Corporate Plan 2025-2030: Contextual Overview

October 2023

Reigate & Banstead
BOROUGH COUNCIL
Banstead | Horley | Redhill | Reigate

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Introduction

The Council's Corporate Plan is a document setting out the Council's vision, priorities and commitments. The plan is a core part of the Council's policy framework, and establishes the organisation's core objectives and overarching approach for the period of the plan. The Council's current Corporate Plan runs between 2020 and 2025, whilst the following plan is expected to cover from 2026 through to 2030.

As a strategic document, the plan must therefore reflect the current needs of the borough and its residents, predictions for the coming years, and the priorities and ambitions of its elected Councillors. To do this effectively, the plan must therefore be developed by considering the local context, wider trends which will shape the next years, and the Council's available resources and capacity.

To support this process, this document therefore provides an overview of this information, setting out details of national, sub-national and local context, assessments of salient trends and potential events, and consideration of the implications for the borough and the Council.

The information provided is only a snapshot of the borough context, and readers should therefore be aware that information will continue to change and develop over time.

With the breadth and complexity of the Council, and even more so the Borough, this document can only provide a strategic perspective; much like the Corporate Plan itself, more detailed examination of specific elements will need further support and information. However, by considering the broadest and most influential factors, this document seeks to provide readers with the necessary information to effectively consider the Council's overall strategic approach.

Where possible, links to online sources are provided within the text, to enable readers to view additional context and background information.

The Themes – People, Place and Organisation

Since 2015, the Council has approached its priorities through three themes – People, Place and Organisation. These themes speak to the key requirements for the Borough and the work of the Council, and provide a broad structure for considering the work of the organisation.

At present, the themes are believed to remain a useful lens through which to consider the Council's objectives and priorities, though they may be revised for the 2026-2030 Corporate Plan. On this basis, the information within this document is set out according to theme, and how the context for each may shape the Council's goals for the next corporate plan period.

As will become apparent, no theme or area of work operates in isolation. People are shaped by and shape the places where they live and work, and the Council's organisation reflects and influences these factors in turn. Similarly, key influences such as the national economy will drive context across all areas of work. Whilst this document therefore highlights the most closely relevant considerations for each theme, there will always be additional factors to consider, and each topic will therefore ideally also be considered holistically, with regard to its interrelationship with and implications for other areas.

People

The Council's People theme covers the work of Council services that most directly supports, enables and meets the needs of local people. This includes work on housing and homelessness, communities and partnership working, support and intervention for vulnerable residents, and leisure and culture provision.

The factors that are most influential for the Council's People work are therefore those which most immediately reflect and shape residents lives in turn. These then encompass population and demographics, household contexts, community strengths, deprivation and need, and local services, amenities and challenges. The following section on Place also includes additional information on the economy and business, local geography and development, travel, transport and the environment which may also help inform consideration of this section.

National Context

The primary national trends which influence the borough's residents and the People work of the Council are the economy and costs of living, housing provision, demographic shifts, and public sector support.

The UK Economy

The UK has a large economy (the sixth-largest in the world by gross domestic product (GDP)), and a prosperous population (the tenth highest by GDP per capita, adjusted for purchasing power). The economy is primarily shaped by the service sector, which comprises approximately 82% of the economy, with financial and technological sectors occupying a strong global position.

Despite this historically strong position, in recent years the economy has been characterised by minimal growth, influenced significantly by the coronavirus pandemic. Even allowing for the impact of the pandemic however, the UK economy has been relatively stagnant, showing no sustained growth since 2019, whilst other developed economies have recovered significantly more strongly. Real terms GDP per capita is currently lower than it was in 2005.

Where growth has occurred, this has been felt unevenly across the population. Income inequality has increased in recent years, and, as referenced regarding cost of living pressures, low income households are generally most affected by rising costs. Overall, real incomes for the UK population are now lower than they were in 2008, once adjusted for inflation.

Some elements of these outcomes are likely to have been influenced by the UK's lower rate of productivity growth in the period since 2008. Historically, this trended towards approximately a 2% annual increase, but it has been significantly lower in the post-2008 period. This is particularly influenced by the period between 2010 and 2015, where the UK's productivity did not significantly increase, whilst that of most other developed nations did so. Analysis from the IMF suggests that ambitious reforms may be required to secure the UK's future prosperity, including promoting business investment, improving national health outcomes, and supporting development of skills and knowledge.

It is currently unclear as to if UK national government policies will address these conditions. If they do, the outlook for the borough will likely similarly improve. If they do not, pressures on the borough and its residents will likely continue to increase.

With UK growth currently low and inflation falling, there is the possibility that the UK may enter recession in the coming years. If it does, this would be anticipated to further decrement financial stability for residents and businesses. A recession would be expected to reduce inflationary pressures, although prices would not necessarily be expected to return to lower levels, as many were primarily influenced by supply-side factors such as increases in energy costs and disruption to supply chains, rather than elevated demand. At present however, the economy has maintained growth despite the pressures faced, and this will hopefully continue.

Cost of Living

Many residents have faced financial pressures due to increases in the cost of living. Costs of staple goods and necessities increased significantly, whilst income and social support measures lagged significantly, although support has subsequently been increased. Residents on lower incomes have therefore been experiencing increases levels of difficulty, manifesting in increasing demand for support from Council services, such as Housing, Money Support, Council Tax Support, and from partners such as food banks.

These pressures have been felt especially strongly by the least well off, as inflation in the prices of essential goods such as bread and milk has reached levels around 20%, approximately double overall inflation measures. As these costs represent a higher proportion of spending for less well-off households, who already have less disposable income, the negative impacts are therefore amplified significantly. These increases have now slowed, with prices starting to fall for a small selection of goods, but costs in general remain significantly elevated.

Recent increases in the Bank of England base rate are likely to lead to further difficulties for many residents, as corresponding increases in mortgage rates will lead to potentially very significantly increased housing costs. Whilst these interest rate increases have now slowed, the impact of current cost of living pressures may therefore spread to a wider section of the population in the coming years as more fixed term mortgages come to an end.

Housing Provision

The UK is generally undersupplied with housing, with housing completions each year lagging behind both government targets and estimates of need. This is reflected in the increasing cost and decreasing affordability of homes over time. This pattern is consistent across almost all parts of the UK, with the highest prices and lowest affordability in London and the South East.

Current UK government policy identifies the planning system as one of the key obstacles to additional house building, and has been reviewing and implementing a range of measures aimed at reducing planning restrictions, including reducing local control, improving the availability of land, and expanding permitted development rights, including in the currently forthcoming Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. These changes may make it easier to housing development to accelerate, but there are potential risks around changes leading to lower standards of homes or reduced contributions towards affordable homes or other necessary local infrastructure (including through changes to section 106 arrangements). The LGA has provided an assessment of the bill.

Other factors also influence the provision and affordability of housing. Among these are the level and cost of available construction workers, supply of materials, and costs and availability of finance for builders and homebuyers. Of these, it is currently unclear as to how these aspects may be support by the national government. Costs of labour and materials have increased in most countries over the last decade; however, the increase has been particularly marked in the UK, with concerns raised over skills shortages and import costs for materials having been exacerbated by Brexit.

As identified above, costs of house buyers are also currently elevated due to increases in the Bank of England base rate being passed to consumers by mortgage providers. With the costs of homes so high compared to earnings by historical standards, home ownership in recent years has depended heavily upon the low cost of borrowing. Whilst this impact on mortgages borrowers renders it unlikely that current elevated interest rates will be sustained for a long duration, it will nonetheless present a significant influence on the current affordability of homes.

Increased costs of finance would also be expected to hinder development, as practical costs of construction will be similarly influenced. Whilst demand for housing remains high, if current factors lead to both development being more expensive and purchasing power being reduced, there may be risks that home building rates could drop further below target levels.

More information on the local housing context is provided in the later sub-section, but the national trends indicate that there are likely to continue to be significant pressures on general housing affordability and supply in the coming years.

Of note in recent legislation is the Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023. This introduces new powers for regulation of social landlords. These powers provide advantages in ensuring the sector is maintained and regulated. There were however some concerns raised regarding the requirement in the act for senior housing managers and executives to hold specific housing qualification, with the potential for this to disrupt providers and hinder operation of social housing. It remains to be seen how the implementation of new requirements will be managed and how this may influence housing provision.

Demographics

The UK population has continued to expand, whilst the average age of the population has increased. Between 2011 and 2021, the population of England and Wales grew by 6.3% to a record high of 59.6 million, with the population for the UK as a whole estimated at 67 million. The average age of the population increased by a year during the same period, from 39 to 40.

As the population increases, there is more demand on space and public infrastructure. Over time, this must therefore be supported by growth in these supporting resources, such as homes, schools and hospitals. More information on these demands is provided in the section below on Public Sector Support. An increasing population also represents an increase in available labour and opportunity for networking effects and growth, although these factors must also be supported by appropriate investment in order to realise their benefits.

The increase in the age of the population is significantly influenced by more people living longer. This reflects improvements in medical capability over time, allowing more people to survive conditions such as heart disease and cancer for longer. However, whilst these improvements have increased the average life expectancy, there has also been an increase in chronic conditions and morbidity. The Health Profile for England had its publication disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, but the 2018 report provides information on some of the challenges this presents.

The aging population also presents some challenges in other areas. A report on these challenges to parliament in 2015 remains apt, and outlines some of these factors, along with potential approaches a government might take in response. The primary concerns identified are an increased need for health and welfare support, paired with an increase in the ratio of those requiring support relative to those who are economically active.

These national demographic factors are well known, and have been under consideration by the UK government and other nations for some time. However, at the time of writing, it remains unclear if steps to date have been sufficient to prepare for their impact. If this preparation is not sufficient, this would be expected to increase demand for local support from Councils to fill the gaps in providing necessary public infrastructure and amenities, and in providing support to those in need. Whilst district and borough Councils do not have a primary healthcare duty, secondary effects would nonetheless be felt as residents would likely face additional challenges and partner organisations would look for support.

Public Sector Support

For many people in the borough, the most prominent role of the state in their lives is their engagement with one or more elements of the public sector and the support they provide – be that in terms of health and social care, education or income and welfare support. Across these and other elements of the public sector there are some consistent factors, and some variations.

Healthcare

Healthcare and the NHS are clearly a key consideration, with health outcomes both directly influencing the wellbeing of the population and also significantly influencing productivity and wider support needs. Health statistics are unfortunately challenging to assess at present, due to the significant anomalous influence of the coronavirus pandemic on both outcomes and resource allocation.

On the most recent figures, UK healthcare expenditure in 2021 was £280.7 billion, approximately £4,200 per person, and representing 12.4% of GDP – of this, 83% was government funded. This level was fairly typical of comparable countries, such as 12.9% for Germany and 11.3% for Japan. However, prior to the coronavirus pandemic, spending was generally at a lower level, at approximately 9.6% of GDP, lower than other G7 countries with the exception of Italy.

Health expenditure does not necessarily correspond to strong health outcomes, with the US having by far the highest national health expenditure, but attaining only average health outcomes across the population. However, evidence suggests that health outcomes in the UK are sub-optimal, with record high levels of long-term sickness and life expectancy at birth stagnating relative to previous improvements. These trends will again have been influenced by the coronavirus pandemic, but could be observed prior to its start and have continued since. Health inequality has also worsened in recent years, with the gap between the most and least deprived growing to 9.7 years for males and 7.9 years for females.

Workforce security has also been a challenge for the NHS of late, with industrial disputes over pay and conditions, and challenges around recruitment. The government has announced plans to address these matters in England, through the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. Whilst the plan's commitment to recruiting needed professionals have been welcomed, bodies such as the General Medical Council and British Medical Association have emphasised that its focus on recruitment will need to be accompanied by efforts towards retention, and some concerns have been raised that shortened training periods may risk reducing the standard of patient care.

As more statistics emerge subsequent to the pandemic, it will be possible to become more confident of trends in national health and healthcare. In the interim, planning at a local authority level will need to continue to be aware of emerging trends in healthcare and their potential implications for residents.

Social Care

Social care is another key public sector function, and also faces meaningful challenges. Social care encompasses support for children, vulnerable adults, older people requiring support, and other persons requiring support to live their lives. It has historically been provided separately to healthcare and the NHS, although there are currently efforts emerging to improve integration between the systems.

Social care is primarily commissioned by upper-tier local authorities, such as county councils, who must fund provision within their areas. Resourcing and funding necessary care has been a persistent concern over recent years, particularly since the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent austerity measures and real-term reductions in local authority funding. As identified regarding demographics, an aging population leading to more people living longer but also requiring additional support has further increased pressure on the system.

Since 2016/17, there has been additional funding available to the sector, but significant elements have been through short term grants or similar arrangements which providers have reported as presenting challenges to longer term planning. Funding for both adult social care and children's social care continues to therefore be challenging. The 2022 Autumn Statement announced further additional funding in 2023 and 2024, and permitted relevant local authorities to increase the adult social care precept by up to 2% per year in those years. Whilst the additional funding was welcomed, it maintained the uncertainty of the short term funding provision, and was considered by the LGA to fall short of the required level.

Related to these funding concerns, the sector has also a range of related factors, including difficulty in attracting and retaining staff, sustainability of commissioned care providers, and risks of delays and gaps in provision. The combination of these factors means that those in need may not always receive the necessary support, leading to struggles for those persons and additional demands emerging on secondary parties, such as unpaid carers and family and potentially borough and district councils.

Those in need of care also face potentially significant personal costs, with obligations to meet the costs directly in many cases prior to receiving public sector support. Reforms to adult social care charging were set out by the government in 2021. Originally set to introduce additional caps on personal liability for care costs from October 2023, this has been postponed to October 2025. These reforms are expected to reduce the burden of care costs on most individuals, but there remain concerns about the associated cost increases to local authorities and capacity to deliver the updated requirements.

As identified, social care is not a primary responsibility of lower-tier local authorities. However, the system has significant bearing both on wider needs for residents in the borough (including homelessness and employment) and relates to a number of areas of local activity, including intervention work. The costs of social care provision also significantly affect the work of Surrey County Council, which will have bearing in turn on their other areas of influence within the county and the borough. It will therefore be important to continue to consider and monitor the impact of developments regarding social care in the coming years.

Education

Education is another key element of public sector support for many. The UK's education system is generally considered to perform strongly by international standards, and is commonly ranked within the top ten national systems, although inconsistent metrics between organisations make these difficult to compare. The UK is also recognised to have a high number of high quality universities which attract international research and students.

The education sector has experienced challenges common to much of the public sector of late, including recent industrial action around rates of pay. Whilst agreement on these has now been reached, the field in recent years has experienced persistent weaknesses in recruitment and retention. The Department for Education has a Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy in place, but the focus of the strategy on recruitment may limit its effect upon retention. These factors may present risks for the longer term strength of the education system.

Whilst education is again not a direct responsibility of borough and district councils, its implications will be broadly relevant through skills availability for local businesses, experiences of residents, and general prosperity.

Income and Welfare Support

Income and welfare support payments are an important source of income for many within the country, particularly those receiving pensions. As of the last headline analysis released by the ONS, welfare spending represents approximately 34% of government spending. Of this, it was broken down approximately as follows:

- Pensions – 42%
- Family benefits, income support and tax credits – 18%
- Incapacity, disability and injury benefits – 16%
- Personal social services and other benefits – 13%
- Housing benefits – 10%
- Unemployment benefits – 1%

With the introduction and expansion of universal credit, more recent data is frequently less clear on the allocation of spending, but the levels identified above are anticipated to remain broadly indicative.

Pensions are the largest component of this spending. The current full state pension for 2023/24 is £203.85 per week (£10,600.20) per year. The government has committed to the state pension increasing according to a ‘triple lock’ system, whereby it increases by the highest of wage growth, inflation or 2.5%, although the earning’s component was suspended for 2022/23. State pensions are supported by other measures such as pension credit for those on lower incomes.

As the size of the population of pensionable age increases, this will increase demand on pension spending, and potentially other benefits. There is therefore a risk that the current level of national support could be reduced in future – if this were to be the case, then there would be expected to be knock-on impacts on demand for other sources of support – such as housing or through work with the voluntary and charitable sector. If however the current triple lock arrangement is maintained, then this provides some security regarding pension needs.

Other income and welfare payments can broadly be considered within two categories – those which are inflation linked, and those which are set at flat levels. Inflation linked payments are generally based on the consumer prices index (CPI) measure of inflation from the previous

September. These payments will therefore increase over time at approximately the same rates as overall prices increase, although with up to 18 months delay. In the last two years, this meant a 3.1% increase in April 2022, and a 10.1% increase in April 2023.

However, as identified under the cost of living section above, the inflation rate on many more essential goods (such as staple foods and energy) has increased at a higher rate than the overall level; consequentially, essential costs for many of those receiving income support or other benefits will have outpaced the increase in available support, potentially leaving them facing additional financial challenges. This may therefore lead to increased demand on secondary support measures, such as local authorities. The current levels of inflation are not anticipated to be sustained for a protracted period, but this effect may carry through until the current supply disruptions abate.

Payments not linked to inflation, or tied to fixed levels, will be more affected by current high levels of increases to costs. There are also a range of benefits which are means tested or similarly restricted, where previous recipients will either lose access or have access delayed due to thresholds not keeping pace with inflation. In some cases, due to sharp break-points in support, this may mean that individuals actually receive less support than in previous years, despite increasing costs. These factors again increase the risk factor that additional support will be sought from local authorities and others in the coming years, although they will again be mitigated as inflation levels decrease.

Sub-National Context

Healthcare

The borough falls within the Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care System (ICS), established following the passage of the Health and Care Act 2022. ICSs represent work towards a more cohesive local approach to health provision, encompassing expanded efforts towards prevention and the wider determinants of health, as well as prevention. This therefore includes an ambition for the NHS to work more closely with local partners, particularly including local authorities.

Within the ICS, place-based partnerships take the lead role in delivering and integrating services. Reigate and Banstead falls across two such Places, with the southern and central sections of the borough within East Surrey Place, while the northern sections are within Surrey Downs Health and Care Partnership. Following the establishment of the ICS and associated places, there has been work to expand partnership activity between the NHS, borough council and other partners. This has led to some initial positive outcomes, such as securing funding for some community development work and the Creating Healthy Communities Grants, funded by East Surrey Place and administered by the Council.

The expanded partnership working within the ICS is currently still at an early stage. However, if the approach towards effective joint working and providing integrated support is continued, then there is the possibility for this to meaningfully improve health outcomes in the local area. This has the potential to both address local needs and reduce future demands for support through making prevention work and community wellbeing support more effective, and thus decreasing costs for both local health providers and the Council.

There is also a Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board with a Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the county, as part of Healthy Surrey. The board is led by ICS and County Council representatives, but also includes representatives from borough and district councils, Surrey Police and other local partners. The Council's managing director is current one of the borough and district council representatives. Health and Wellbeing Boards were established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, as part of previous efforts towards integrating local health provision. Whilst some elements of this act have now been effectively superseded by the 2022 act, the boards retains a statutory role in joint working, per the most recent guidance.

Housing

Surrey County Council has developed a county-wide strategy for Housing, Accommodation and Homes. Adopted at the 28 March 2023 meeting of the cabinet, subject to public consultation and finalisation, the strategy sets out ambitions for encouraging effective cooperation between local partners and calling upon central government for additional powers and funding. It includes recommendations around sharing best practice, expanded joint working, and seeking to utilise economies of scale, as well as reflecting the needs of the aging population. The consultation took place between 12 May and 26 June 2023, with findings yet to be announced.

Social Care

Surrey County Council (SCC) is the lead authority for social care within Surrey and Reigate and Banstead. SCC has an established adult social care vision and ambitions, and a number of commissioning strategies, including around support for older people, accommodation, carers, dementia and physical disability and sensory impairment. These are available to view via SCC's website.

SCC also works together with the NHS and health partners to maintain a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment of the current and future social and health needs of the population of Surrey.

Welfare Support

As with Reigate and Banstead, SCC offers a range of wider health and welfare support within the county. RBBC and SCC have various areas of partnership working, along with overlapping relationships with other local partners. The coronavirus pandemic emphasised some of the advantages of effectively coordinating efforts, but there remain some distances between some respective borough and county level services. If joint working can be built upon further in future, this offers this potential for improving service provision for residents, and potentially making support more efficient.

Community Safety

Reigate and Banstead Council is part of the Reigate and Banstead Community Safety Partnership, together with Surrey Police, Surrey County Council, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, and representatives of the Probation Service and health services.

Crime rates in Surrey are generally low, with the 4th lowest rate of recorded crime among 44 police service areas in England and Wales in 2023.

Borough and Local Context

ONS Information

The Office for National Statistics produced a summary of changes for each local authority area for the period between 2011 and 2021. The summary for Reigate and Banstead may be of interest to readers.

Population

In 2023, Reigate and Banstead Borough has an estimated population of 152,789.

In 2011, the population was 137,835, and by 2026, this is projected to grow to 154,959, reaching 157,050 by 2030. This represents an increase of approximately 0.4% per year, which is a lower rate than the approximately 0.91% between 2011 and 2021.

2026 levels for other Surrey Boroughs vary between 82,177 for Epsom and Ewell and 149,040 for Guildford, with the overall population for Surrey estimated at 1.2 million.

In terms of population density, the borough has approximately 1,200 persons per square kilometre (1168 as of 2021). The average for England and Wales is 395; rural areas generally have population densities of between 100 and 300, while cities outside of London typically have densities of between 3000 and 5000.

The main population centres are Redhill, Reigate, Horley, and the areas between Tadworth and Banstead Village in the north of the borough.

Looking at ONS data on built-up areas via the Nomis service, key populations as of 2020 projections are as follows:

- Redhill (including Meadvale, Merstham and north Earlswood): 38,171
- Tattenham Corner, Preston, Nork and Banstead Village: 29,980 (approximate)
- Horley (including Hookwood and Gatwick Airport): 26,851

- Reigate (including South Park and Woodhatch): 23,589

Of the population growth in the borough since 2011, this has been particularly concentrated in Horley (approx.. 4,000 increase) and Redhill (approx. 3,000 increase).

Age

The borough's population is aging, in common with the UK as a whole. In 2021, 17.7% of the population were 65 and older, which is projected to increase to 19.5% by 2026 and 21% by 2030.

More of the borough's older population is concentrated in the north of the borough, with the lowest concentrations around the centre of the borough.

The increase in the older population is anticipated to lead to additional demand on some support services over time.

With regard to over age groups, children (those under 18) have remained relatively constant at approximately 22% of the population, decreasing slightly over time. The median age of the borough is 41, comparable to the average for England and Wales.

In terms of households, 32.95% of households in the borough reported having dependent children.

Ethnicity, Language and Religion

From the 2021 Census, as per ONS groupings, the percentages of responses to the Census' ethnicity question in the borough were:

- White: 84.41%
- Asian, British Asian or Asian Welsh: 7.55%
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: 3.67%
- Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: 2.93%
- Other ethnic group: 1.44%

Most households in the borough have at least one member who speaks English as a main language, according to the 2021 Census household language information. However, over 8% of households contain at least one person for whom English isn't their main language, and over 4% have either no-one or only children for whom English is a main language.

In terms of language proficiency by population:

- 97.44% of the applicable borough population either have English as a main language or can speak English very well,
- 1.85% of the applicable borough population are able to speak English well

- 0.71% of the applicable borough population are not able to speak English well, or don't speak it at all

Other than English, the most common main languages among borough residents are Romanian, Portuguese and Polish. The correlations between main language and proficiency in English are not recorded, so these languages will not necessarily be most represented among those who would benefit from additional language support.

Again per the 2021 Census, the responses to the Census' religion question in the borough were:

- Christian: 49.05%
- No religion: 38.09%
- Not answered: 6.04%
- Muslim: 3.08%
- Hindu: 2.41%
- Buddhist: 0.46%
- Other religion: 0.42%
- Jewish: 0.24%
- Sikh: 0.21%

Compared to the 2011 Census, the borough has not change significantly in terms of ethnicity, although it has become slightly more diverse. The borough, in common with the majority of the UK, has become less religious over time.

Marriage and Sexual Orientation

From the 2021 Census, as per ONS groupings, the percentages of responses to the Census' sexual orientation question in the borough were:

- Straight or heterosexual: 91.00%
- Not answered: 6.70%
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual or other: 2.28%

In 2021, 52.5% of adult residents reported being married or in a civil partnership, whilst 47.5% did not, with 33.09% reporting having never been married or in a civil partnership.

Health and Disability

From the 2021 Census, 13.97% of the borough population were reported as being disabled under the Equality Act, with their day to day activities limited either a little or a lot. A further 7.51% were reported to have a long term physical or mental health condition, but not to be disabled under the Equality Act.

Of those aged 5 and over, 7.87% provided at least some unpaid care during a week, with 4.50% providing 10 or more hours, including 2.08% providing 50 or more hours.

Deprivation

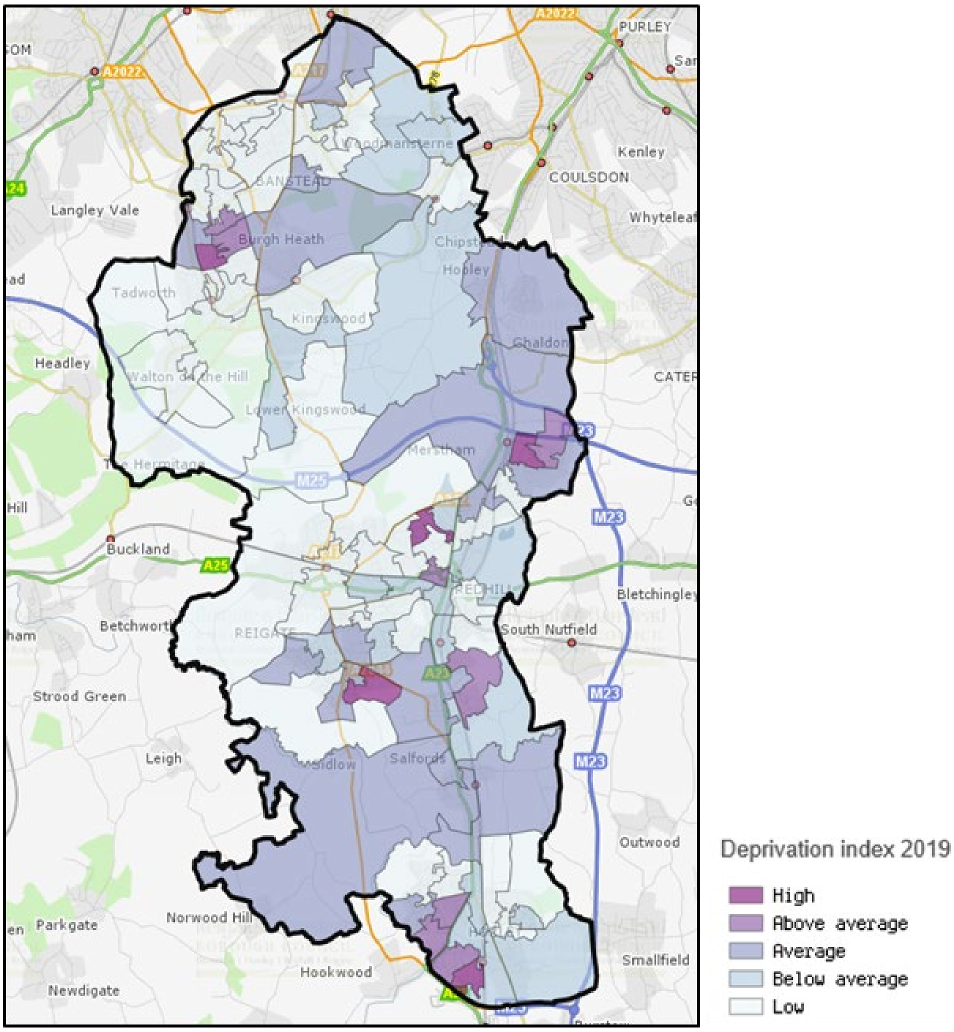
The Government uses a tool known as the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) to assess relative deprivation in England. The index was last published in 2019. In 2019, Reigate & Banstead borough was ranked 276 out of 317 local authorities (where 1 = the most deprived). The borough as a whole therefore fares well in terms of deprivation. However, areas and people within the borough can still face significant challenges.

Parts of Merstham were in the top 20% most deprived areas nationally for income deprivation affecting older people, with parts of Preston in the top 30% nationally.

For income deprivation affecting children, parts of Merstham, Preston and Redhill were in the top 20% of most deprived areas nationally, with parts of South Park and Woodhatch and Horley in the top 30%.

Parts of Merstham, Preston, Redhill and Horley ranked in the top 30% nationally when it comes to health deprivation and disability.

The map below shows the varying concentrations of deprivation across the borough.



The 2021 Census also provided [information on the deprivation of households](), assessed in terms of education, employment, health and housing (referred to as dimensions). According to these findings:

- 57.06% of the borough's households are not deprived in any dimension
- 30.83% are deprived in one dimension
- 9.89% are deprived in two dimensions
- 2.06% are deprived in three dimensions
- 0.16% are deprived in four dimensions

The distribution of this deprivation is broadly consistent with that observed in the IMD, with deprivation most observed in central Horley, Merstham, South Park and Woodhatch, and south Tattenham.

Housing and Homelessness

The Council has a particular duty to address homelessness within the borough, supported through its [Homelessness Strategy 2022 to 2027]().

Additional social housing nominations have been secured by the Housing team in recent years, increasing from 206 in 2020/21, to 279 in 2022/23 (an increase of 35%). Despite this, demand for social housing has continued to grow as housing affordability has been a consistent concern, and the number of households waiting for housing on the housing register has increase from 841 in February 2020 to 1275 in February 2023 (an increase of 52%).

It is anticipated that demand is likely to increase further, as housing affordability remains low (with a ratio of house prices to earnings of 11.82 in 2022, up from 7.87 in 2010), and current activities by the Bank of England are driving significant increases in mortgage costs.

Demand may also be driven by refugees displaced by recent international conflicts; whilst refugees constitute only a small proportion of the borough's population, they often require more extensive support. Given the borough's proximity to Gatwick airport, the national programmes providing support make extensive use of local temporary accommodation options, which both reduces their availability for other purposes, and may lead to secondary demand on associated resources. It would be hoped that conflicts may abate in coming years and reduce the need for such support, but it is unclear if this will be the case.

The Council has a Housing Delivery Strategy in place, and is continuing work to provide additional emergency and temporary accommodation.

Digital Exclusion

Whilst not a measure of deprivation, the level of access different sectors of the population may have to digital content and tools is also important to consider in planning and delivering Council services.

Digital access is not a topic captured by the 2021 Census, but information about digital exclusion from 2019 (ONS) suggests that 1.4% of the borough population has never used the internet, whilst figures from 2017 suggest that 8.2% of adults did not access online services over a 3 month period, and around 20% lack one or more basic digital skills.

Community Safety

The borough crime rate is low, broadly consistent with the wider Surrey level. The most common category of crime recorded locally is violence against the person; this level is no higher than elsewhere in the county, but represents a larger proportion of local crime due to a lower level of theft offences than the national average.

Leisure and Culture

The borough has three leisure centres, located at Tadworth, Redhill and Horley. It also has the newly opened cinema at The Rise in Redhill, along with the Harlequin theatre, also in Redhill, and another cinema in Reigate. In addition to these facilities, the borough also has a number of parks, playgrounds and open spaces, which regularly receive awards for quality.

Outside of the borough, leisure options are also available at nearby locations including Crawley and Epsom, with London also within relatively easy reach.

The Council monitors local levels of reported physical activity and related health indicators. Per the latest figures, covering November 2021-2022, approximately 70% of adults reported themselves as being physically active, representing at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise a week. This level has been relatively consistent in recent years, although it did dip during the coronavirus pandemic. Local levels of overweight individuals have increased in recent years, climbing from 59% in 2015/16 to 64% in 2021/22, now matching the England average.

Health

Looking at wider health indicators, the most recent health profile for the borough was released by Public Health England (now under the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities) in 2019. Per this profile, the borough's health is generally good, with life expectancies higher than the average for England, health inequalities at some of the lowest levels nationally, and levels generally remaining stable.

Health data since the coronavirus pandemic has been difficult to assess informatively, due to the high level of disruption experienced. It is therefore unclear as to how the borough's underlying health conditions may have shifted most recently, although there is likely to be some negative influence due to the demands on the health sector and others on responding to the recent difficulties. The most recent data can be viewed at: Local Authority Health Profiles - Data - OHID (phe.org.uk)

Place

The Council's Place theme covers the work of Council services that shape the borough's geographic and material conditions. This includes work on planning, place delivery, economic prosperity, and the wide range of neighbourhood operations. Environmental sustainability is also covered within this section, as a factor which will inevitably influence the local area.

The factors that are most influential for the Council's Place work are therefore those which lead to these material conditions and associated needs and opportunities. As with the factors relevant to the people theme, causes these could ultimately be attributed to a vast range of inputs, but the most relevant to the operation of the Council could be considered to be those regarding planning and development, business and industries, travel and transport, regulations, and the environment.

National Context

The primary national trends which influence the borough's places and the Place work of the Council are national planning policy, economic strategy, the environment and climate change policy, and regulatory requirements.

National Planning Policy

The UK's national planning policy is shaped by the National Planning Policy Framework, originally adopted in 2012 and last revised in 2021. This provides the context under which planning decisions are made.

A process is currently underway to further revise and update national policy. Following a review and consultation in 2020, and a number of changes since, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is being brought forward through Parliament. Whilst the bill does not only relate to planning, it includes a number of relevant elements, including relating to levies on developers, use of vacant properties, environmental assessments and reforms to local plans. The LGA released a response to the Bill as considered in March 2023, which includes reference to a number of the points of interest, strengths and potential concerns regarding the bill.

Planning policy and its associated powers are currently some of the key ways through which local authorities and planning bodies are able to both influence local development and support the provision of local infrastructure. With little direct funding provided by central government towards many key infrastructure needs, existing levies on developers therefore provide an important resource for securing this provision.

The initial Planning White Papers released as part of the 2020 round of consultation, raised concerns that elements of the legislation had potential to erode local controls, with the risk of allowing developers to proceed without regard to local concerns or of resources needed for local amenities not being secured. The new bill appears to move away from these concerns to some extent, and is more supportive of plan-led systems. However, there remains much uncertainty, including how fully the proposed arrangements for developer levies will meet local infrastructure and amenity needs whilst preserving the ability to secure affordable housing.

Economic Strategy

As identified within the People section of this report, the UK has a strong economy, but one which has been slow to grow in recent years. Whilst this has been recognised by recent governments, there has not been a consistent approach to securing stronger growth in recent years, presumably influenced by the demands of managing the Brexit process and responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

In September 2022, the government announced The Growth Plan 2022. This sets out ambitions to address current high levels of inflation, drive short term growth, and encourage supply side economic growth through a number of tax cuts and relaxations of some regulation. It is as yet unclear as to how effective the plan will be, but as a primarily indirect range of measures, its potential impact would be expected to be felt broadly, rather than primarily in specific areas. There are also a range of more specific grants and related opportunities available, but these are generally relatively small in scale relative to the national economy.

The longer direction of UK economic strategy remains unclear at this time. The growth plan and the government's Levelling Up campaign include a wide range of ambitions and local measures for potential investment zones, particularly with reference to historically underinvested areas. Again however, most components are relatively small scale and have not yet been significantly progressed, leaving it unclear as to the extent of the benefits which may be provided.

Regarding the Levelling Up campaign in particular, the campaign's stated focus is on the less prosperous areas of the country. To date, support from the levelling up approach for the borough and similar relatively prosperous areas is therefore anticipated to be limited, although the council was able to secure approximately £1m of funding over 3-years from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund associated with the levelling up agenda.

The Environment and Climate Change Policy

The UK's approach to climate change is now overseen by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), and is shaped by the Climate Change Act 2008 (amended 2019). The act commits the government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050, and established the Climate Change Committee (CCC) to review and advise on government policy as an independent statutory body. The UK is also a signatory to the Paris Agreement, adopted as by 196 parties at the UN Climate Change Conference in 2015.

In response to a request from the government, the CCC provided a full assessment of the UK approach to stopping global warming in 2019. It was from this report that current UK targets are derived. The CCC publishes regular reports on the UK's progress towards its commitments. As of the most recent June 2023 report to parliament, it identified that there was more to be done, including regarding the urgency and swiftness of actions, the need for policies around planning and land use, and the continued need to move away from fossil fuels. A recent report on adaption measures also identify a need to do more to protect UK citizens from the effects of climate change, regardless of emission reductions.

In April 2023, the government published a new policy paper on Powering Up Britain, setting out an approach towards providing energy security and moving towards net-zero emissions. The paper includes support for renewable and nuclear energy, carbon management and replacement technologies and encouraging private investment. The paper references actions made to date, but is less clear on how next steps in the process will be implemented.

Of particular note for many will be the planned end of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars in the UK, with a phase out from 2035 to 2040. The government announced that these start point for this phase out would be moved back from 2030 to 2035. The phase out is expected to make a significant impact on UK carbon emissions, of which over 30% are transport based. It will require the roll out of extensive new infrastructure to support electric vehicles, supported by government funding. This infrastructure roll out will need to accelerate from its current rate to be in place by 2040, but work is underway in many areas, and will be further incentivised as the threshold dates approach. With the postponement of the phase out date, there is likely to be a delay in the adoption of electric vehicles and the roll-out of charging points, leading to higher emissions in the interim, although it is possible the date will be brought forward again by a future government.

There were also parallel plans for the phase out of new gas boilers by 2035, in line with the government's 2021 Heat and Building Strategy. The strategy was supported by a related consultation on the topic, the results of which have been announced to be being analysed. However, this was also recently announced to have been postponed. There is currently a national Boiler Upgrade Scheme in place, providing grants to contribute to the cost of replacing a gas boiler with a heat pump or biomass boiler. Unfortunately, the scheme has been relatively unsuccessful to date, per an inquiry by the House of Lords, with it facing limitations on awareness, available installers, and with initial costs remaining too high for many households to access. Recent announcements included an increase in available support from £5k to £7.5, which may help increase uptake. As domestic heating remains a significant source of emissions (with the residential sector contributing 17% of emissions as of the provisional 2022 greenhouse gas emission figures), there is likely to be a need to further address these elements in future.

A range of requirements for environmental matters not focussed on carbon emissions and climate change were enacted in the Environment Act 2021, with targets adopted in December 2022 and the Environmental Improvement Plan published in January 2023, building on the 2018 25-Year Environment Plan. These included updated requirements for consideration of biodiversity net gain within planning assessment, along with related elements for land managers and developers. Most elements of the plan are beneficial, and will operate to help improve environmental conditions nationally. There are however a few elements regarding recycling and waste collection which, whilst laudable in ambition, pose the risk of negative consequences for some local authorities, as described below.

Climate change has been identified to be a concern for a large majority (82%) of the UK population, according to figures from the DESNZ. As such, and with the established national and international context, there will be a continued need for the Council to continue to work towards mitigating its impacts and improving environmental sustainability.

Waste and Resources

The government set out its long term approach to waste and recycling in England in its Resources and Waste Strategy in 2018. This strategy included commitments towards reducing waste, protecting the environment and dealing with waste related crime. Per the Environmental Improvement Plan referenced above, the government is seeking to standardise collections of household and business waste, aiming to require collections of core recyclables and food waste.

This goal will be beneficial for waste management if implemented; however, it is possible that the associated changes may also make collection of garden waste a baseline requirement of local authorities, rather than its current status as a paid-for service. Whilst the goal of improving recycling rates cannot be contested, the garden waste service currently contributes a significant level of income (approximately £1.2m) to the Council's budget. Were changes to be implemented which removed the option to secure this income, and did not provide any compensatory funding, this would present budgetary challenges for Reigate and Banstead and other local authorities providing similar services.

The objectives of the Environmental Improvement Plan and similar matters regarding waste have been known to be under review by recent governments for some time, and there remains considerable uncertainty over their implementation as the plan does not include details of these elements. It is therefore currently unclear as to how this national approach may influence local requirements and conditions, but it is an area of both potential and risk which will need to be monitored in the coming years.

Regulatory Requirements

There are a range of national laws and regulations which are enforced by local authorities. These include matters around environmental health such as air quality and contaminated land, licensing of various premises, food safety, health and safety, taxis, public nuisance and pest control.

There are not currently anticipated to be major changes to these regulatory regimes, although requirements have increase in some cases, and some areas are due for updates to statutory fees which can be charged by local authorities, with increases to planning fees expected to be confirmed. However, following the role of local authorities in responding to various matters during the coronavirus pandemic, there appears to have been an expanded awareness of local capabilities among central government departments. There is therefore a possibility that additional requirements may be place on local authorities in future, which would have potential implications for costs and resources.

Sub-National Context

Travel and Transport Infrastructure

SCC has responsibility for many factors relating to local travel, including most roads, buses, and on-street parking. The county council's approach to transport is therefore of significant relevance to the borough and its residents.

Surrey's approach to travel and transport is primarily set out in their newest Local Transport Plan (LTP4). The plan has a focus on sustainable transport, with elements around supporting active travel (walking and cycling), public transport, reducing the need for car journeys, accessibility, and reducing emissions and improving air quality.

Surrey currently has one of the highest levels of road traffic in the county; levels were at 8.6 billion vehicle miles in 2019 prior to the pandemic. Numbers decline sharply during the pandemic, but has since been rising again, with 7.4 billion vehicle miles recorded for the latest data in 2021. It remains to be seen if levels will continue to return to pre-pandemic levels, but the borough's roads are nonetheless highly active.

As populations continue to grow, this is likely to place additional pressure on road networks and risks increases to travel times, particularly for commuters. This may be offset somewhat in the near future if the increase in remote working leads to traffic levels remaining lower.

With respect to trends, use of rail travel has been increasing over time in recent decades, whilst bus use outside of London has been declining. Both types of services were significantly affected by the pandemic, and it again remains to be seen how complete the recovery will be.

Whilst there continues to be interest in public transport, it is currently unclear where funding to support an expansion of services would originate. As identified above, Surrey County Council's local transport plan (LTP4) includes plans for improving the existing network and potential accessibility options around on-demand transport, but does not commit to significant expansion in the scale of services available.

The north of the borough is also influenced by the approach of London authorities. Of particular recent note has been the expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ).. Whilst the ULEZ scheme is unlikely to have a significant structural impact on transport in the borough, it will likely continue to be of concern to local residents, and is emblematic of the influence London has on transport in the area.

Reigate and Banstead has been involved in some joint working with Surrey, such as on the development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, more information on which is provided in the local context section below. The Council is also a consultee on a range of other elements of Surrey's approach, although consultation is not always extensive. It will be necessary to continue to monitor Surrey's approach to transport and seek to ensure that the county council takes due account of local considerations.

Gatwick Airport

Gatwick Airport is located directly to the south of the borough, and although technically outside of the borough's boundaries is a major influence on Horley and the surrounding area. The airport is a major local employer providing approximately 20,000 jobs, and drives significant local transport activity and secondary business.

The airport's plans for expansion and second runway have recently been accepted for examination by the National Planning Inspectorate, despite a range of concerns expressed by local authorities and others, including input from the Council. The potential expansion would offer economic opportunities for the borough, but also has potential risks regarding environmental factors such as air quality, noise, and carbon emissions, and around demand on local transport infrastructure.

Given the potential impact of the expansion of Gatwick Airport, the national planning process and any subsequent action will need to be closely monitored by the Council to information ongoing consideration of its local implications.

Business and Investment

The south east of England is one of the most prosperous areas in the country, with it and the east of England being the only regions outside of London which regularly contribute a net surplus to the national accounts. The region's industries are relatively consistent with the UK as a whole, with a slightly lower prevalence of manufacturing and public administration and defence roles, and a slightly higher rate of retail, construction and information and communication roles.

Within Surrey, a similar profile applies, although retail is close to the national average, whilst professional scientific and technical activities are more highly represented. More information on the balance within Reigate and Banstead is available in the local context section below.

Surrey County Council has a programme to support business and investment in the county, most prominently through their Invest in Surrey campaign. The county council also has an Economic Strategy Statement, published in 2020, which has a focus on recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and looks towards 2030 and enhancing the county's strengths in technical fields, among a wide range of elements.

Until recently, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) provided a range of functions across regions of the UK, including elements of business representation, strategic economic planning and delivery of some related central government funding. Reigate and Banstead fell within the Coast to Capital LEP. However, the government has recently announced that it will be transferring the core functions of LEPs to local authorities, with Surrey County Council expected to take on the role in the county. This may lead to economic measures being better integrated with local government approaches in future, but it is as yet unclear to how these changes will be realised in practice.

Planning and Development

The majority of local planning matters are decided by district and borough Councils, with the county council only deal with matters regarding minerals and waste or its own properties such as schools and libraries. Surrey also responsibility for strategic planning approaches and providing an overview of land use in the area, including through its Surrey Future approach, which also touches on business needs.

However, SCC is still a significant partner in local development, as are other public sector partners. As part of coordinating efforts there is a Surrey Strategic Estates Network, which provides a forum for raising topics of interest. Local partners also look towards the One Public Estate programme.

Coordination between local public sector partners remains relatively ad-hoc, although efforts such as those referenced above do seek to improve coordination. With many public sector organisations facing similar needs and challenges in the current and coming years, consideration of joint opportunities may be an important tool for future approaches to development.

Environment and Sustainability

Surrey County Council has a climate change delivery plan, Greener Futures, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the county. It has strategic priorities around increasing resilience to climate change, integrating sustainability into planning and development, and increasing understanding of the need and opportunities for action.

Borough and Local Context

Borough Economy

The borough is, overall, a broadly affluent place, with an average resident annual income of £35,282 in 2022, 27% higher than the national average and 17% higher than the average for the south east.

Unemployment levels in the borough are low, both reflecting and exceeding the national trend, reaching a low of 2.1% as of the latest data in 2021/22 (as compared to 3.7% in Great Britain).

Business survival rates for new businesses are also higher than elsewhere in the country, sitting at 44% between 2016 and 2021, per the most recent data. These are deflated from pre-covid levels of almost 46%, but are still significantly higher than the UK level of 38.4%.

There are 7055 businesses in the borough, per 2022 data. Of these, 91% (6440) are micro businesses with 0-9 employees, 7% (510) are small with 10-49 employees, 1% (70) are medium with 50 to 249 employees, and 0.5% (35) are large with 250 or more employees.

Compared to the South east and the wider UK, this represents a higher proportion of micro and large businesses, and a smaller proportion of small and medium businesses.

Industries

According to ONS data on employee jobs via the Nomis service, the largest industries by number of jobs in the borough are Human, Health and Social Work Activities (12,000), Financial and Insurance Activities (8000) and Wholesale and Retail Trade (8000). Relative to the wider UK, the borough has a disproportionately prevalence of a few sectors, including:

- Financial and Insurance (11.9% of jobs, as compared to 3.6% nationally)
- Construction (7.5% of jobs, as compared to 4.9% nationally)
- Human, Health and Social Work (17.9% of jobs, as compared to 13.7% nationally)

The borough is relatively underrepresented in:

- Manufacturing (3.0% of jobs, as compared to 7.6% nationally)
- Accommodation and Food Services (5.2% of jobs, as compared to 7.5% nationally)
- Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (1.5% of jobs, as compared to 2.3% nationally)

The borough is also technically underrepresented in terms of Transport and Storage jobs (3.4% compared to 5.1% nationally), but in practice this is offset by the presence of Gatwick Airport immediately adjacent to the south of the borough.

Over time, the distribution of jobs across sectors is projected to remain relatively constant, and has been largely consistent over the previous corporate plan period, according to information provided by Cambridge Econometrics. A small increase in Accommodation and Food Services is projected, along with general business services, but these are unlikely to significantly affect the profile of the borough.

The anticipated expansion of Gatwick Airport, whilst again technically outside of the borough, might lead to increases in the number of residents employed in Transport and Storage jobs.

Retail and Town Centres

The key retail locations in the borough are the town centres at Redhill, Reigate, Horley and Banstead, particularly the Belfry Shopping Centre in Redhill. Nearby locations are also available for residents at Crawley, Epsom and a number of London locations, depending on where in the borough they live.

Online retail has been expanding in recent years, increasing competition for high-street retailers. Vacancy rates for town centres have varied over time at all locations within the borough, and are relatively volatile. Per the 2023 Town Centre Monitor, levels in Reigate and Banstead have remained close to the target levels of 5%, Horley reached 7.8%, but improved from 9.8%, whilst Redhill saw a significant increase in vacant premises, reaching 16.7%. The significant increase in Redhill may however have been influenced by the construction of new units, which had not yet been filled, rather than representing a loss of existing businesses.

Footfall in town centres shows more positive signs, with year on year footfall increasing across the borough as of July 2023. Increases ranged from +4.5% in Horley to +47% in Reigate. Following the opening of The Rise in Redhill, there was a notable increase in local footfall, indicating a positive impact from the new development.

Travel and Transport Infrastructure

Road Traffic and Parking

As identified in the sub-regional information above, road traffic levels are very high in Surrey. The 2021 census captured [local data on travelling to work] for the borough, but was significantly influenced by the coronavirus pandemic ongoing at the time, and this data is therefore limited in applicability.

Parking availability may also be under pressure in future, although this will also depend upon travel trends. The Council operates a number of off-street car parks at Banstead, Horley, Redhill, Reigate and Tattenham Corner (Epsom Downs). These experienced a drop in users during the pandemic as road traffic declined, and have been similarly recovering since.

Parking provision for new development is generally at lower levels than was historically the case, encouraging use of alternative modes of transport, particularly for those in urban areas. However, personal vehicles are likely to continue to be considered as necessary for most residents, although the number of vehicles per household may decline over time.

Public Transport

In terms of public transport, the borough is primarily served by rail and bus services.

The primary rail lines through the borough are:

- The London-Brighton line, connecting London, Merstham, Redhill, Earlswood, Salfords, Horley, and Gatwick Airport, with routes to Crawley, Horsham and Three Bridges.
- East-west lines, connecting Redhill to Dorking, Guildford and Reading via Reigate to the west, and to Tonbridge and Ashford International to the East.
- The London circuit line through East Croydon and Sutton, via Woodmansterne, Chipstead, Kingswood, Tadworth, Tattenham Corner, Epsom Downs and Banstead.

Unfortunately, there are not generally direct train services between the stations in the north and south of the borough, making the use of rail for such journeys more difficult and disproportionately time consuming.

Bus services are also available in the brough. Urban routes between connected areas are reasonably well served, with multiple services connecting the towns in the south of the borough, and the areas in the north respectively. Southern routes also connect to Gatwick and Crawley, whilst routes in the north including connections to Epsom, Ewell, Sutton and Coulsdon.

There are however fewer convenient services for rural sections of the borough, with buses generally infrequent and likely to take longer routes. There is again limited connectivity between the northern and southern sections of the borough, with only the 420 and 460 bus routes providing a regular connection.

Active Travel

The borough and SCC have also agreed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, which is a ten-year plan agreed in accordance with Department for Transport guidance, which will support investment in cycling and walking infrastructure in the borough. This plan will be beneficial for driving active transport provision in the borough, but will also be partially dependent on available external funding opportunities through bids to central government or other applicable sources.

The primary benefits of enhanced active travel provision are likely to be most strongly felt by urban areas, where such options are likely to be most accessible, but also have potential to expand appeal to wider, more rural areas if easier or safer routes and supporting facilities are made available.

Electric Vehicles

By 2035, the phase out of petrol and diesel vehicles will begin to be implemented by legislation with the sale of new cars and vans prohibited unless they have significant zero-emissions journey capacity (i.e. hybrid vehicles), with all new cars and vans expected to be fully zero-emission from 2040 (see above notes on recent changes to this schedule).

Work towards installation of electric charging points is progressing, but is not currently at the rate which will be required to meet future needs. The Council has been examining options for installation of additional charging points on Council owned land, including around potential partnership working with SCC or participation with their provider for roll out of on-street charging points, but has not yet agreed any general approach. Local planning requirements do include the need for charging points in new developments, although this evidently affects only a small proportion of local homes and other buildings.

The scale of work required to meet the requirements of a complete electric vehicle charging network will require concerted efforts from industry and potentially national government. Where specific local needs or market failures are identified, the Council will continue to monitor where opportunities to support the process become available, and may also be able to consider income generating opportunities from the emerging demand.

Planning and Development

The Local Plan

The Council is the planning authority for most local matters. The borough's planning policy is set out in the Local Plan, comprising a Core Strategy, Development Management Plan and policies map, with a number of supplementary planning documents. As a plan-led authority, the Council's approach to planning is determined by the policies of the Local Plan, and local development is shaped on this basis, consistent with national requirements.

The current Local Plan will be in effect until 2027; due to the lengthy process required, planning is therefore underway for a new Local Plan, which is intended to utilise a single plan approach. The timetable and approach to the development of this new plan are set out in the Local Development Scheme.

Development

Independently of its planning role, the Council also looks to bring forward development opportunities which will enhance the local area, be that through providing necessary housing or amenities, or through stimulating the local economy.

Most recently, this has encompassed the major redevelopment of The Rise at Marketfield way, providing a new cinema, leisure and retail options, and housing, along with several projects in Redhill, Tadworth and Horley to provide additional affordable, social or temporary housing, along with a range of improvements to the public realm.

The Council owns a property portfolio including a number of office buildings, retail locations and business sites, along with a range of landholdings across the borough. Many of these sites are currently either providing valuable community benefits, such as allotments, or are generating an income for the Council which helps to fund services. However, the Council is also reviewing its portfolio to identify where sites may be underutilised or have potential for enhance uses. Depending on the direction of the next Corporate Plan, there are likely to be opportunities to repurpose or redevelop some such sites to help deliver on the Council's objectives.

Environmental Sustainability

The Council has an established Environmental Sustainability Strategy, building on a commitment in the current Reigate and Banstead 2025 Corporate Plan. The plan has three key themes around energy and carbon, low impact consumption, and biodiversity and the natural environment. Annual reports are provided on the strategy each year.

As part of the plan, the Council has been working on a number of actions, including improving the energy efficiency of its buildings, increasing its use of electric vehicles where possible, and updating practices such as grass cutting to take account of sustainability considerations. The Council is also working to help promote and provide information on environmental sustainability through the community, with a dedicated section of the website, regular messaging, and attendance at local events.

As identified within the national context section of this document, climate change is a concern for 82% of the population, and there will therefore be a continued need to work towards environmental sustainability in the coming years.

Organisation

The Council's Organisation theme covers the Council's structure and internal services, as well as its governance and processes. This therefore includes consideration of Finance, Organisation Development and Human Resources, Legal and Governance matters, Communications and Customer Contact, Corporate Policy, Projects and Performance, and Information Technology. It also encompasses a range of work across other services through which the Council shapes its service delivery.

Due to this more internally focussed aspect, the Council's organisation is less directly dependent on external factors, although it continues to be ultimately shaped by the situation in which the borough and Council operate. This section therefore provides information on the factors regarding the labour market, local authority finances and policy, and potential devolution approaches.

National Context

UK Labour Market

As referenced within the Place section of this document, the national employment level is historically high, with unemployment at approximately 4%, influenced partially by high rates of long-term illness, early retirement and reductions in workers from the EU. At the same time, recent inflation levels are the highest they have been in over three decades. The recent coronavirus pandemic also led to significant disruption to existing working patterns.

The combination of these factors has led to considerable pressure on recruitment, retention and wages, and increased rates of staff turnover. Figures for 2022[1] indicate a national labour turnover rate of approximately 16%, significantly higher than trend. Professional roles in particular have been reported as being challenging to recruit.

The Council has similarly experienced these pressures, with local staff turnover rates similarly elevated. Whilst there is the possibility of prevailing economic factors leading to increased unemployment, and inflation is likely to decrease, recruitment and retention may remain challenging in the near term. On this basis, the Council will likely need to reflect the necessity of maintaining its operational capacity through appropriate recruitment and retention efforts in coming years, both of which are priorities addressed in the draft Organisational Development & Human Resources Strategy (OD & HR).

Local Authority Policies

Central government policy towards local authorities in recent years has primarily been to rely on them to operate independently, with reductions in central government support and funding

[1] XpertHR's 'Labour Turnover Rates Survey 2022'

relative to previous periods. This has caused financial challenges for some authorities, and led others towards seeking additional revenue sources, sometimes through high risk projects. Local examples of Councils experiencing such issues have included Croydon and Woking. Council use of borrowing is now required to be for the purposes of fulfilling the Council's social benefit functions, rather than aimed at generating a financial return – see guidance from the Public Works Loan Board section of the UK Debt Management Office for more information.

The last year saw a small amount of additional resources made available to local authorities, through measures such as increased to permitted Council Tax, social care precepts, and extension of existing business rates income. However, with demands on support from local authorities continuing to grow in many cases, the sector's finances remained stretched. Current indications from central government and the DLUHC are that this financial context should broadly be expected to continue, although there may be additional small concession in coming years.

Likely partially prompted by those Councils pursuing ultimately unwise investments, the DLUHC is currently consulting on new guidance on best value practices and is establishing the Office for Local Government (Oflog) as a performance monitoring body for local government. Whilst the current consultation does not specify such an approach, it is therefore likely that central government will seek more oversight and involvement with local government in future. If this is the case, this will likely represent an additional ask on local authority capacity to provide reporting requirements or similar, which may not be supported by corresponding additional resources.

Sub-National Context

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

At various points over the last several years, the government has expressed interest in pursuing additional local devolution measures and/or local government reorganisation. Whilst these have been primarily focussed on large urban areas such as Manchester, there have also been proposals for the inclusion of other areas, including Surrey.

The Council previously took part in a consultation exercise with other districts and boroughs around options for such local reorganisation across Surrey, in response to an unsupported County Council approach towards the same. Whilst this review identified some potential areas for expanding joint working, the reorganisation was ultimately not pursued by central government, and district and borough Councils were able to continue under current arrangements.

Subsequent to this, there has been further consideration by Surrey County Council of pursuing a 'county deal' with central government, where additional powers would be concentrated in the County Council. Proposals for this county deal were most recently considered by SCC Cabinet in October 2022. Notably, the SCC proposals did not include support for a directly elected mayor for the area, which was a key element of central government proposals tied to control of funding, and would therefore likely limit powers over any additional funding in any agreed approach. Central government has not formally responded to the proposals at this time, but indications from the DLUHC are believed to be that SCC will be invited to submit a formal bid to government.

Whatever the outcome of the current SCC county deal proposals, the current local government structure is not anticipated to change significantly in the near term. However, more modest alteration such as county deals may nonetheless have local effects, and the Council will therefore need to remain aware of these potential changes and their implications for the borough.

Surrey County Council Policy

In addition to the more specific policies and strategies identified within the relevant sections above, Surrey County Council also has an overarching Community Vision for Surrey 2030. This sets out a wide range of ambitions, divided between people and place, around supporting the wellbeing of county residents, education, pleasant communities, travel, homes and business. This forms part of the county council's strategic framework, called The Surrey Way. This strategic framework includes information on the council's organisational approach, along with its most recent budget.

Borough and Local Context

Finance

The Council is a in a strong financial position relative to most local authorities. It has so far been possible to present a balanced budget each year without the need for significant reductions in service offers, without major use of reserves. The Council also maintains significant capital reserves at this time.

However, as with other local authorities, demands for services continue to rise and costs of service delivery are likely to rise faster than primary funding sources. Council Tax increases in the last year were limited to 3%, whilst inflation was at over 10%. It has been possible to offset these pressures to date through a combination of efficiencies and securing additional revenue income, but this is likely to become increasingly challenging in future.

The Council has an established Medium Term Financial Plan, along with a range of supporting financial plans.

The Council's ambitions in future years will need to take account of these financial pressures and the constraints these may apply to possible action. It is possible that continued efficiency and effective investment may continue to mitigate this pressure, but these will need to be carefully monitored to ensure that they do not adversely affect overall service provision and that an appropriate risk profile is maintained.

Organisational Capacity

Related to the financial pressures on the Council, plans and ambitions will also need to take account of available organisational capacity.

Due to efficiency measures already undertaken, along with the ongoing need to provide the best possible support for residents and the borough, available Council organisational capacity is largely fully utilised with immediate priorities and associated ongoing activities. As such, new initiatives will likely require either reallocation of existing resources (with a potential impact on the order of priorities) or investment of additional resources. Such investment may be able to be self-supporting in the longer term as part of invest-to-save or revenue generating measures, but the balance of demand will nonetheless need to be carefully considered.

As identified within the national context, recruitment and retention are also currently demanding. Turnover rates for Council staff have been elevated at a similar level to the national average, leading to more requirement for recruiting and inducting new staff and associated training, although the level has now decreased again to 11.59% (below the 12% target). Due to the additional effective costs of taking on replacement staff and potential loss of existing expertise, care will also need to continue to be taken to maintain existing staff capacity through effective measures that will influence the retention of staff. In Autumn 2023, a staff survey will run for staff to report how they feel about working at the Council. The results of the survey will provide key baseline data that will influence the Organisational Development and Culture priorities (one of the themes within the OD & HR Strategy).

Partner Organisations

The Council works with a large number of partners across a range of sectors. These have largely been alluded to within their relevant sections, but include the voluntary and community sector, health services, housing associations, environmental bodies, the police, and business groups. These partners are consulted on work within their fields, and will frequently form part of collaborative or coordinated approaches to meeting local needs. However the Council and its plans progress in the coming years, working with local partners will continue to be an important requirement for the organisation.

Not yet referenced specifically, the borough contains two parish councils: Horley Town Council and Salfords and Sidlow Parish Council. Funded primarily through local precepts on Council Tax, these parish councils are composed of elected Members representing their local areas. Horley Town Council currently has an agreed Town Plan for 2022-2027, setting out its vision, key priorities and future projects for the period, with a focus on organisational and environmental sustainability while benefitting the local area. Salfords and Sidlow Parish Council has a lighter touch approach, but lists its Mission Statement, objectives and strategies on its website. It also provides a separate listing of its projects for 2023.