

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 17 April 2024 at Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Reigate, RH2 8EF.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday, 27 June 2024.

**Elected Members** (\*=Present):

- \* Fiona Davidson (Chairman)
- \* Jonathan Essex
- \* Robert Hughes
- \* Rebecca Jennings-Evans
- Rachael Lake BEM
- \* Bernie Muir
- \* John O'Reilly
- \* Mark Sugden
- \* Ashley Tilling
- \* Liz Townsend
- \* Chris Townsend (Vice-Chairman)
- \* Jeremy Webster (Vice-Chairman)
- Fiona White

**Co-opted Members:**

Julie Oldroyd, Diocesan Representative for the Catholic Church  
Mr Alex Tear, Diocesan Representative for the Anglican Church,  
Diocese of Guildford

**11/ APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1/24]**

Apologies were received from Cllr Rachael Lake and Mrs Julie Oldroyd, who both attended remotely.

**12/ MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 15 FEBRUARY 2024 [Item 2/24]**

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

**13/ DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3/24]**

Cllr Essex declared that he sits on the Facilities Environment Committee of the YMCA. Cllr O'Reilly declared he is a Trustee to the Hershaw Youth Trust.

**14/ QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4/24]**

**Key points made in the discussion:**

1. There were no questions from the public. Responses to the four Member Questions have been attached to these minutes.
2. As a supplementary to her Member Question, Cllr Davidson asked if Mindworks would be willing to investigate the experiences of parents she refers to them who are having difficulty accessing Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder expertise.
3. Cllr Essex followed up his question on Betchwood Vale Academy by asking if it was a change in Government policy that meant the Council was unable to intervene, as the school would be built by a third party. A written answer would be provided to him.
4. In relation to his question on the Reigate Valley College relocation, Cllr Essex asked why the fire station site in Reigate was excluded and why split site solutions had been discounted on financial grounds. A written answer would be provided to him.
5. Cllr Essex asked if the Council would seek to recoup what it had appeared to continue to pay to two special schools following their off-rolling of two children. The Director for Education responded there could be a number of reasons for that situation and she was happy to look into both cases.

**15/ ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PLAN [Item 5/24]**

**Key points made in the discussion:**

1. The Select Committee planned to scrutinise the topic of Children Missing Education in September 2024. The Chair commented children not in education required a great deal more attention from both Surrey County Council and schools, noting that between September 2023-February 2024, 2,942 children in maintained schools in Surrey had been absent for more than 15 days, of whom 3.8% received Alternative Provision.
2. The Chair added that Members did not feel reassured by the Service's response to the Committee's recommendations on Alternative Provision (AP). The Committee was concerned about how the Service would monitor the education being provided to those 42% of young people who had been absent from school for more than 15 days and were not enrolled in a PRU/AP Academy. For those pupils in receipt of AP, the Chair hoped to see an improvement in the proportion receiving 15 or more hours a week, currently at 15 per cent, and looked forward to reviewing tracking reports on all children receiving AP at a future Committee.

3. Following recommendations made on the recruitment and retention of foster carers, the Chair looked forward to welcoming back the Surrey County Foster Carer Association in the future to update the Committee. She remarked it would be interesting to have an independent review of Surrey's foster care recruitment and retention strategy of the sort undertaken by King's College on Hampshire.

**16/ CHILDREN, FAMILIES & LIFELONG LEARNING (CFLL) ADDITIONAL BUDGET ALLOCATION [Item 6/24]**

**Witnesses**

Cllr Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning

Cllr Maureen Attewell, Deputy Cabinet Member Children and Families, Lifelong Learning

Cllr Catherine Powell

Tina Benjamin, Director – Corporate Parenting

Julia Katherine, Director – Education and Lifelong Learning

Chris Tisdall, Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting

Kay Goodacre, Strategic Finance Business Partner for CFL

**Key points made in the discussion:**

1. The Chair summarised the areas where opinion differed on how to allocate the additional Children, Families and Lifelong Learning budget coming from Surrey's share of the £600m additional allocation announced by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in January 2024: (a) the Service wants to develop inclusive play rather than continue to support play and leisure breaks for children with additional needs and disabilities suggested by Cllr Powell; (b) the Service supports the need for additional support in schools for neurodiverse children but does not support targeting areas of high deprivation suggested by Cllr Powell; and (c) the Select Committee questions the value of international social worker recruitment proposed by the Service.
2. A Member asked the Service to explain the inclusive play it espouses and the evidence base for its outcomes. The Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting explained it would make the mainstream more inclusive, for example allow children with additional needs to access sports clubs in their community. Surrey could learn from other local authorities already doing this, for instance Hampshire and Wandsworth. It had been discussed

with 30 parents so far in a co-production programme. He assured the Committee that inclusive play would not undermine the current £370,000 play and leisure offer. A Member said they would like to get rid of the deficit in the current SEND play and leisure offer, i.e. address the waiting list in this area, before introducing another scheme. The Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting noted that, unlike some other local authorities, Surrey County Council (SCC) did not have an eligibility threshold and this open approach made it hard to give an answer on how many eligible children were waiting. The Cabinet Member thought this open approach might have to change.

3. Asked how many play and leisure places for children with additional needs and disabilities (AND) were available versus how many were needed, the Head of Commissioning – Corporate Parenting responded that about 1,400 children accessed 140,000 hours of play and leisure breaks each year and about 350 children and young people were on a waiting list. Access was at the discretion of SCC, whose statutory duty was to provide overnight short breaks, rather than enabling every child with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for example to access a play and leisure scheme.
4. The Cabinet Member said SCC was not obliged by statute to provide play and leisure but it was highly valued by families of children with additional needs, many of whom had difficulty in finding childcare, and should be seen in the context of preparation for adulthood and promoting independence. She was saddened by a point in the SEND inspection report that a number of young people with additional needs did not feel included or welcome in their community, and felt sports clubs becoming more inclusive may help to address that. From September 2026, every school will have to provide access to wraparound childcare from 8am-6pm.
5. Explaining why she raised the budget amendment, Cllr Powell spoke of increased demand because of the increasing number of children with EHCPs, and the need to reopen waiting lists that closed due to the 2023/24 reduction in services. The Equality Impact Assessment had stated the increased pressure on families of children with disabilities would likely lead in some cases to the contribution of family breakdown if not mitigated, leading to increased costs for SCC. Parents told Family Voice the reduced service had led to significant mental health pressures on the family and reduced child confidence. In one case the respite was said to be the difference between the child staying in the family or going into residential care. Cllr Powell did not believe inclusive provision was able to meet all needs.

6. The Service was asked if it would support more funding focused on neurodiversity need in school catchment areas of higher child need/deprivation in Lower Super Output Area domains, or if alternatively it believed there should be a priority on identifying and targeting geographic clusters of identified neurodiversity need, regardless of prevailing socio-economic factors. The Director for Education and Lifelong Learning questioned whether targeting would take into account just the school location or its catchment area, explaining that although none of the 18 schools included in the Schools Inclusion for Autism pilot were in those areas, many of the pupils live in such areas. She proposed deprivation was one of a number of factors that should be considered when targeting, including attendance, exclusions and percentage of AND pupils within the school. She added that the Council could not insist that any schools take up an offer of support or direct them to do so. Asked why a school would not want to take it up, the Director answered that they might feel they cannot give it the attention needed to have impact if they have other ongoing initiatives, or they could perhaps have an alternative idea to meet need.
7. A Member queried how many schools would be categorised as in an area of high deprivation and whether, if these schools were prioritised, there would be any remaining capacity. He also enquired how low level of attainment in language and communication when starting school mapped against areas of deprivation across Surrey. The Director responded it was a problem that had worsened due to the pandemic and she would provide figures.
8. The Cabinet Member said most programmes already in place had been piloted first. The Council did not manage any school and could not dictate to or impose on schools; each one was an autonomous organisation accountable to its governing body or trust.
9. Cllr Powell said it was acknowledged that it would take a decade for the gap in attainment between the most disadvantaged pupils and others return to what it was before Covid. Schools in areas of deprivation were also dealing with the challenges of higher numbers of children with neurodiversity and more safeguarding issues. Forty-five Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) of Surrey were in the bottom 20 per cent of the country. Two of the Service's universal suggested services provided advice that would require extra time and energy on the part of the schools.
10. A Member asked what lessons were learned from the last occasion international social workers were recruited, who were understood to have left due to cultural differences and some experiencing racism from service users. The Director for

Corporate Parenting informed that out of the 33 recruited via an agency in 2022, 20 still worked for Children and Families and four had transferred to Adult Services. SCC had held workshops to learn what worked for them and found non-office working had led to a number of people used to living and working in another country feeling isolated. In West Sussex Council's international campaign they had a pastoral focus and did more preparation with the employees before they left their native countries. She added that any reported abuse was always followed up. The Member said mentoring and whether they brought dependents should be considered. A Member suggested a need to understand why social workers were leaving the profession rather than bringing workers from abroad who would have loneliness to deal with in addition to the demands of the role. The Director said in one retention initiative, social workers were being given clinical support to debrief.

11. Asked what impact the £5,000 per annum market supplement recommended by the Select Committee and introduced in December 2023 had had on social worker recruitment and retention this year, the Director for Corporate Parenting said since its implementation, which had brought pay more in line with that of neighbouring authorities, five agency staff had moved into permanent roles. In Family Safeguarding, the retention rate had increased to 76 per cent in March 2024 from 68 per cent in December 2023, a significant difference in three months.
12. The Chair explained that the £370,000 allocated to SEND play and leisure would not necessarily fully restore all the hours that were available in 2022/23 and this would not be known until negotiations with providers had been concluded. Therefore, the Committee would like some of the £500,000 being considered for play and leisure funding additional to this £370,000, which is proposed by the Service for a programme developing more inclusive practice in mainstream provision, to be redirected to bring down the waiting lists for play and leisure for children with additional needs.
13. A Member questioned the value of piloting inclusive play and thought the Committee should take one side or the other rather than doing both at once. The Chair said both could be funded and the pilots were to understand how well integrated play could serve the anticipated needs in each quadrant. The Strategic Finance Business Partner confirmed there was money ringfenced to Children, Families and Lifelong Learning that had not yet been allocated to specific projects.

## Actions

1. Scrutiny Officer to reshare briefing on supply and demand for short breaks provided in July 2023.
2. Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to answer: How many schools would be included in the Enhanced Language and Communication Initiative if focusing first on the areas of high deprivation; and would that utilise the whole capacity (up to 50 schools) for the programme or not?
3. Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to answer: Is the low level of attainment in language and communication referred to on page 63 of the report recognised as a greater problem in areas of deprivation across the county? Please supply supporting data.

## Resolved:

- 1) The Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee endorses the following:
  - **£4.84m** spending on prevention work proposed by CFLL;
  - **£0.05m** of one-off funding to support the expansion of the current pilot, where providers of SEND Play and Leisure or Overnight Respite groups would allow parents and carers who struggle to recruit Personal Assistants for respite to fund a session or place using their personal allowances;
  - **£0.05m** one-off funding to support the implementation and roll out of the Surrey Foster Carer Charter.
- 2) It also welcomes the Service's proposed **£1.8m** spend on social worker recruitment and retention, with the proviso that special measures are put in place to ensure that social workers recruited from overseas for front line roles are retained in those roles, and the effectiveness of these measures is reviewed six months after recruitment and reported back to Select Committee by the end of April 2025.
- 3) The Committee supports the Service's **£653,105** proposals for additional support in schools for neurodiverse children, and makes the following recommendations to demonstrate and reinforce SCC's commitment that no one is left behind:
  - (a) To better understand where the need is and why, by the end of November 2024 the Service undertakes research to identify where the greatest presentation of neurodiversity need exists in the county and what the contributory factors are.

(b) The offer for the Whole School Autism Friendly Reviews and the Schools Inclusion for Autism Initiatives is underpinned by the offer of implementation support to take the pressure off the schools, with **£0.3m** allocated to provide such implementation activity in schools which are struggling to cope. It will be for the Service to ascertain which schools would require this to enable them to take up the offer.

4) The Committee asks that, on completion of the co-production programme's research, a written report is produced to outline the strategy for developing and delivering integrated play and leisure across Surrey. The report should detail what integrated play will be delivered by whom, to whom, where, and by when. It should also address how interaction with voluntary sector providers will work, along with an assessment of the strategy's anticipated impact, by comparison with existing provision, and how the transition will be achieved. It should also identify where integrated play will not meet the needs of children with additional needs and disabilities, and how it is anticipated these needs will be met.

5) Including £0.5m that the Service proposes for a programme developing more inclusive play and leisure in mainstream provision (which the Committee reserves judgement on until it learns the outcome of recommendation 4), the above initiatives cost a total of £8,196,227. The Committee understands up to £8.3 million may be available to support prevention objectives in Children's Services, which potentially leaves £103,773.

Thus the Committee recommends that all hours of SEND play and leisure provided in 2022/23 are restored in 2024/25. It has been indicated that this will now require more than the £370,000 uplift originally advised by the Service, and championed by the Select Committee. It recommends using what remains of the £8.3m to ensure that the objective of the Select Committee as originally intended is achieved – i.e. restoration of the hours of SEND play and leisure in 24/25 to 22/23 levels. If this is not sufficient to restore 2022/23 hours, it recommends the necessary funding is taken from the **£0.5m** that the Service proposes for a programme developing more inclusive play and leisure in mainstream provision.

## 17/ YOUTH WORK PROVISION [Item 7/24]

### Witnesses

Cllr Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning

Cllr Maureen Attewell, Deputy Cabinet Member Children and Families, Lifelong Learning



Jackie Clementson, Assistant Director – Early Help, Youth Justice & Adolescent Service

Dave McLean, Service Manager – Early Help, Youth Justice & Adolescent Service

Elaina Phillips, Commissioning Officer – Early Help, Youth Justice & Adolescent Service

*Judith Brooks*, Head of Children & Young People and Deputy CEO - YMCA East Surrey

Stuart Kingsley, Family Services and Youth Work Manager - YMCA East Surrey

Melissa Salisbury, Hale Community Centre Manager

Jo Goodhew, Hale Youth Centre Team Leader

**Key points made in the discussion:**

1. The Hale Youth Centre Team Leader informed that the centre serves 45-50 young people aged 11-19 in eight sessions a week, providing a safe space in which they can talk to a trusted adult. The building is leased for free from Surrey County Council (SCC) who maintain it. They could not run without volunteers. There are also paid staff employed to secure funding, which comes from National Lottery and Waverley Borough Council. Aside from SCC's holiday activity camps for those on free school meals, the centre runs term-time only, due to funding rather than staff availability, which can lead to distress in the summer holidays when young people feel deserted.
2. The YMCA Surrey's Youth Work Manager told the Committee they deliver 20 sessions a week in Reigate and Banstead, with SCC offering a peppercorn rent and paying for utilities. They had secured Safer Streets and National Lottery funding, would not be able to do their work without the building, and report back quarterly to SCC. Recruiting was a barrier.
3. Asked how provision differed from before a reorganisation of youth work four years ago, the Service Manager reassured Members that none of their 27 buildings were being closed or knocked down; the Council was looking to enhance the work of the third sector and not throw them out. A couple of buildings were currently closed for repairs. The Commissioning Officer explained that 14 of the 27 buildings had been leased to interested community organisations or third sector providers. The other 13, described as retained youth centres, had no

interested hosts and still sat with SCC; they were fully utilised by police and health partners and managed by a business property support team. Some of the leaseholders had struggled to deliver their contractual terms in the financial landscape, meaning ten of the 14 buildings being leased out were standing empty much of the time, apart from perhaps one or two evenings a week. Meanwhile, SCC paid for the utilities and had statutory services like family centres that needed places to go, but the Service Level Agreements (SLA) meant they were not allowed to use their buildings. Leaseholders were able to generate rental income to invest in support for local families, though in many cases were not doing so.

4. A Member asked the Service how it was collecting information on which of the 14 buildings were working well. The Committee heard that the SLA, inherited by the current team, was not sufficiently effective to ask for monitoring data and provided no means of enforcement if leaseholders did not provide KPIs quarterly or meet with the Council the required two times a year. The five-year leases, due to end in 2025, allowed for termination of the lease should providers not improve, but included no criteria for what constitutes improvement.
5. The Service Manager explained that SCC's budget for its youth offer remained £1.2m, the same as in 2019 before the transformation. It was spent on buildings and more money was needed to enable them to run the service as they would want. The Assistant Director said this would be as a mixed economy, working in partnership with the voluntary sector who have a real understanding of the communities they work in. Asked if the Service believed the intended changes had been successfully delivered, the Commissioning Manager said needs had changed due to Covid, they want a blended model, and they wanted to improve relationships.
6. Members suggested a workshop for the Committee to understand what provision was available, with information provided in a paper in advance.

## **Actions**

- 1) Assistant Director – Early Help, Youth Justice & Adolescent Service to provide a list of the locations of the 27 buildings (centres referenced in paragraph 8) and how many of them are currently being used for youth work.

- 2) Provide the Committee, ahead of the workshop and confidentially if necessary, with the template Service Level Agreement for third sector providers leasing youth centre buildings.

**Resolved:**

A workshop would be arranged with a paper circulated beforehand.

*Cllr Bernie Muir and Cllr Bob Hughes left the meeting at 1pm.*

*Break at 13:00, meeting resumed at 13:15.*

**18/ ADULT LEARNING AND SKILLS UPDATE [Item 8/24]**

**Witnesses**

Cllr Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning

Cllr Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth

Julia Katherine, Director – Education and Lifelong Learning

Francis Lawlor, Surrey Adult Learning Service Manager

Luke McCarthy, Economy Lead, Strategic Lead - Policy & Strategy

**Key points made in the discussion:**

1. The Task Group Chairman remarked that he thought it was a mistake to have paused work on a centralised online database of all available training in Surrey, recommended by the task group. Surrey Adult Learning (SAL) Service Manager said following the recommendation he had sought to gain information from colleges. However, National Careers Service had since developed their own national database of courses that lead to qualifications, which Surrey Adult Learning and colleges in Surrey feed into. The Member asked if this included community learning opportunities and if it was promoted by SAL. The Service Manager said he was confident it included all courses but they did not question the outside body to check its accuracy or completeness. They did market the facility but did not test to see if residents utilised it. The Service Manager added that when, under the County Deal, Surrey County Council (SCC) had a greater strategic oversight and leadership role for adult learning and its funding, it should then provide its own database and not go through the National Careers Service.

2. A Member asked for more information on how SCC's approach to adult learning would change following the introduction of the County Deal and devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) from 2026/27. The Service Manager said it would allow the Council to ensure it has a far greater understanding of adult learning across the whole county. Rather than just being a deliverer, it would receive about £11.5m and will be able to set out its priorities in terms of the skills agenda, community, health and wellbeing, make decisions on what it is spent on and who it funds, and set expectations for the providers it commissions. Currently SCC cannot determine how money is spent; the Department for Education (DfE) and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) allocate money to providers, who spend it in accordance with the National Funding Allocation Method. The Economy Lead added this would enable the Council to target provision in line with skills gaps flagged by local businesses, and to focus on particular demographics most in need.
3. The Cabinet Member leading on Adult Learning added that community learning courses were highly valued and should not be forgotten when the AEB is devolved, with the disparity between West and East availability in this area highlighted by the task group. A Member sought clarity on what the Council planned to do to address the postcode lottery from 2026/27 onwards. The Service Manager said a programme board would be set up to discuss how they want to influence the balance of provision when the County Deal is introduced in September 2026. A Skills Strategic Plan would be developed to determine what the offer should be to meet the needs of Surrey, on a health and wellbeing as well as skills basis. The Economy Lead said they met FE principals quarterly to give a steer on business needs. The £11.5m made available which would become known as the Adult Skills Fund, was not an increase in funding and would also have to also be used to develop the Skills Strategic Plan and procure and monitor contracts.
4. A Member sought assurance that free courses for residents in carbon literacy and sustainable living would be freely available to all Surrey residents as recommended, not just employees across different sectors serving the economy. Assurance was provided by the Economy Lead.
5. A Member asked if SAL was working with any of multiple charities suggested by the task group to help the Council reach

vulnerable people in most need of its adult skills through the charities' local knowledge. The Service Manager responded they had worked with York Road Project and Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum and been to Oakleaf Enterprise. Scope and Mencap helped the Council in its mental health approach. Although there was some partnership working, he said charities' first expectation tended to be to look for funding from the Council, which was not a funding body for adult learning.

6. A Member queried as to whether asylum seekers in East Surrey also had their transport to attend training provision funded, since SAL serves only the West. The Service Manager replied that while SAL uses some of its ESFA funding to pay for transport, East Surrey College chooses not to, and the County Deal would in the future allow SCC to harmonise the funding model across the county.

*Cllr Matt Furniss joined the meeting at 1.51pm.*

7. The Cabinet Member leading on Skills was asked to outline his aspirations in this area and how these fit together with those for Adult Learning. He explained that the national focus was much more on vocational skills in a drive to get people back into jobs and that was the strong focus of the Surrey Skills Plan and the Local Skills Improvement Plan created by Surrey Chambers of Commerce. He did not believe there were plans to remove community learning, much of which was paid for by individual learners. The future question would be whether they are delivered together or not.
8. The Cabinet Member noted progress made in the last nine months: £4.5m additional funding for adult skills training including Skills Bootcamps and retrofit training, a good relationship with Department for Work and Pensions for Targeted adult learning employment support in neighbourhoods including Old Dean, and a majority of education establishments signed up to Surrey's single careers hub which focuses on apprenticeships and technical education.

**Resolved:**

The Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee recommends:

1) Lifelong Learning produces a map of which adult learning providers across the county provide what courses and where, to enable gaps in provision to be identified, by the end of July 2024.

2) Surrey Adult Learning and the Economy and Growth team together give renewed consideration to the Task Group's recommendations endorsed by the Select Committee in June 2023.

3)

(a) The Cabinet Member for Children, Families, Lifelong Learning (adult learning) and the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth (skills and apprenticeships) confirm in writing to what extent they believe the 2023 recommendations have been completed; and

(b) The Lifelong Learning and Economy and Growth Services assist the Cabinet Members in the above endeavour by producing an analysis of the gap between what was recommended and what has been done, and a programme of work striving to reach completion.

*Cllr Liz Townsend left the meeting at 1.57pm.*

**19/ CHILDREN'S HOMES - OFSTED REPORTS PUBLISHED SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 9/24]**

**Witnesses**

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning

Tina Benjamin, Director – Corporate Parenting

**Key points made in the discussion:**

1. The Chair said the Outstanding Ofsted grade of a children's home in January was testament to the staff's hard work and dedication and excellent management, and she would write to the registered manager and staff to congratulate them. She also acknowledged progress made in the two other homes inspected.

**20/ PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW [Item 10/24]**

**Witnesses**

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Lifelong Learning

Patricia Denney, Director – Quality and Performance

**Key points made in the discussion:**

1. The Chair said she was reassured to see a clear improvement trend in the social care metrics. She noted she wanted to see more up-to-date data submitted for additional needs and disabilities.

**21/ DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 11/24]**

The Committee noted its next public meeting would be held on Thursday 27 June 2024.

Meeting ended at: 2.10 pm

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**Chair**



**Member Questions to Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture Select Committee – 17 April 2024**

**Question submitted by Cllr Fiona Davidson**

- 1) There appears to be a discrepancy in the response to my supplementary question, and the initial question I asked in February about the number of paediatricians and Mindworks personnel formally trained in FASD, and the experience of parents of children with FASD. My concern on this topic is based on the experience of parents who have not found that there are currently developmental paediatricians or Mindworks personnel able to deal with children presenting with symptoms of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, despite reputable studies showing that this is a growing issue, often misdiagnosed.

How many Mindworks neurodevelopmental personnel – currently working for the service – have been formally trained in FASD?

**Response:**

Dr Raja Mukherjee, who leads the national clinic for FASD, based at the Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, ran a one-day training session on FASD in October 2023 which most of the Mindworks team attended. This included the Neurodevelopmental Pathway General Manager, the ASD lead, assistant psychologists, some of the diagnostic assessors and 5 of the 6 clinicians in Spoke, who triage all referrals.

When a referral comes in, Spoke review all of the information and then indicate whether a FASD diagnostic assessment is required. Spoke receive a wealth of information at the point of referral and if they see FASD is indicated, they book in a consultation with Dr Mukherjee to discuss and confirm. The young person is then put on the diagnostic pathway with a note advising potential for FASD. It is expected that FASD will be most prevalent for looked after children, therefore New Leaf staff, (who support and provide assessments and intervention for children and young people who are in care, care leavers, adopted and/or under Special Guardianship Orders who are affected by developmental trauma and attachment difficulties) have also had FASD training so this can be identified and some clinicians are trained to complete the full diagnostic assessment.

Part of a FASD diagnostic assessment is to have a full ND diagnostic assessment (ASD/ADHD). As many of the diagnostic assessors (including the ASD lead) have also had FASD training, if suspected FASD was not identified by the Spoke team, it could be identified at this point.

In addition to this pathway, Dr Mukherjee's team are commissioned to assess 8 young people for FASD a year.

**Question submitted by Cllr Jonathan Essex**

- 2) Please can an update be provided as to the status of the new Betchwood Vale SEND school proposed in Dorking, and when and indeed if this is likely to be completed in terms of construction and attendance. If this was not to proceed what alternative arrangements are now being sought.

**Response:**

Betchwood Vale Academy is funded by the Department for Education (DfE) under the Special Free Schools Programme. In October 2023 the Department for Education advised the Council that the new school's realistic year of opening (RYO) was delayed for a third time to 2026/27. Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) issued the Planning Decision Notice in October 2023 seven months after the Committee decision in March 2023, despite the application not being called in by Secretary of State for Environment. The Section 106 agreement should have been resolved in June/July but didn't conclude until late October. This meant that the ecology window for birds and reptiles was missed for early commencement of works in Spring 2024.

In early December 2023 DfE advised SCC of pre-action protocol (PAP) notification in relation to a prospective judicial review challenging MVDC Planning and Regulatory Committee's decision to grant planning permission for Betchwood Vale Academy with associated access, offsite highway works, car parking, external landscaping, outdoor sports and play space provision and ancillary works. The PAP was addressed to MVDC to respond to, however as an identified interested party DfE's legal department was also served a copy. MVDC issued a robust response to the pre-action letter in mid-December setting out that the District Council would not consent to a quashing of the Decision and the intention to contest any claim lodged.

SCC was advised by DfE in early March 2024 that Mole Valley had taken the decision not to defend the Judicial Review and wished to commence negotiations with DfE's Legal Counsel to agree to the quashing of the planning decision. DfE confirmed last week that they had received no confirmation of a request being received by the Court.

Until the Court receives an application to quash the decision by MVDC and until the Court allows the application and the process concludes to give legal effect to the Order, the Judicial Review remains live. Furthermore, if the Order is granted, it is to quash the decision and not the application. DfE have been informed by MVDC that if a quashing order goes ahead, the existing application will go back to the planning and regulatory committee in August/September, with the intention of removing the grounds for the Judicial Review by remedying alleged administrative errors and reconfirm the original decision, subject to any further material information. The Department is committed to the project/school and fully expect the positive planning decision to be reconfirmed by the LPA once a new committee date is tabled. At that point confirmation of date of delivery will be determined.

**Question submitted by Cllr Jonathan Essex**

- 3) A planning application has been submitted by Surrey County Council to Surrey County Council to relocate the Reigate Valley College pupil referral unit in Reigate to the site previously used for adult social care at Park Hall. The planning application Statement of Community Consultation states that, "A detailed site search to that end has been carried out and that this search has identified the Park Hall site in Reigate as the only viable option to deliver the project within the target timescales in the right area." Please can this detailed site search and subsequent evaluation of alternatives be publicly shared?

**Response:**

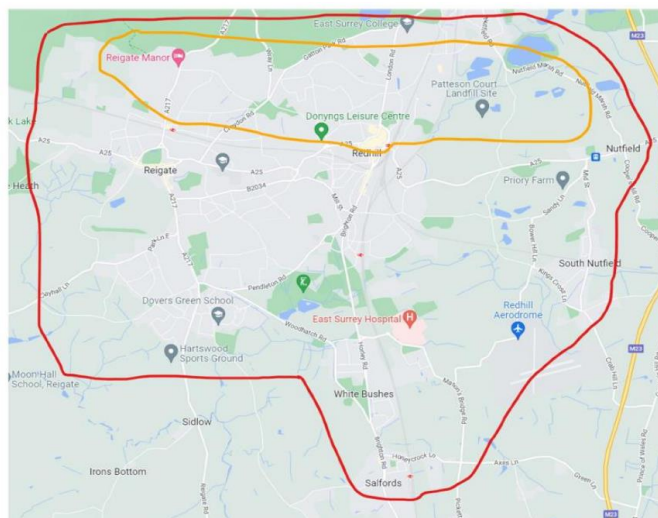
This query is the subject of a resolved Information request (ref: 7667825)

Reigate Valley College's current facilities are located over three sites, which have been assessed as near end of life and technically severely undersized to provide the facilities and curriculum requirement for statutory alternative provision for a total of 72 pupils.

None of the school land or adjacent land to the current provision used by Reigate Valley College at Sidlow bridge has been disposed of by Surrey County Council (SCC).

Vail Williams (SCC's appointed Planning Consultants) was commissioned to undertake an independent land search to locate a new permanent site on which to amalgamate the current three separate campus locations for Reigate Valley College as set out on a plan (below) to a target suitable area, rather than simply by distance (radius).

The target zone was identified with the red line on the plan, with an 'ideal' zone highlighted by the orange line considered by Inclusive Education Trust and SCC as appropriately sited to utilise the Trust's existing facilities to meet local children's need within the existing catchment area. It was not possible to allocate a site within the orange area, but the proposed site is a short distance away within the target area.



Four potentially suitable SCC owned sites were addressed against the defined criteria for Reigate Valley College. These are set out in the table below. Most of these sites were discounted on grounds of current type and use (i.e., commercial uses), timescales, or planning designation.

OPTION	Plan Description	Location	Status Quo
<b>ORIGINAL PROPOSAL</b>	Co-location on existing asset occupied by Reigate Valley College	Sidlow Bridge Campus RH2 8PP Allingham Road Campus RH2 8HX Phoenix Centre Campus RH1 2HY	Option dismissed as all sites technically too small to meet Building Bulletin 104 requirements for Alternative Provision. Planned disposal of existing assets generates capital receipts to achieve funding against the overall budget allocation by Cabinet.
<b>1</b>	Co-location at Park Hall	RH2 9LH. RIBA Stage 1 completed January 2022.	Confirmed as technically and financially viable option within the available budget, as no additional acquisition costs.
<b>2</b>	Co-location at Colebrook North	RH1 2BL Redhill	Option dismissed due to Trust's Education Safeguarding concerns in terms of proximity to Carrington School.
<b>3</b>	Split site option	Phoenix Centre Campus RH1 2HY and Another Site (site yet to be determined)	Option dismissed as not financially viable for Inclusive Education Trust to continue to operate across split sites. Phoenix Centre has significant condition issues. Would require substantial increase to pupil places to provide economies of scale. Approach not aligned with SCC's adopted Alternative Curriculum Pathways and Reintegration Support Strategy.
<b>4</b>	St Alban's Road	RH2 9LN	Option dismissed as lease renegotiations unlikely to be resolved in time to realise target delivery and use timescales.

Under Department for Education (DfE) policy for making significant changes to open academies, the transfer of an open academy to another site must be assessed against the affect to other catchment areas. If a change to the catchment is necessary, and the academy trust needs to vary determined admission arrangements, it must request a variation to its admission arrangements. The Regional Director or the Secretary of State will determine whether the change to the catchment area is necessary and should be approved.

Where the main entrance of the proposed new site for an open academy would be more than 2 miles from the main entrance of the current school site, a full business case is required. Planning and budget certainty is required for a Trust to submit a full business case to the Secretary of State for Education. Given the Inclusive Education Trust's existing facilities are in Redhill and Reigate, Tandridge and Mole Valley were excluded on this basis.

SCC's Corporate Asset Panel approved the decision to allocate the Park Hall site, which is a Council owned asset to the Alternative Provision Capital Programme on 27 September 2022 specifically for the use of co-locating and relocating Reigate Valley College. The Council's decision was based on an internal assessment and confirmed that no other Service need applied, hence it was deemed suitable and available for the relocation and rebuild of Reigate Valley College.

The agreed decision noted at Asset Strategy Board on 13 October 2022 remained an officer recommendation, noting there is delegated authority (Standing Order LA 12 - written notice of proposed development of land vested in the Council) that enables assets to be recycled. A Cabinet decision would have only been required if the Park Hall site had been subject to a formal surplus declaration which was not the case in this instance.

**Question submitted by Cllr Jonathan Essex**

- 4) I have been contacted by two parents of SEND children in Surrey placed in alternative provision by Surrey County Council. In both cases, which are with different schools, the young person has been off-rolled by the school, but Surrey County Council still pay full provision by the school, although no actual education is being provided. Why is that the case and what can be done to address this?

**Response:**

If a child with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) is awaiting a specialist or different placement, or if they are unable to attend school for medical reasons (physical or mental health), it is not unusual for alternative provision to be put into place. If the child has a current placement at a school, the local authority will seek to maintain that placement, and work with the setting to ensure the alternative arrangements are suitable. We also require the school to continue to oversee and have responsibility for safeguarding the young person. In these examples the school would continue to receive funding for the child and would use that funding to pay for the alternative provision.

Maintained schools are not able to take a student 'off roll' other than in the case of a permanent exclusion; if the young person has a placement at another school; or if the parent or carer has indicated they wish to home educate the child. Independent schools do not have to comply with the same requirements in relation to school placements. We would need to investigate the specifics of the cases being referenced to understand the context of the 'off rolling', and the reason funding had not ceased to the schools.

If the names of the young people can be shared with Liz Bone (SEND County Service Planning and Performance Leader), we will be able to investigate the specific circumstances of these cases.

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