

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24 JULY 2008

BOROUGH OF SPELTHORNE

AT THE MEETING OF THE SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, KNOWLE GREEN, STAINES ON THURSDAY 24 JULY AT 7.30PM

Ayers F.	Collis M.J.	O'Hara E.
Bain Ms M.M.	Crabb T.W.	Packman J.D. (Leader)
Beardsmore I.J.	Davis C.A.	Pinkerton Jack D.
Bell Mrs E.	Dunn Mrs S.A.	Rough Mrs M.W.
Bhadye S. (Mayor)	Forsbrey G.E.	Sider R.W.
Bouquet M.L.	Grant Mrs D.L.	Smith-Ainsley R.A. (Deputy Leader)
Broom Ms P.A.	Hirst A.P.	Strong C.V.
Budd S.E.W.	Leighton Mrs V.J.	Thomson H.A.
Chouhan K.	Napper Mrs I.	Trussler G.F.
Colison-Crawford R.B.	Nichols Mrs C.E.	Weston Mrs P.

Councillor S. Bhadye, The Mayor, in the Chair

243/08 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms N.A. Hyams, H.R. Jaffer, C.D.G. Kuun, L.E. Nichols, Mrs J.M. Pinkerton, M.T. Royer and the Deputy Mayor, Mrs C.L. Spencer and from Mr M. Litvak.

244/08 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2008 were approved as a correct record.

245/08 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR

Planned Mayoral Events

The Mayor reminded Members of the following forthcoming Mayoral events:-

- Outback Dinner and Fun Bingo – 29 July 2008;
- Charity Golf Day – 5 August 2008;
- River Day – 6 September 2008; and
- Trafalgar Day Lunch – 19 September 2008.

Hope 08 – “Big Clean” Weekend May 08

The Mayor welcomed Naomi Zumpe to the meeting, as the representative from St. Saviour's Church, Sunbury.

St. Saviour's Church had led Hope 08, a national Christian programme, which was aimed at bringing the churches closer to the community.

The Mayor presented a certificate to the Hope (St. Saviours) Group in recognition of their hard work and commitment on the Hope '08 Big Clean Weekend held on 8 May in Sunbury Common.

Members of the church had worked with the Youth and Children's Council to transform Groveley Park. The area was cleaned, painted and litter-picked.

The church had also supported older people in the area by helping with gardening and any odd jobs and made visits to families in need/crisis to offer support.

He congratulated St. Saviour's Church on making a real difference to the people of Sunbury Common and, although she was unable to be present at the meeting, he gave a special mention to Sabrina Moutarde, whose drive, enthusiasm and cajoling of the Council had delivered this project.

Surrey Youth Games DVD

At the June Council meeting the Leader announced that Team Spelthorne had come first in the Surrey Youth Games, for the first time. The Mayor welcomed some of the winning team members and their team manager, Claire Thrussell, who was Spelthorne's Sports and Facilities Officer, to the meeting.

A short DVD was shown to give Members an insight into the joy, competitiveness, companionship and great fun that all the young people had experienced whilst participating in the Surrey Youth Games programme.

246/08 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

Sports Council Awards

The Leader, Councillor J.D. Packman, said that it was appropriate following the DVD presentation to announce that he had recently attended the Spelthorne Sports Awards 2008 at Kempton Park Racecourse with Councillors A.P. Hirst and Mrs D.L. Grant. He fully recognised the involvement and commitment of Spelthorne Sports Council and its Chairman, Councillor H.R. Jaffer, in promoting and supporting the Surrey Youth Games in its twelfth year as a major event for young people in the County. Over three hundred participants had attended the Kempton Park event to receive their sports awards.

South East Development Agency

The Leader, Councillor J.D. Packman, reported that he had attended a meeting of SEEDA, the outcome of which would affect the future development of Staines Town Centre. The Airtrack rail link had been recognised as a strategic development and SEEDA had agreed to contribute £65K towards the Staines Transport Study, making a total of £130K for the Transport Study which was a major achievement and recognition for Staines and the Borough.

Housing targets

The Leader, Councillor J.D. Packman, reported that the Government had published its housing targets and he was pleased to inform Members that Spelthorne's target remained unaltered. However, people would still be under pressure because the Government had ignored all attempts to address the problem of increasing pressure on infrastructure. With the substantial increase in housing provision there was a need to improve the infrastructure to support this increase.

The Government was intending to do away with SEERA, which was a democratically elected representative body, within the next twelve to eighteen months.

Additional Highways Funding

Finally, following recent successful discussions which the Leader had held with top level County representatives, Spelthorne would now benefit from an additional £330K of improvement funding for works to improve the local highways within the Borough.

247/08 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Mayor reported that under Standing Order 13, one question had been received from a member of the public. A response was given by the Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman who confirmed that a copy would be sent to Mr. Carruthers.

(1) Question from John Carruthers

"I see in your minutes of the 28th May 2008 Planning Meeting, that at Item 13 you sent to Surrey CC a strong objection against the importation of demolition waste into the land west of Queen Mary Reservoir next to Ashford Road.

The Minutes state that very special circumstances are needed before such approval (in this case, raise no objection to SCC) can be given.

The site was a good one screened from habitation and away from other uses, and even 70 years ago it was an army transport storage depot. But let that pass.

Already a major demolition material plant has been closed under the L/A flight-path due to T5, and which brought comments of relief from your Planning Officers. Since then, attempts to have a replacement recycling plant close by, north of Stanwell, then in the Littleton commercial estate and now here at Queen Mary Reservoir have been refused.

So where do you expect all this demolition waste to go then?

It has to go to land fill with increase road usage and costs. Are you being serious?

Is that really your considered opinion in dealing with waste, or have you just not thought it through. It seems to be a case of having heads in the sand, or in this case rubbish. Where is the joined up thinking here?

In addition none of you appear to have read what the County Development Plan has to say on the subject, and which is intended to be as important to follow as the Government Development Plans themselves.

Quote: Clause 9.2 on page 23 of Preferred Option for Recycled etc.

'It is recognised that temporary facilities might be located at sensitive locations such as waste sites in the green belt, etc.'

So I repeat my question. Trying to be a caring high recycling Authority, where do you expect all this demolition waste to go, and what are you going to do about it please?"

Response by Councillor E. O'Hara, the Chairman of the Planning Committee:

"The appropriate recycling of demolition waste is important in that it can help to reduce the amount of new mineral that has to be dug up and (often) transported great distances. However, I fully appreciate that such facilities can be very intrusive and disruptive.

There is a lot of merit in co-locating recycling facilities alongside existing ground works where fill material that is coming in anyway may be sorted and recycled. But, it is important that the impact of this activity, on what are invariably Green Belt sites, are carefully considered, and that temporary recycling facilities do not end up delaying the time when mineral sites are properly restored and local people see an end to the activity.

As I am sure you are aware, Mr. Carruthers, it is for the County Council, through their Waste LDF, to properly balance issues and ensure that individual proposals are appropriate. I recognise it as a complex matter and there are many conflicting issues that have to be carefully considered. I can assure you that, when consulted by the County, this Council will be caring towards our residents, while looking to balance the need for recycled materials by society as a whole."

[Note: Councillor Ian Beardsmore announced at the Council meeting that he was not aware of the above Public Question, so did not disclose an interest as a Surrey County Councillor.]

248/08 REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman, presented his report which outlined the various matters the Executive had dealt with since the last Council meeting.

249/08 IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Improvement and Development Committee, Councillor Mrs P. Weston, presented her report, which outlined the matters the Committee had dealt with since the last Council meeting.

250/08 PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor E. O'Hara, presented his report, which outlined the matters the Committee had dealt with since the last Council meeting.

Councillor O'Hara referred to this year's Planning Delivery Grant which amounted to £294K and wished to congratulate Officers of the Planning section for their hard work.

251/08 MOTIONS

Under Standing Order 16, a Notice of Motion had been received regarding the proposed Polyclinic at Ashford Hospital.

Councillor Mrs C.E. Nichols moved and Councillor C.V. Strong seconded the following motion:

"That this Council notes the concern of Spelthorne residents regarding the proposed Polyclinic at Ashford Hospital.

The Council further notes that confusion surrounds the Polyclinic on its potential impact on existing GP services within the Borough.

This Council resolves to:

Request the Performance Management and Review Committee to conduct an immediate review and scrutinise the Polyclinic proposal by inviting Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust and the Surrey Primary Care Trust to address the Committee and local people.

Request that to facilitate public participation the Performance Management and Review Committee meets along the lines of the successful Committee meeting held on 31st July 2006.

Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Surrey Primary Care Trust expressing concern that their future plans should not deplete the provision of existing GP and community services."

An amendment was moved by Councillor Miss P.A. Broom and seconded by Councillor F. Ayers that the first paragraph in the resolution to the motion be deleted and replaced by a new paragraph (a); the second paragraph in the resolution to the motion remain unaltered and marked (b) and the third paragraph in the resolution to the motion be deleted and replaced by a new paragraph (c), so that the motion reads as follows:-

"That this Council notes the concern of Spelthorne residents regarding the proposed Polyclinic at Ashford Hospital.

The Council further notes that confusion surrounds the Polyclinic on its potential impact on existing GP services within the Borough.

This Council resolves to:

- (a) Request that the Performance Management and Review Committee call a special meeting to review the proposed introduction of a Polyclinic at Ashford Hospital; invite Ashford & St Peters Hospital NHS Trust & Surrey PCT Trust to the meeting, giving them the opportunity to address the Committee & answer any questions or concerns members may have.
- (b) Request that to facilitate public participation, the Performance Management and Review Committee meets along the lines of the successful Committee meeting held on 31st July 2006.
- (c) Furthermore request that the Chief Executive write to Surrey PCT Trust expressing concern regarding the suggested introduction of a polyclinic at Ashford Hospital and that, if this is fact, it should not be allowed to detract or deplete from the already excellent GP services currently provided to residents in Spelthorne.”

The amendment was accepted by the Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Councillor C.V. Strong.

The amendment was carried.

The amendment was put as the substantive motion.

In accordance with Standing Order 21.4, a request was made by Councillor C.V. Strong for the voting on the substantive motion to be recorded. The vote was as follows:

For (30)	Councillors F. Ayers, Miss M.M. Bain, I.J. Beardsmore, Mrs E.M. Bell, S. Bhadye, M.L. Bouquet, Miss P.A. Broom, S.E.W. Budd, K. Chouhan, R.B. Colison-Crawford, M.J. Collis, T.W. Crabb, C.A. Davis, Mrs S.A. Dunn, G.E. Forsbrey, Mrs D.L. Grant, A.P. Hirst, Mrs V.J. Leighton, Mrs I. Napper, Mrs C.E. Nichols, E. O’Hara, J.D. Packman, Jack D. Pinkerton, Mrs M.W. Rough, R.W. Sider, R.A. Smith-Ainsley, C.V. Strong, H.A. Thomson, G.F. Trussler and Mrs P. Weston.
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The motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED:-

That this Council notes the concern of Spelthorne residents regarding the proposed Polyclinic at Ashford Hospital.

The Council further notes that confusion surrounds the Polyclinic on its potential impact on existing GP services within the Borough.

This Council resolves to:

- (a) Request that the Performance Management and Review Committee call a special meeting to review the proposed introduction of a Polyclinic at Ashford Hospital; invite Ashford & St Peters Hospital NHS Trust & Surrey PCT Trust to the

meeting, giving them the opportunity to address the Committee & answer any questions or concerns members may have.

(b) Request that to facilitate public participation, the Performance Management and Review Committee meets along the lines of the successful Committee meeting held on 31st July 2006.

(c) Furthermore request that the Chief Executive write to Surrey PCT Trust expressing concern regarding the suggested introduction of a polyclinic at Ashford Hospital and that, if this is fact, it should not be allowed to detract or deplete from the already excellent GP services currently provided to residents in Spelthorne.

252/08 QUESTIONS ON WARD ISSUES

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor R.W. Sider asked the following question:

“At the latter part of June and beginning of July there was a Fun Fair in Manor Park Shepperton. As such, boards measuring approximately 2' 6" x 18" advertising the Fair were placed on roundabouts and on lamp posts in and around Shepperton. In view of the Street Clean Legislation, of which I have been reminded by the Council, can the Portfolio Holder for the Environment inform me why such advertising has been allowed by a commercial company, whereas local and community groups have been denied such advertising and had their boards removed and in some circumstances confiscated, and will he also agree with me the old adage that what is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander?”

Councillor G.E. Forsbrey, responded as follows

“Thank you for your question Councillor Sider. Unfortunately, funfairs can legally do just that. Funfairs have an exemption under the 2007 Town and Country Planning Advertising Regulations. Provided the advertising signs comply with the permitted dimensions and the funfair gives the Council 14 days' prior notice of the placing of the adverts, the funfair can place boards up.”

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Mrs. E. Bell asked the following question:

“The Executive briefing states that the local area forums will include an agenda item on a local issue. The briefing also states that local residents will be involved in the choice of topic. Can I ask the exact process by which residents in Sunbury will be consulted ahead of the November forum meeting?”

Councillor A.P. Hirst, responded as follows:

“Thank you for your question.

As Councillor Bell is aware, the programme for Area Forums has evolved over several years. In order to provide some historical background on this matter, I can inform the Council that the first Area Forum was held on 2 February 1999 so the holding by the Council of Area Fora in the five areas of the Borough will be coming up for the tenth anniversary in 2009. The current arrangements allow for a question and answer session, with the audience and the various public sector partners e.g. Police/PCT/Hospital Trust/Surrey County Council; a main topic presented at all 5 Area Forums and then a local topic.

In terms of the local topic, consultation is carried out through the various Residents Associations in the Borough.

In September a letter will be sent to the 30 known Residents Associations in the Borough including 6 in Sunbury setting out the main topic, which will be the Council's Environmental Sustainable Development Strategy – and several suggestions for the local topic, which are not exhaustive.

The Residents Associations will be asked to contact the Chairman of the relevant Area Forum – in this case Councillor Smith-Ainsley, by a certain date in September with their views on the most appropriate 'hot' topic for the area. Councillor Smith-Ainsley will make a final decision based on the feedback he has received plus his own soundings and knowledge of issues likely to be relevant by the time of the Forum.

I would add that the Chairmen of the Area Fora would welcome any input from Ward Councillors on the local "Hot Topics " to be covered at each of the Area Fora."

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor T.W. Crabb asked the following question:

"Now that the refurbishment of the Ha Ha in Sunbury Park appears to be completed what is its final total cost, and how far is that sum above the original estimate?"

Councillor A.P. Hirst, responded as follows:

"Thank you Councillor Crabb for your question.

The restoration of the Ha Ha in Sunbury Park has cost £57,092 over two financial years. The works will be completed within the next two weeks and is £2,092 over budget. This was due to the extensive damage by tree roots to the wall which became evident once work started."

253/08 GENERAL QUESTIONS

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor R.W. Sider asked the following question:

"Will the Leader join me in congratulating Mr. Trevor Baker on his being a finalist in the United Kingdom Local Government Association Awards, the presentations of which took place in Bournemouth on the evening of the 4th of July 2008, and will he also agree with me that this was a great team effort by this Council in the way everyone worked hard to achieve this excellent result?"

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman replied as follows:

"Thank you, Councillor Sider, for taking this opportunity to raise this matter. I don't think there is a Member or an Officer of this Council that would not wish to recognise the outstanding contribution that Trevor Baker has made to this Council over his 38 years of service. It was your recognition of Trevor's work and his many achievements that inspired you, Councillor Sider, to nominate Trevor for this very prestigious award, and I thank you for that.

I wholeheartedly supported his nomination and it was with great pleasure that I was able to inform councillors that Trevor was shortlisted as a finalist in the Local Government Channel's Council Worker of the Year. This celebration of the unsung heroes of local government is now in its third year and it goes from strength to strength, with many councils becoming involved in very competitive campaigns to promote their candidates. Our own campaign for Trevor was very well orchestrated and very far reaching, and all those involved should be congratulated, none more so than Trevor himself. His hard work, courage and determination were recognised by the judges in selecting him as a finalist, and we in Spelthorne pay tribute to that excellent contribution and strength of character.

May I also thank you personally Councillor Sider and the Chief Executive, Roberto Tambini, for the enthusiasm you both showed in promoting and driving this forward and for spreading the word far and wide. We are indebted to you."

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor I.J. Beardsmore asked the following question:

"What risk assessment has been carried out on the financial position of the Council following the recent slump in the housing market and the knock on problems in the building industry?"

Councillor M.L. Bouquet replied as follows:

"Assessing budget risk is an ongoing process of liaison between the Council's accountancy section and budget holders. We are currently pulling together the outline budget which projects forward the budget position to 2011/12.

In our latest projections, we are taking on board the interest rate projections from our treasury management advisers; we are also taking a view on likely revenue income levels, and other possible economic impacts on the budget. It is worth noting that at present, fee income levels from development control, building control and land charges are holding up reasonably well against 2008-09 budget.

Car park income is also being closely monitored, at present total car parking income is at similar level for the first quarter of 2008-09 as for quarter one of 2007-08 with pay and display income slightly up in percentage terms against budget assumptions.

We are seeking to maximize the rates of returns we can obtain on our investments and the current credit crunch may assist us in obtaining relatively good rates for interest for forthcoming investments. Our projections include anticipated levels of capital receipts for the outline budget period.

At the end of September (six months into the financial year), budget holders will be asked to provide projected outturns for the current year. This will provide a base for the working up of the detailed budget for 2009-10."

In accordance with Standing Order 14.2, Councillor I.J. Beardsmore asked the following supplementary question:

"Has there been a risk assessment of the Council's Capital Receipts, in light of the "credit crunch"?"

Councillor M.L. Bouquet responded:

“This risk assessment of the Council’s Capital Receipts will be carried out on an ongoing basis by the Council’s Officers, in consultation with advisers, as required.”

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor M.J. Collis asked the following question:

“As I am sure the Leader is aware there has been much discussion about BT’s so called replacement telephone kiosks that have sprung up around the Borough. Would the Leader inform me whether the Council has communicated to the Surrey Local Transportation Manager and the relevant Planning Officers the following information in the Department for Transport Manual for Streets?

Firstly that the agencies responsible for items that accumulate on the footway and those who manage the street should consider ways of reducing their visual impact and impediment to users.

Secondly, that street furniture should be aligned on footways, preferably at the rear edge in order to reduce clutter? “

Councillor A.P. Hirst replied as follows:

“Over the past few weeks BT have installed 13 new telephone/advert kiosks in the Borough. Some have obviously raised concerns from local residents. They required approval and Surrey County Council were consulted in each case. They raised no objection to the applications.

I agree that the siting of things such as these need to be carefully considered so they are neither visually or physically intrusive.

I can confirm that concerns have already been raised with Surrey’s Local Transportation Manager and our Planning Officers who, I have been assured, will be giving future proposals like this additional attention.”

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor C.V. Strong asked the following question:

“A recent e-mail from the Chairman sent to all members of the Audit Committee and passed to me as Group Leader contains a disturbing claim that there are holes in the Council’s operational systems.

The Chairman of Audit further says in his e-mail and I quote:

"I have seen no evidence to convince me that any of our systems are documented and this usually means that each new member of staff will try to work as he/she did at his/her last job."

Does the Leader share the view of the Chairman of the Audit Committee and if so what action does he propose to take?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman replied as follows:

“Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this.

Following investigation, Management has assured me that most of our systems are well documented and I have requested that Councillor Pinkerton supply details of services where he believes this not to be the case.

The Council's Health and Safety policies and procedures are set out on the Intranet. I also understand that the Council's Health and Safety Officer is currently reporting to management, the Corporate Risk Management Group, any areas where he feels improvements need to be made in health and safety related risk assessment.

The Council's Constitution, including Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders, sets out clear procedures for dealing with financial and procurement related issues. Many procedures and corporate policies are held on the Council's Intranet, and services have their own system notes and manuals for staff.

Also, there is a detailed annual risk assessment process undertaken by services in partnership with Audit Services, which identifies (and prioritises) risks relating to departmental systems and procedures. Whilst I welcome any contribution from Councillors with expertise in this area, they do need to understand that we do have robust systems in place and we need to let our Officers get on and do the job they are employed to do.

Last year the Council received good scores on the control element of the Use of Resources assessment which was undertaken by our own external auditors. Furthermore, their more recent interim audit has not identified any major concerns regarding systems and procedures.

I trust this satisfies your concerns.”

In accordance with Standing Order 14.2, Councillor C.V. Strong asked a supplementary question on the following lines:

“Has the Leader considered the position of the Chairman of the Audit Committee in relation to this matter?”

Councillor J.D. Packman replied on the following lines:

“Yes, and his position as Chairman will remain unchanged as he is fulfilling his duties in his role as the Chairman of the Council’s Audit Committee.”

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor A.W. Crabb asked the following question:

"Draft Strategy for Older People - What response if any has the Executive had so far to its request to TfL for a dialogue on problems of access to TfL's services for the elderly and disabled?"

Councillor Mrs. V.J. Leighton replied as follows:

“The Council and Spelthorne Together have been developing a new strategy for Older People’s Services, which, at this time, is being drafted ready for presentation to Spelthorne Together for final approval at its Executive on 16 September 2008.

As part of the consultation process a presentation was given to the Improvement and Development Committee on 1 July 2008. The recommendations put forward by this Committee go forward to the Executive. The recommendation agreed was to ask the Executive to engage with Transport for London regarding problems of access for older people on the buses. There was also the request to act on this issue prior to the 16 September Executive, if possible. As a result we will be writing to Transport for London to arrange to meet to try to resolve this issue to help older people, and people with disabilities, as soon as possible.”

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor G.F. Trussler asked the following question:

"I notice that a number of Councillors have put themselves down to speak at the inquiry into the Local Development Framework [LDF].

Would the Deputy Leader confirm that the LDF has been approved by the full Council and as such would he expect elected members to support our officers and not speak against the LDF?"

The Deputy Leader, Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley replied as follows:

“On 2 September an examination hearing will commence in this Chamber into the Council’s new plan. The LDF sets out the blueprint for the Borough for the next 20 years. This document was approved by the Council in April 2007 and a re-advertised version was agreed February 2008.

Although the Liberal Democrats opposed this, it had the overwhelming democratic support from Members of this Council and officers will now present our position at the forthcoming examination.

Given Member’s support for the plan through the democratic decision of this Council there is no need for individual Councillors to have made representations to confirm their support.

It is regrettable that some Councillors have nevertheless objected to various parts of this plan and will be speaking against it. This is of particular concern given they chose not to contribute or raise most of their concerns in this Chamber or in the many Committee and Working Party meetings that were held, or even at earlier consultation stages.

I will leave it for others to decide the reasons behind this.”

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Mrs C.E. Nichols asked the following question:

“The Spelthorne Biodiversity Action Plan is to be welcomed for its habitat plans which cover floodplain grazing marsh, standing open water and reed beds, unimproved meadows and historic park land. The BAP also acknowledges the crucial role played by urban gardens for biodiversity. In paragraph 6.3 the Plan notes “There is particular pressure on previously developed or ‘brownfield’ sites, many of which have rich communities of plants and animals”. Current trends for the loss of gardens in Spelthorne to development and pressure from developers to convert

areas classified as Degraded Landscape (Spelthorne Borough Plan 2001) to housing allocations are in direct conflict with biodiversity objectives. Does the BAP provide any mechanism by which both these trends can be halted?"

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman replied as follows:

"Firstly could I remind Members of Spelthorne's longstanding and unwavering protection of the Green Belt. Despite developers wishing to build on some sites they will, as always, be strongly opposed by this Council, contrary to what some of your colleagues would have our residents believe.

Biodiversity is of course an important issue. That is why we have adopted an Action Plan. It is one of the many considerations we need to keep in mind when dealing with development proposals.

Around 60% of housing is on former employment sites. These often have extensive buildings and hard surfaces with little, if any, nature conservation value. New development on such sites provides the opportunity for gardens and landscaped areas and greater biodiversity. But, as highlighted by the growth in garden centres, many gardens are actually so well kept that they too can be quite sterile places for wildlife.

Our Local Development Framework has a policy to improve biodiversity through new development including proposals that might involve existing garden land. Along with the Biodiversity Action Plan, this provides an opportunity to make overall improvements across the Borough including making gardens more wildlife friendly.

Biodiversity needs to be considered across the whole borough. The action plan is just one of a number of ways the Council can restrict the loss of habitats that encourage wildlife.

I am aware of your particular interest in this subject Councillor Nichols and I thank you for that and hope that you will educate your fellow Councillors about what Biodiversity means."

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Mrs I. Napper asked the following question:

"The Leader of the Council will no doubt be aware of the statistics regarding the survival rates for heart surgery patients at Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Trust and of the comments made by both the Trust and the Department of Health regarding the accuracy of the statistics on this.

Would the Leader agree with me that if, as is being claimed, the figures are not 'statistically significant' then their publication has merely caused unnecessary worry and concern to local residents and calls into question many of the statistics on health that the discredited Labour Government uses to try to defend their 11 wasted years?"

Councillor Mrs. V.J. Leighton replied as follows:

“As we know, public bodies are open to scrutiny and have their targets. Hospitals have their own targets of predicted survival rates for aneurysm or heart surgery.

In a newspaper article in the Surrey Herald on July 16 2008, Dr Mike Baxter did state that the issue here is that the numbers of patients involved is low and also a patient could have other health factors which means that his or her survival rate is lower for this reason.

Whether we like it or not, targets and figures are a fact of life and need to be published, but should always be treated with caution. In fact, the press article did allow St Peter’s Hospital NHS Trust to provide some clarity on the figures.

What is important though, is that we must continue to work to ensure that both Ashford and St Peter’s Hospitals via the NHS Trust continue to provide quality services to Spelthorne residents.”

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor J.D. Pinkerton asked the following question:

"Would the Leader please advise the Council of the present position regarding the Local Development Framework [LDF] and the issue of Green Belt? I am aware of certain anxious members of the community as a result of political literature which has been circulating in some areas of the Borough."

The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor E. O’Hara replied as follows:

“The Local Development Framework sets out a very clear position that all new development must go in the urban area. It also identifies how this can be done.

There is no need to contemplate any development in the Green Belt or to change this Council’s longstanding and unwavering defence of the Green Belt in this Borough.

Developers have nevertheless put forward sites they would like released for development and, as required, we have notified residents so they can express their views.

Unfortunately, residents have been alarmed by some literature distributed by the party opposite suggesting this Council had changed its robust position in defending the Green Belt. This suggestion is totally untrue and has caused enormous and unnecessary concern to residents. The party opposite should be ashamed of themselves.

I am therefore, pleased to confirm this Council will continue to defend the Green Belt and there is absolutely no change in this Council’s strong and resolute position on this issue.”

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor H.A. Thomson asked the following question:

"Following the disturbing news this week that the Labour Government is abolishing the legal right of residents to have their rubbish collected by local councils – can the Portfolio Holder for Environment assure me that Spelthorne Council's determination to provide a continuing excellent recycling and rubbish collection service to the residents will not be affected?"

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J.D. Packman replied as follows:

"I want to send a very clear message to all residents in the Borough that this Council's Administration will continue to fulfil all of its statutory obligations and duties in relation to refuse and recycling. I can assure all residents that the Council will continue to provide the present excellent alternate weekly services for rubbish and recycling materials in the future."

254/08 URGENT BUSINESS – APPOINTMENTS TO LALEHAM CHARITIES

RESOLVED that Mr. Colin Squire and Mrs. Alma Burfoot be appointed as the Council Representative Trustees to the Laleham Charities, each for a four year term of office.