

COUNCIL MEETING

4 MARCH 2021

ITEM 5

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 12

Question from Aileen Owen Davies ,a local resident:-

In view of the now undisputed climate emergency and the recognised need by the Government for more tree cover, can the Council tell me what targets they have set for increasing the tree cover in Runnymede ?

Question from Deb Long, a local resident:-

The policy SD7 Sustainable Design which I have queried.

Bullet point 2: 'Opportunities to achieve net gains in biodiversity and greening' The fact that your contractors are still using glyphosates doesn't sit well with enhancing biodiversity. The budget contractors spend on glyphosates could be used for wildflower rewilding. Please explain what was meant by 'pushing back' on glyphosates, also where are these opportunities for net gains in biodiversity, have you examples? It appears there is no budget for wildflower planting and it is being delivered by developers when it's clearly not usually their priority, Developers are geared to maximum profit gain.

Question from Steve Ringham, a local resident:

In 2019 Friends of The Earth surveyed and scored borough councils in the UK and produced a league table. The detailed methodology is in the published document, but here is a summary of the criteria:

The issues scored are: household energy efficiency; eco-heating; renewable energy; proportion using public transport, cycling or walking; electric vehicle chargers; lift-sharing; tree cover; and reuse, recycling and composting of household waste.

(Link to document:

<https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/download/league-table-local-authority-performance-climate-change>)

Runnymede scored 72% - 6th place by score out of 15 score groups and the same as about 40 other councils. 92% being the highest score. By comparison Spelthorne was in the bottom cohort with only 40%.

As you may know, Spelthorne has declared a climate emergency, Runnymede has not. One take-away from this report could be that such declarations can be worthless without concrete actions to back them up. So I would like to offer my congratulations to the council and it's staff on the work done so far in this matter and to achieve the score they did.

However, this score actually only placed Runnymede in the median for all councils. And in it's summary of the report, Friends Of The Earth opined that:

(Pto)

“All local authorities, even the best performing, need to do much more if climate catastrophe is to be averted. The government needs to provide them with the powers and resources to do so, and it needs to do much more itself. All local authorities should adopt an ambitious local climate action plan . And they should join with Friends of the Earth and others in urging more government action. Each local authority should declare a climate emergency as a sign of political intent.”

The Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill is currently in Parliament.

Website: <https://www.ceebill.uk/>

This is a cross-party bill, supported by 98 MPs across the political spectrum. But as yet, no Conservative MPs.

It offers a real opportunity to put Climate Action at the heart of everything our government does. It will protect our bio-diversity, and it will legally oblige the UK to take responsibility for its greenhouse gas emissions throughout our economy and our supply chain. It will oblige the UK to contribute fairly to climate mitigation consistent with limiting global temperatures increase to 1.5°C, as we signed up to in the Paris Agreement. It will give councils and citizens a means to hold our government to account for any failures to protect us from any avoidable harm from Climate Change

But there is a real danger that it will be deliberately run out of debate time by the Leader of The House of Commons, in order to suppress it. Because if passed, it will hold the Prime Minister and Government of the day legally responsible for failure to protect this country against the worst

So this is not yet another question about declaring a Climate Emergency. That has been asked of this council back in December 2020. And it would be wonderful if this council decided to show political intent to the outside world. It is, however, related to the demand contained in Friends Of The Earth's report.

What I would like to know, is, regardless of Climate Emergency declarations, will the council show itself to be forward-thinking, progressive and mindful of its duties to do the best for its residents, by publicly signing up to, supporting and promoting the CEE Bill. And in turn, ask Dr Ben Spencer, our MP for Runnymede, in the strongest possible terms, to add his support for the bill and do his best to ensure the bill can complete its passage through Parliament?

Question from Vanessa Kane, a local resident:

Has the council produced a Green and Blue Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document? This was due this month (Feb)to provide more detailed information in terms of how new developments can contribute towards the delivery of Green & Blue Infrastructure (GBI) in support of the Local Plan's vision.