

Notice of Meeting

Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning Decisions



Date & time
Tuesday, 9 June
2020 at 3.30 pm

Place
Remote

Contact
Joss Butler
joss.butler@surreycc.gov.uk

Chief Executive
Joanna Killian

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

2b Public Questions

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Joanna Killian
Chief Executive
Published: 8 June 2020

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CABINET MEMBER FOR ALL-AGE LEARNING DECISIONS
9 June 2020

PROCEDURAL MATTERS – PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1. Question submitted by Andrea Collings, Family Voice Surrey

I disagree with the decision to pre-empt the outcome of the Department of Education's (DfE) 2019 consultation on [Home to School Travel and Transport Statutory Guidance](#) by removing safeguards around maximum journey times in Surrey County Council's revised SEND Travel Policy issued in February 2020. Presuming to be clear about the intentions of an independent party in advance of their conclusions being published seems unwise and it takes away a safeguard that was established for a good reason. I have written to ask the Department for Education for advice on the legal standing of their current consultation document and Family Voice Surrey (FVS) asks the Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning to revoke this change to the wording of the SCC policy, pending a response from DfE. We have suggested appropriate alternative wording in the report on our website: [SEND Transport Policy – FVS Concerns May 2020](#).

Reply:

During 19 July 2019 – 31 October 2019, the Department for Education consulted on revised statutory guidance for local authorities on home to school travel and transport for children of compulsory school age (5-16). It explained that it was consulting because:

'The guidance was last updated in 2014. **There have been no changes to the law.**

The revised guidance seeks to **clarify** local authorities' statutory duties in relation to home to school travel and transport policy, in response to feedback from local authorities and other interested parties.'

Further the Department explained it was proposing 'revised drafting and structure, and the inclusion of examples, **to aid the reader's understanding.**'

Surrey County Council's Home to School/College Travel and Transport Policy, published in February 2020, mirrors the wording in the DfE's proposed revised statutory guidance on travel times. It does so as the DfE's clear intent is not to change the law or to remove safeguards, but to clarify it for local authorities and for families. On this basis, we do not agree to the changes Family Voice suggest regarding travel times. In terms of our practice, we do monitor closely our route times and are very mindful of the recommended maximum travel times.

2. Question submitted by Andrea Collings, Family Voice Surrey

We accept that some families will be better off under the current banding arrangements but the vast majority will lose out. I have carried out some [modelling of the comparative benefits of the banding scheme and the standard HMRC mileage rate for travel expenses](#) which shows that those parents with journeys under four miles in length benefit from the existing scheme and those with longer journeys - the majority - lose out. We hope that this comparison makes the issues clearer for both the Local Authority and for families. Family Voice Surrey therefore asks the Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning to consider changing to a simpler set mileage rate based on shortest route by road for all in the interests of transparency and equity, pending a fuller review which explicitly addresses parents' costs and time commitment alongside council budget restraints.

Reply:

The Council acknowledges Family Voice's concerns about the way in which the Council calculates its Travel Allowance.

In the Autumn consultation, we were keen to understand from families what the barriers were to take up of the Travel Allowance. The Travel Allowance is an option for families; no family is required to take it. The vast majority indicated it was other commitments such as work or lack of a car/second car. The amount of the allowance was not raised as significant issue.

However, we are happy to look at other options for administering the Travel Allowance. Our initial internal review last summer indicated that if we changed to another model, some families would be better off and some worse. For this reason, we need to carefully consider the options, and with families, before we make any changes.

We have offered to meet with Family Voice to take this forward. We would be interested in a conversation with Family Voice and, through their networks, with families on some options that may be more attractive for families.

**Julie Iles
Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning
8 June 2020**