substitute for Cllr David Powell)

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Panel members Cllr David Powell (Horley Town Council) and Cllr Graham Knight (Reigate & Banstead and Surrey County Council)

Surrey Community Projects Fund ("Your Fund Surrey")

SCC Cllr Kay Hammond gave an overview of the Projects Fund. She explained that £100m capital funding had been made available over a five-year period, designed to bring community-led projects to life. Residents, community groups, businesses and organisations were invited to submit proposals and offer feedback on others' ideas. People were able to log their ideas on the CommonPlace map, as well as support other projects already logged, with the full application process anticipated to open in March. (Full details available on the SCC website.)

An example of a project was one put forward by Horley Town Council. The proposal was to demolish the aged former Scout Hut in the Michael Crescent Centenary Park and to build a new community centre for Horley residents.

A representative of the Horley Local History Society asked about the parameters that would be used by SCC to support projects. Cllr Hammond explained that the projects would need to support the SCC Community Vision for 2030 (full details on the SCC website). The HLHS representative went on to explain that the History Society was seeking to raise funds (in the order of £20,000) to build an Archive Building and that to date he had failed to receive any support from either Borough or County Councillors. Cllr Hammond suggested that the representative contact her directly. Another resident suggested that it might be possible to use under-utilised areas of existing buildings for some of the projects.

Proposed Horley Commercial Hub

HTC Cllr Mike George updated those present on the proposal. He explained that this was a joint project between Horley Town Council (led by its Environment Group) and the Horley & District Chamber of Commerce. Cllr George said that the Hub would be a facility for remote working, meeting rooms and pop-up shops for small local businesses, with its uses expanding over a period of time. Advice would be available for those looking to start up a business, improve their skills or change career direction. Other local businesses would also benefit from the local footfall in the town. Longer term it was hoped to provide links with local schools and to offer such facilities as PO Boxes and printing. A bid had been submitted to Your Fund Surrey and both SCC and RBBC Leaders had offered their support for the project. A town centre facility was envisaged, possibly the vacant unit next to the new Horley Library, however Cllr George pointed out that the funding required was considerable.

Topics and Questions Posed by Local Residents

Two local residents asked for an update on plans by the owners of Gatwick Airport Ltd (GAL) to use the Emergency Runway at the airport as a second runway. HTC Cllr Mike George, also a member of the Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee explained that this runway was currently used when the main runway was unavailable. The plan was to bring the Emergency Runway into regular use for departures only by smaller aircraft. Mike explained that the Project would be under the Development Consent Order [DCO] process which would mean that Crawley Borough Council, the local planning authority for Gatwick & other local borough/district councils would be statutory consultees. The DCO process, including public consultation was a legal process overseen by the Planning Inspectorate with the final decision being taken by the Secretary of State. The Public Consultation process would need to fit in with any COVID restrictions in force at the time. Work would be required to fully separate the two runways. The Emergency Runway was slightly closer to Horley however it wasn't anticipated that it would have a major impact on the town. GAL was keen to move as many passengers onto public transport as possible so the local infrastructure should be able to manage. Cllr George said that there were varying expectations as to when passenger levels at Gatwick would return to 2019 levels, possibly not until 2029. He added that he would be happy to update residents further if required.

A resident asked for an update on trees which had been felled on the site for the proposed RBBC Business Park, adjacent to the Balcombe Road in Horley. RBBC Cllr Richard Biggs said that he had attended the site as soon as this happened and had been totally shocked at the devastation. No planning applications were in place to permit this work and Surrey Police and the Forestry Commission were carrying out ongoing investigations. Further information would be shared with local residents as soon as it became available, prosecutions would follow as maybe necessary, with the support of the RBBC Legal Dept.

A resident asked about the purpose of the road leading from Bonehurst Road, which seemed to be just a Service Road at the present time. Cllr Biggs explained that this road was a link through to the last phase of Westvale Park from the A23. Special kerbs and bollards, where the road crossed Meath Green Lane, prevented vehicles turning left or right onto this road. Another resident expressed concern that some of the kerbs on Meath Green Lane seemed to make it easier for vehicles to turn south onto Meath Green Lane. Cllr Biggs agreed to make information available regarding these kerbs, which could be sent onto local residents.

Several residents expressed concern about the new three-way traffic lights at the junction of the Westvale Park road, which were close to existing lights and were slowing down traffic on the main road. Cllr George said that HTC had concerns about this whole stretch of road, as whilst it was mostly in the Salfords & Sidlow area, it had a direct impact on Horley. He added that it was vital that SCC looked at the impact on the whole area, when planning any new developments. It was hoped that all the traffic lights in the area would be better synchronised once all the works were complete.

A resident asked about the Gatwick Storage site off the Bonehurst Road, where vans waiting to collect deliveries were having to park along the main road. Cllr Biggs suggested that this was mainly vans waiting to pick their loads from the Amazon Depot and advised that Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council write to Amazon about the issue.

Concerns were raised about the Crossoak/Orchard Drive junction and the impact of illegal vehicle turns on the many pedestrians in the area. All Councils in the area were aware of the ongoing issues and numerous site visits had been made. A Petition had been received by the Reigate & Banstead Local Committee and HTC Cllr Martin Saunders, one of the leaders of the Petition said that there was strong support to change the layout back to a regular junction.

Questions were raised about the increasing number of traveller caravans in the Picketts Lane field. Cllr Kay Hammond said that Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council were very aware of this and enforcement proceedings were taking place to try to remove the travellers. An Appeal was to be heard by the Planning Inspectorate, however this would be later in the year as the travellers had requested a face to face meeting. It was confirmed that no Residential Licence was in place at the site in question.

Concerns were raised about the proposed siting of the Aldi Store along the Bonehurst Road and its impact on local traffic in the area, especially emergency vehicles. Furthermore residents were worried that this might increase the likelihood of the Linden Homes development adjacent to Emlyn Meadows going ahead, further impacting on the local traffic flow. Cllr Biggs responded that he had spoken to Aldi representatives and reiterated that traffic in the area needed to be looked at as a whole. With regard to the proposed Linden Homes site, Cllr Biggs explained that this site was a Sustainable Urban Extension in the RBBC Development Management Plan and RBBC currently had no need to release the site for development.

RBBC & HTC Cllr Jerry Hudson, a member of the RBBC Planning Committee added that no official planning application had been received from Aldi and stressed the need for Surrey Highways to assess traffic levels along the whole stretch of the A23. RBBC Cllr Christian Stevens, also a member of the Planning Committee agreed that all developments added issues to this stretch of road, although he was not hopeful of help from Surrey Highways in the short term. HTC Cllr Samantha Marshall added that people trying to turn right out of Cross Oak Lane were also affected by the recent traffic light additions etc, especially when cars on the main road did not move lanes to avoid blocking the junction.

A resident expressed concern at the removal of mature oak trees on the east side of Meath Green Lane, near the junction of the access road to Westvale Park. Cllr Biggs agreed to investigate this and report back to the concerned resident. (After the meeting another resident forwarded a photo of the stumps of the trees to Cllr Biggs.)

Finally thanks were recorded to the Environment Agency for removing rubbish and debris from the stretch of the Burstow Stream alongside the Cambridge Lodge Mobile Home Park.

Cllr Hammond thanked everyone who had attended this first Virtual Forum and said that it was hoped that another meeting would be held sometime after the May Elections.

Meeting concluded at 8.08 pm.