

COUNTY COUNCIL – 11 FEBRUARY 2014

WRITTEN QUESTION PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

1. Question by Councillor Lambert to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

At its meeting on 28 January 2014, Cabinet took the decision to reduce the opening hours at the Seaford Household Waste Re-cycling Site to three days a week from the current seven.

This decision was made for financial reasons, but the figures on which the decision was made were indicative only.

When will the final figures be ready and will these be in the public domain?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Following the Cabinet's decision in relation to the Household Waste Re-cycling Sites, officers have started negotiations with our contractor and as I am sure you will appreciate the financial information will have to remain confidential until these negotiations have been concluded in order not to affect the Council's commercial position. I anticipate that these negotiations should be concluded in the next few months and shortly after this we would be able to make information publicly available.

2. Question by Councillor Lambert to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Will the Lead Member please confirm the statement made on Twitter on 28 January 2014 by the Lead Petitioner, Councillor Sam Adeniji that he has assurances that if the Cabinet decision to close the Seaford Household Waste Re-Cycling Site four days a week is causing a problem it will open one or two more days.

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

We have had to make some difficult budget decisions to find significant savings and realise that keeping the Seaford site open for three days a week will not fully meet all residents' expectations. However, the Cabinet has listened to local views to develop a revised plan which balances the requirement to make savings with local need for services. Reducing the number of days the site is open may well result in some additional queuing at busy times and it may take residents some time to adapt to the change in service. Like all council services we continue to review the long term service needs against other priorities within our available budget. However, no assurances have been given to Councillor Adeniji that the Seaford site would open for more than the 3 days that we have agreed.

3. Question by Councillor Lambert to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

East Sussex County Council's Highway Maintenance Contract comes to an end in September 2015 and is therefore up for re-tendering. West Sussex County Council's contract finishes in 2016 and Surrey's in 2017. Given the extensive promises made for savings by work with the South East Seven Partnership, what opportunities are there for working with our neighbours to achieve joint contractual arrangements?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Officers have been exploring a number of opportunities for joint working with neighboring authorities, and specifically with Surrey County Council, West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council. These initiatives range from exploring joint contracting opportunities through to establishing our new joint permitting scheme.

There are a number of joint contract arrangements and other initiatives developed as part of the wider South East 7 (SE7) working and these are described below:

Procurement Partnership between ESCC and Surrey CC

ESCC and Surrey County Council procurement teams have entered into a strategic partnership under the control of a shared head of procurement with the aim of developing and delivering improved procurement.

The key objectives of the arrangement are to drive significant improvements in procurement and to deliver increased savings and efficiencies.

The principles of joint working and collaboration between the organisations have enabled the sharing of best practice for the benefit of both organisations.

Highway Construction Frameworks

Two new highway works frameworks have been developed through the SE7 which were set up to deliver Highways projects utilising local and regional contractors. The use of these frameworks has resulted in reduced procurement costs for SE7 members as well as the District and Borough who have opted in.

To date £12m of works on major projects have been delivered through the framework agreements.

Consultancy Framework

SE7 have developed a regional highways professional services framework which is designed to support the delivery of Local Transport Plans. Use of the framework results in reduced procurement costs and focuses on performance management through developing longer term collaborative relationships with the framework consultants. To date ESCC has avoided approximately £150k of procurement costs through using the framework.

Supply Chain Initiatives

SE7 Councils and our key contractors, have been working closely on a project to maximise the use of recycled construction waste in highways.

An outline SE7 business case has identified the following opportunities:

- SE7 highways activities generate in excess of 1,000,000 tonnes of waste per year. Generally, responsibility for these waste materials lies with the contractors, who usually either sell it on to a third party, or pay for disposal in landfill. Landfill charges are significant (around £140/tonne for 'tar-bound materials') and as a solution, landfill is unsustainable and should be avoided wherever possible.
- In the SE7, as across the rest of the UK, there is an established market for highways waste, and much is already 'reused'. However, they are generally used in low value applications, for example road planings are often used by farmers to build tracks in fields

Maintenance Construction Matrix

A bespoke SE7 tool is being developed that once scheme information is entered, will suggest to engineers the best recycling-based outcome. For example this will encompass latest materials information (SE7 Standard Specifications), latest design information, and indicative scheme costs and previous experience/trial information – to suggest what approach will be most appropriate for the scheme type; which will give the longest design life; and lowest whole life cost.

SE7 Standardised Specifications

SE7 technical specialists are working on developing standardised material specifications that will offer the best engineering solution, balanced against expected design life and appraisal of whole life costs. This will include an SE7 certification scheme, to provide quality assurance.

Joint Permitting Scheme

ESCC and Surrey CC have implemented a Common Permit Scheme to provide greater control of utilities works on highways. Details of lessons learnt are being shared across the SE7. The South East Permit Scheme prevents work starting on the county's busiest roads during rush hour, encourage companies to carry out work at the same time using the same trenches therefore reducing disruption for drivers.

MSc in Highway Engineering

As part of a national initiative through the Department for Transport sponsored Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP), it has been recognised that skills within the highways sector could be enhanced. In parallel, SE7 have been considering how they can best work together to improve services to the public, in particular highway engineering and management. Through these two initiatives, and

in partnership with their suppliers and the University of Brighton, the SE7 has developed a postgraduate MSc course in Highway Engineering.

This MSc, the first of its kind in the UK, is designed to equip the future senior managers of our organisations with the right mix of technical and managerial skills that will help ensure we have the capability to deliver high quality highway services in the future.

The MSc is the first part of a wider plan for the SE7 members to develop skills and capability collectively. We are also working with Construction Skills, the Sector Skills Council for Construction, to ensure that our contractors are also investing in developing their people, including apprenticeships and local employment opportunities.