

## CABINET

The following decisions were taken by the Cabinet on Tuesday, 22 April 2014 and will take effect on Thursday 1 May 2014 unless the call-in procedure has been triggered.  
**CALL-IN DEADLINE: 30/04/14.**

The following represents a summary of the decisions taken by the Cabinet. It is not intended to represent the formal record of the meeting but to facilitate the call-in process. The formal minutes will be published in due course to replace this decision sheet.

County Members wishing to request a call-in on any of these matters, should contact the Senior Manager for Scrutiny or relevant Democratic Services Officer.

The Cabinet at its meeting on Tuesday, 22 April 2014 considered the following matters and resolved:

### **Members' Questions (Item 4a)**

One Member question was received. The response is attached as **Appendix 1**.

- **REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEES, TASK GROUPS, LOCAL COMMITTEES AND OTHER COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL (Item 5)**

#### **A: Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The report of the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Welfare Reform Task Group on the Impacts of Welfare Reform in Surrey was considered by Cabinet. The response is attached as **Appendix 2**.

#### **B: Children and Education Select Committee**

Recommendations were received from the Children and Education Select Committee in relation to the Home to School Transport Policy. The response is attached as **Appendix 3**.

- **SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN (Item 6)**

That the School Organisation Plan 2013-14 – 2022-23 be approved for recommendation to Council.

### **Reasons for Decisions:**

The School Organisation Plan is a key contextual document used by Schools and Education Stakeholders when making long term plans. Its annual review is necessary to ensure that the best information is used in this planning process. Any comments received can both inform the existing plan and shape future iterations.

- **CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: RE-COMMISSIONING FOR 2015 - 2020** (Item 7)
  - (1) That the strategic goal and the revised Surrey Young People's Outcomes Framework for 2015-2020, as set out in Annexe 1 of the submitted report, be approved.
  - (2) That the refresh of the Surrey Young People's Employability Plan for 2015-2020, to align with the re-commissioning for 2015-2020 be approved.
  - (3) That the development of options to deliver the three revised commissioning priorities set out in the submitted report be approved, with a further report including the full business cases coming back to Cabinet in September 2014.
  - (4) That the exploration with Local Committees of increased delegation of decision-making in relation to young people, such as the current Centre Based Youth Work be approved.
  - (5) That the exploration of potential for more integrated commissioning with Districts/Boroughs, Surrey Police, Public Health, Clinical Commissioning Groups and Active Surrey be approved.

**Reasons for Decisions:**

The report sets the strategy and outcomes for young people in Surrey for 2015 – 2020 to meet statutory duties outlined at paragraph 11 of the submitted report and to build on the success of the achievements since the transformation in 2012.

*[The decisions on this item can be called in by the Children and Education Select Committee]*

- **HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY 2015** (Item 8)

That with effect from September 2015, and subject to the distance thresholds appropriate to the age of the child being met, eligibility to free home to school transport for Surrey children to attend their nearest geographical Surrey school (measured by the shortest walking route) be extended, if their nearest school is out of County and the distance or safety of route to that school would mean that transport would still need to be provided.

**Reasons for Decisions:**

- It would enable parents who would otherwise receive transport to their nearest out of County school, to send their children to their nearest Surrey school and still receive transport, thus potentially increasing their 'choice' of schools
- It would ensure that the cost of transport would not be a barrier for children to attend their nearest Surrey school
- It is a policy change that could be applied consistently across the County
- It would demonstrate support to Surrey schools by offering families an incentive to apply for their nearest Surrey school, even if they have an out of County school which is nearer
- It would help to support the financial viability of undersubscribed Surrey schools and in turn may reduce the likelihood of County Council funding being needed to support the recovery of an undersubscribed school

- In some cases it may cost less to transport a child to a Surrey school than to an out of County school
- It would mean that families living in Dormansland and Lingfield would not have their transport to Oxted withdrawn if their nearest school is outside of Surrey
- It would only apply if a parent applied for and was offered a place at the child's nearest geographical Surrey school
- It was supported by Children and Education Select Committee

*[The decisions on this item can be called in by the Children and Education Select Committee]*

### **Member Motion referred by Council**

Mr Stephen Cooksey addressed the Cabinet on his motion, relating to the Home to School Transport policy, which was referred from the meeting of the Council on 10 December 2013.

The response to the motion was considered as part of the discussion and is attached as **Appendix 4**.

- **AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT (Item 9)**

That 'Sole Provider' contracts for home-to-school transport, commencing on 1 August 2014, be awarded for provision at the following Schools by the named suppliers:

- Pond Meadow School – AMK Chauffeur Drive Ltd
- The Ridgeway Community School – AMK Chauffeur Drive Ltd
- Woodlands School – Supreme Freedom to Travel Ltd
- Walton Leigh School – Supreme Freedom to Travel Ltd

The proposed contracts will be for a three year period with the option to extend for up to a further four years.

### **Reasons for Decisions:**

Pupils with special educational needs often want consistency from the operator – the same driver, same escort and same vehicle, on time, each day. Parents want to know the driver will show compassion, patience and caring towards their child, and know how to deal with their child's specific needs (anything from autism to severe learning or behavioural difficulties, to physical disabilities). All four Schools have reported these benefits from the current Sole Provider contracts.

To summarise our objectives:

- Consistency of service delivery, as one provider is accountable
- Strong relationship between the School and its transport provider
- Quality of service provision, as performance monitoring will be made easier

*[The decisions on this item can be called in by either the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Children and Education Select Committee]*

- **FLASH OUTTURN REPORT FOR 2013/14 AND PROPOSED CARRY FORWARD REQUESTS FOR 2014/15 (Item 10)**

- (1) That the provisional year end revenue budget outturn of £6.1m underspend, as set out in Table 1 and paragraphs 2 to 15 of the submitted report, be noted.
- (2) That Services' revenue budget carry forward requests totalling £4.9m, as set out in Table 2 of the submitted report, be approved.
- (3) That the provisional year end capital budget outturn £0.5m overspend, including £39.9m underspend on Services, as set out in Table 3 and paragraphs 18 to 23 of the submitted report, be approved.
- (4) That Services' capital budget carry forward requests for £39.4m, as set out in Table 4 of the submitted report, be approved.

**Reasons for Decisions:**

To continue to provide monthly budget monitoring information to Cabinet and to enable Cabinet to consider services' requests to carry forward funding for approval.

*[The decisions on this item can be called in by the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee]*

- **JOINT WORKING THROUGH GUILDFORD LOCAL COMMITTEE (Item 11)**

- (1) That the proposals to enhance joint working arrangements between the Councils through the Guildford Local Committee from the new municipal year be supported
- (2) That the proposed updated terms of reference for the Guildford Local Committee, as set out in Annex A of the submitted report, be approved.
- (3) That the setting up 'cluster' budgets for grouped divisions jointly funded by Surrey County Council and Guildford Borough Council be approved, with the rules and criteria to be agreed by Guildford Local Committee.

**Reasons for Decisions:**

These recommendations seek to increase and develop joined up working between the two Councils to produce better value and coordinated services for residents. Working in partnership can provide added value in terms of cost and time savings and produce more effective, coordinated responses to service delivery.

Cabinet's endorsement of closer working between Surrey County Council and Guildford Borough Council is sought, along with the approval of the recommended amendments to the advisory functions of the Guildford Local Committee.

*[The decisions on this item can be called in by the Communities Select Committee]*

- **PROPOSED EXPANSION OF SPELTHORNE PRIMARY SCHOOL, ASHFORD FROM A 2 FORM ENTRY PRIMARY (420 PLACES) TO A 3 FORM ENTRY (630 PLACES) FOR SEPTEMBER 2015** (Item 12)

That, subject to the agreement of the detailed financial information for the school as set out in Part 2 of this agenda, the business case for phase 3 of the project to expand Spelthorne Primary School be approved.

**Reasons for Decisions:**

The proposal supports the Authority's statutory obligation to provide sufficient school places to meet the needs of the population in the Spelthorne area.

*[The decisions on this item can be called in by either the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Children and Education Select Committee]*

- **LEADER / DEPUTY LEADER / CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST CABINET MEETING** (Item 13)

That the decisions taken by Cabinet Members since the last meeting, as set out in Annex 1 of the submitted report, be noted.

**Reasons for Decisions:**

To inform the Cabinet of decisions taken by Cabinet Members under delegated authority.

- **PROPOSED EXPANSION OF SPELTHORNE PRIMARY SCHOOL, ASHFORD FROM A 2 FORM ENTRY PRIMARY (420 PLACES) TO A 3 FORM ENTRY (630 PLACES) FOR SEPTEMBER 2015** (Item 15)

(1) That the business case for phase 3 of the project to expand Spelthorne Primary School at a total cost, as set out in the submitted report, be approved.

(2) That the arrangements by which a variation of up to 10% of the total value may be agreed by the Strategic Director for Business Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets and Regeneration Programmes and the Leader of the Council, be approved.

**Reasons for Decisions:**

The proposal supports the Authority's statutory obligation to provide sufficient school places to meet the needs of the population in the Spelthorne area.

*[The decisions on this item can be called in by either the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Children and Education Select Committee]*

- **AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT** (Item 16)

(1) That a three year fixed term and fixed price contract be awarded to AMK Chauffeur Drive Ltd at an estimated annual value, as set out in the submitted report, for the provision of home-to-school transport, to commence on 1 August 2014, for the following Schools:

- Pond Meadow School
- The Ridgeway Community School

(For years four to seven, the contract will be extended annually at the discretion of the Council, at pricing to be agreed between the parties)

- (2) That a three year fixed term and fixed price contract be awarded to Supreme Freedom to Travel Ltd at an estimated annual value, as set out in the submitted report, for the provision of home-to-school transport, to commence on 1 August 2014, for the following Schools:

- Walton Leigh School
- Woodlands School

(For years four to seven, the contracts will be extended annually at the discretion of the Council, at pricing to be agreed between the parties)

### **Reasons for Decisions:**

A full tender process, in compliance with the requirement of EU Procurement Legislation and Procurement Standing Orders has been completed, and the recommendations ensure the continuation of valued services for the children, their families and the Schools.

*[The decisions on this item can be called in by either the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Children and Education Select Committee]*

## • **PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS (Item 17)**

### **(A) Disposal of Land as part of the Horley North West Sector Development**

- (1) That Cabinet confirms its previous commitment to approve the sale of land forming part of the North West Sector Development to the developer consortium (BDW Trading Limited, Taylor Wimpey UK Limited and Persimmon Homes Limited) on terms outlined in the submitted report.
- (2) That the Strategic Director for Business Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be given authority to complete final negotiations on this disposal, including any variation of the terms and subject to there being no more than 10% variation in the sale price.

### **Reasons for Decisions:**

The sale of land will result in the delivery of a major development scheme that will make a significant impact on the requirement to deliver housing for the area and produce capital receipts in support of the county councils investment strategy.

### **(B) Disposal of Land at Portesbery Road, Camberley**

- (1) That the sale of land hatched on the plan, attached to the submitted report, extending to 0.3256 hectares, be approved to the bidder named in the report. The approval is conditional on planning consent being granted for a development scheme in connection with the adjoining Camberley Police Station site as set out in the report.

- (2) That a 10% variation in the sale price to reflect possible changes occurring during the planning process, be delegated to the Strategic Director for Business Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

**Reasons for Decisions:**

The sale of land at Portesbery Road Camberley is required to contribute towards the county council's Investment Strategy and to dispose of a parcel of land no longer required to support service delivery or generate a significant income.

*[These decisions can be called in by the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee]*

**Members' Questions**

**Question from Mrs Hazel Watson (Dorking Hills) to ask:**

Who made the decision, and on which date, to use the Runnymede Centre for a new secondary school?

**Reply:**

During the week commencing 3 March 2014 colleagues in CLT, after discussion with myself and the Deputy Leader, began the process of moving to temporary types of occupancy so that the site could be prepared to be available for secondary school provision. As Mrs Watson is aware, Surrey County Council needs 13,000 new school places over the next five years to meet growing demand fuelled by rising birth rates.

**Mr David Hodge  
Leader of the Council  
22 April 2014**



**CABINET RESPONSE TO COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE**

**Welfare Reform Task Group Report**

I welcome this report of the Welfare Reform Task Group. Welfare Reform cuts across a number of different council services and partners. For that reason, responding to the impact of Welfare Reform could all too easily fall through the cracks. That is why I am glad that the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) commissioned this important task group. I strongly believe that it is cross-cutting areas such as this where scrutiny task groups can add most value.

I will now outline my response to the specific recommendations:

***Recommendation 1:*** *Adult Social Care, Children Schools and Families, Libraries, Public Health and Finance teams to continue to monitor impacts of the welfare reforms on service users and services, and provide a joint update through the Welfare Reform Co-ordination Group to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in September 2014. Adult Social Care to include a summary of the impact of the welfare reforms on carers and Children Schools and Families to include a summary of the impact of the welfare reforms on care leavers in their updates.*

***Recommendation 2:*** *The Welfare Reform Co-ordination Group be encouraged to continue to collate data on the impact of the reforms on residents and the cumulative impact of the reforms, and to share information and good practice within the group, and to report on progress to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the update report in September 2014.*

Although it is obviously for the COSC to determine its own work programme, I endorse these recommendations. As the report acknowledges, the impacts of welfare reform are expected to become more apparent over the next 12 months, as the initial reforms have embedded. Therefore it is sensible that the COSC continue to scrutinise this area, highlighting any issues or concerns with myself and the Cabinet as appropriate.

***Recommendation 3:*** *Surrey County Council's Organisational Development Team analyse training needs on welfare reform in the Council and explore how such training can be disseminated throughout affected council services and ensure consistency with training being delivered by partner organisations.*

Human Resources & Organisational Development officers have been analysing the training requirements of the welfare reform changes for SCC staff, particularly related to the forthcoming Care Bill, and have already put in place the following learning and development offer:

- e-learning package on Welfare and Benefits
- Introduction to Welfare Benefits and Reform
- Personal Independent Payments
- Adult Social Care Eligibility Training (which includes some aspects of the welfare reform and the benefits system)

I fully support the Task Group's recommendation that the Organisational Development Team take this opportunity to work with wider SCC officers and external partners, particularly through the Welfare Reform Coordination Group, to ensure that this training offer is sufficiently comprehensive and reaching all staff that would benefit.

**Recommendation 4:** *Surrey's Welfare Reform Co-ordination Group to work with the Head of Family Services to explore the potential for the Supporting Families Programme (which is being extended through the Public Services Transformation Network) to provide early help/intervention to some of those families who are most severely impacted by the welfare reforms.*

I welcome this recommendation. I believe that it is both sensible and proper that the Family Support Programme, which seeks to target the most vulnerable families, works with the Welfare Reform Co-ordination Group - particularly as we enter phase 2 of the programme.

**Recommendation 5:** *Any Local Assistance Scheme (LAS) funding left unallocated at the end of 2013/14 is ring-fenced and rolled over into 2014/15 and continues to be committed to supporting residents in crisis through the LAS.*

**Recommendation 6:** *Shared services to provide an update on improvements to the LAS scheme and take up of the fund, as part of the update report to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2014.*

**Recommendation 7:** *Surrey County Council to continue lobbying central government to provide funding for emergency crisis support for residents (known as the Local Assistance Scheme in Surrey) beyond 2015.*

I welcome the task group's support of the Local Assistance Scheme. When the Government disbanded the social fund, they stated that they felt the money could be better administered at a local level. We have proved that in Surrey. Rather than merely replicating the social fund we have developed a truly local scheme where applicants receive advice and support through the CAB, or furniture through a re-use scheme, rather than just a one-off payment.

I recognise the Government's concerns about councils not yet using their full welfare assistance allocation, but I know that here in Surrey this is because we are making better use of the funding by adopting this early intervention approach. By seeking to tackle the root of the problem and signposting to other more appropriate forms of support, we have demonstrated that we can reduce demand on our own services and other agencies.

That is why I have recently written to Brandon Lewis to invite him to a roundtable discussion looking at how to build an effective and sustainable welfare assistance support service from 2015 onwards (attached to this response as annex 1). I hope this assures the committee that I will continue to lobby government to fund emergency crisis support as per **recommendation 7**.

In order to be in a strong position to lobby government, I believe that it is important that we ensure our scheme is operating as effectively as possible and that we can clearly demonstrate how it is helping residents in crisis. As the task group recognises, there is scope to improve access to and awareness of the scheme. Therefore, I endorse **recommendation 6** as a way of scrutinising the effectiveness of the scheme and ensuring it meets its full potential.

Rather than carryover the unspent LAS funding from 2013/14 to 2014/15 (**recommendation 5**), I would like to place this money in an earmarked reserve. This would mean that should the government choose not to fund the scheme from 2015/16 onwards, there is still a provision for providing emergency support to residents within the council's budget for 2016/17.

**Recommendation 8:** *The Adult Social Care Committee to closely monitor the delivery of this service by getWIS£ and report back to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee as appropriate.*

**Recommendation 9:** *Surrey County Council's Adult Social Care Commissioners, to work with Surrey's Welfare Reform Co-ordination Group, Public Health and getWi£E to:*

*(a) promote the getWi£E advice and support service to all Surrey GPs through Surrey's 6 Clinical Commissioning Groups; and*

*(b) continue to raise awareness of this service among key partners including District and Borough Housing and Benefits Officers and social housing providers; to ensure Surrey residents receive early help in dealing with the welfare reforms.*

As the report acknowledges, getWi£E are working to improve awareness of their service - particularly in areas where referral rates have been low. However, it is important to continue this good work to ensure that all the residents who would benefit from this support know how to access it. I have discussed these recommendations with the Cabinet Member and Associate for Adult Social Care who are of the same view - therefore I support these recommendations.

**Recommendation 10:** *The Public Health team to report to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee with findings from their food access needs assessment, to inform the Committee's work around reviewing the impacts of welfare reform in Surrey.*

The report highlights data which indicates that there has been a sharp rise in the number of people who are using food banks in Surrey. It is therefore timely that the Public Health team are carrying out a Food Access Needs Assessment to understand more about why people are accessing various forms of food aid. It seems sensible that COSC should review the outcomes of this work as part of their wider review into welfare reform.

**Recommendation 11:** *Surrey County Council to work closely with the Department for Work and Pensions, District and Borough Councils, housing providers and the voluntary, community and faith sector to prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit, taking into consideration the concerns and recommendations highlighted in this report, and report back to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress. This preparation should include:*

*(a) researching and understanding the need for digital access and support across Surrey;*

*(b) the County Council better understanding the potential demand on IT resources as a result of the introduction of Universal Credit to enable Surrey to properly prepare for this, including reviewing budget provision;*

*(c) reviewing the demand for money management advice and assessing existing service provision, in order to make evidence-based recommendations for sourcing the necessary support; and*

*(d) lobbying central government to ensure that support to access Universal Credit is adequately funded.*

I firmly support the key aims underpinning Universal Credit of simplifying the benefits system and making work pay. I also welcome the recognition from the Department of Work and Pensions that local authorities should be an equal and lead partner with DWP in developing the support for people that will struggle to adapt to the new system. Universal Credit will not be introduced in Surrey until at least 2016, but I fully endorse the Task Group's recommendation that officers work closely with local partners to use the intervening period to understand the nature and demand for this support in Surrey, and plan how best to deliver it in order for all residents to be able to make the transition. I will ensure Surrey County Council continues to make the case for sufficient central government funding to be able to provide this locally tailored support.

**Recommendation 12:** *The Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions explaining the Task Group's concerns over the Employment and Support*

*Allowance (ESA) process including the following recommendations:*

*(a) That firms carrying out the medical work capability assessments (WCA) for benefit claimants, on behalf of DWP:*

*(i) treat benefit claimants like customers; and*

*(ii) ensure appropriately qualified persons carry out these medical assessments.*

*(b) Bureaucracy within the ESA claims and appeals process be reduced. In particular:*

*(i) DWP to provide information on the number of medical certificates posted by claimants but not received by DWP and the reasons for this,*

*(ii) DWP to accept claimant medical certificates for longer periods while claimants await mandatory re-consideration and tribunal decisions. This will save GP and claimant time and expense in having these certificates frequently renewed or re-requested where certificates have been sent by post but not received by DWP.*

*(c) DWP's benefit claim forms and decision letters to signpost claimants to advice and support services to enable claimants to seek early help, preferably locally based organisation, such as local authorities, housing providers and Citizens Advice Bureaus.*

*(d) DWP to build a closer working relationship with partners in the Welfare Reform Co-ordination Group, to bring about pro-active information sharing and signposting particularly where claimants have been sanctioned by DWP decisions and therefore lost their passported benefits, such as housing benefit.*

*(e) DWP to use lessons learned from the ESA process and apply this to the roll-out of the Personal Independence Payments.*

I would like to thank the task group for their detailed and thorough investigation into this area. They have clearly uncovered some concerning issues with the way that the Employment and Support Allowance is being administered. I have already had a helpful discussion with the task group Chairman regarding these issues and will be writing to the Secretary of State of Work and Pensions to follow them up.

***Recommendation 13:*** *The Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on simplifying the Universal Credit application process and exploring options for a common assessment for claimants across welfare benefits and support.*

As above, I have already discussed these concerns with the task group Chairman and will be writing to the Secretary of State as recommended.

**To conclude:**

On behalf of the Cabinet, I would like to thank the Welfare Reform Task Group again for their detailed work in this area. As detailed above, I am supportive of the recommendations. As the report acknowledges, the impacts of welfare reform are expected to become more apparent over the next 12 months, as the initial reforms have embedded. Therefore, I welcome the continued scrutiny of this area by COSC and look forward to receiving updates from the committee as and when appropriate.

**David Hodge**  
**Leader of the Council**  
**22 April 2014**

08 April 2014

Brandon Lewis MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
Department for Communities and Local  
Government  
Eland House, Bressenden Place,  
London SW1E 5DU

Dear

**Re: Roundtable to discuss building a sustainable welfare assistance system beyond 2015**

I have already written to your department expressing my concern and disappointment at the withdrawal of funding for Local Welfare Assistance schemes from April 2015 (see exchange of letters attached). I welcome the confirmation that DWP will be conducting a review into the scheme this year, but I would like to propose a roundtable discussion in Surrey or London with Ministers and officers from DWP, DCLG and the LGA about how to build an effective and sustainable welfare assistance support service from 2015 onwards.

The previous DWP scheme operated as a 'cashbox' due to its ineffective targeting of support and did almost nothing to address the underlying causes of demand. Surrey County Council has avoided replicating the faults of the previous system by developing a scheme based on strong local partnerships and diverting applicants to other forms of support where possible. Applicants receive an initial assessment and a range of advice through the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) that seeks to address any underlying issues that may be causing the demand for support.

I recognise the Government's concerns about councils not yet using their full welfare assistance allocation, but I know that here in Surrey this is because we are making better use of the funding by adopting this early intervention approach. By seeking to tackle the root of the problem and signposting to other more appropriate forms of support, we have demonstrated that we can reduce demand on our own services and other agencies. This is possible because of close local partnership working and information sharing that produces better outcomes for residents and ensures real value for money.

However, I am deeply concerned that the sudden withdrawal of funding in 2015 will jeopardise this effective support network and deny partners the time to establish a sustainable alternative solution. If this support abruptly ends, it is inevitable many of these vulnerable people will go on to require much more intense and expensive support in the future from programmes such as Troubled Families. I welcome the Government's ongoing support for credit unions mentioned in the correspondence below. We share your belief that they will play a crucial role in helping people get back on their feet after emergencies, such as the recent extensive flooding in Surrey, and have ourselves invested substantially in helping to establish our local credit union, SurreySave. However, building the viability, awareness and accessibility of such services takes time. This is why ensuring there is not a sudden withdrawal of emergency assistance funding will give the council time to work with partners in order to adequately plan and design a long-term solution to take on the role of helping residents in short-term difficulties.

We would like to work with you and relevant partners to develop a framework for sustainable emergency assistance schemes in the future, that not only support vulnerable people, but do so at a reduced cost to the Exchequer. Therefore, I am offering to host and organise a roundtable with Ministers and officers from DWP and DCLG, the LGA and ourselves. I would also be happy in my role as CCN chairman to enlist the insight and support of wider County Councillors on a new proposition for the future.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

David Hodge  
Leader of the Council

**CABINET RESPONSE TO CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE**

**HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY  
(considered by C&ESC on 27 March 2014)**

**SELECT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That Surrey's Home to School Transport Policy be extended to:

- (1) Provide for a child to receive concessionary home to school transport, or free home to school transport if from a low income family, to attend the same school as a sibling where the sibling has already been assessed as entitled to free home to school transport and where the child is eligible for a place at the same school.
- (2) Provide free home to school transport for a child to attend their nearest geographical Surrey school if their nearest school is out of county and the distance or safety of route to that school would mean that transport would still need to be provided.

**RESPONSE:**

Officers have considered the recommendations made by Children and Education Select Committee.

However, on consideration of the issues, the implications of the first recommendation are considered to be too complex and resource heavy to implement and this has therefore not been recommended to Cabinet. The reasons for coming to this conclusion are set out in paragraphs 99 to 114 of the covering report to Cabinet and can be summarised as follows:

- It would potentially lead to some children receiving home to school transport even though they might live less than the statutory walking distance to the school
- It could not apply to children whose older sibling was assessed as being entitled to transport on faith grounds to a denominational school, because this element of discretionary entitlement was withdrawn for new applicants from 2012
- It would add a further layer of complexity which would not be helpful and would be confusing and resource heavy to apply
- Surrey would be committed to paying transport for siblings to attend the same school, even once the older child had left
- If a concessionary charge was to be levied for some applicants, this would require additional resource for assessing eligibility and for recording, invoicing and collecting the revenue
- The costs for a seat on a school coach, a seat in a taxi, a bus pass and a train pass differ but it would be inequitable to charge different concessionary rates based on the mode of travel. This would leave Surrey having to subsidise the cost for siblings who travel by bus, school coach and taxi
- There may be contractual issues on levying a charge against bus and rail passes where Surrey has negotiated rates with passenger transport companies for statutory pupils only
- Differences in the charging and refund mechanisms for bus and rail passes and concessionary seats on school coaches and taxis have the potential for creating a

two tier system

- The local authority has no statutory duty to provide transport for siblings
- It might pave the way for other elements of discretionary expenditure to be requested
- There is already provision within the policy for exceptional circumstances to be considered

In contrast, the second recommendation appears to represent a reasonable change to policy as it would support those parents who would prefer to attend their nearest Surrey school ahead of a nearer out of County school where transport would otherwise need to be provided, as well as helping Surrey schools to attract applications from Surrey parents. This recommendation has therefore been put forward for consideration by Cabinet.

**Linda Kemeny**  
**Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning**  
**22 April 2014**



**HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY – REPORT BACK FROM CABINET ON REFERRED MOTION**

At the County Council meeting on 10 December 2013, Mr Stephen Cooksey (Dorking South and the Holmwoods) moved a motion which was referred to Cabinet.

**The motion was as follows:**

‘This council notes:

- a) the current consultation on Surrey County Council's Home to School Transport Policy, the stated intention of which in advance was that "Surrey County Council is not proposing any change to its home to school transport policy for 2015."

and

- b) concerns by Surrey residents including:

- i) the discouragement that the present system gives to parents returning to full time work, given the Coalition Government's focus on getting people off benefits and into work. At present if parents cease to receive maximum Working Tax Credit or a child ceases to qualify for free school meals, Home to School Transport stops immediately.
- ii) the difficulties in obtaining school transport by children living in rural parts of Surrey, especially for pupils wanting to go to their nearest school within the Borough or District where they live, where there are community ties, but who live close to Borough or District or County boundaries.
- iii) the difficulties caused by the nearest school to a child's home being denominational when a child is of a different religion.
- iv) people being denied free Home to School Transport when the shortest practical route is far longer than the distances used under the qualifying criteria because there are major physical obstacles (such as railway lines, major roads and reservoirs).
- v) the difficulties caused to children who live more than 3 miles from any school but who are denied free transport to the parent's school of choice because the parents have not opted for the nearest school.
- vi) the difficulties caused when a child does not live in a school's catchment area, even though it is their nearest school.

Council calls for a Members' Start and Finish Task Group to be established to assess the findings of the consultation, the concerns above and any other relevant concerns with the aim of reaching recommendations to resolve as many of the concerns as possible and report back to the Children & Education Select Committee.’

**Response:**

Surrey's Home to School Transport policy had not been reviewed since 2006 and as a number of queries had been raised by parents and Members in recent years, it seemed timely to assess whether it still delivered a fair and equitable policy or whether any changes needed to be made.

It was therefore agreed to carry out a public consultation that would enable respondents to contribute their views to the policy review.

The consultation document made clear that, whilst Surrey County Council was not proposing any changes to its policy, it was interested to hear:

- the views of Surrey residents and schools on the equity of the existing policy;
- details of any home to school transport difficulties that Surrey parents might currently face; and
- details of any suggestions for change (recognising that any additional expenditure on home to school transport would mean that Surrey would need to make savings elsewhere).

As such, the questions were framed to invite comments on some specific matters whilst also inviting respondents to comment freely on any difficulties they may have faced as a result of Surrey's home to school transport policy and on how the policy might be changed.

It was hoped that such an open consultation would enable Members to better understand the concerns of parents and schools when they considered whether any changes needed to be made to Surrey's Home to School Transport policy.

Response to the very specific matters of concern is as follows:

- i. The Department for Education's Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance says:

'In the Department's opinion, once eligibility has been confirmed on income grounds, then local authorities should consider the pupil to be eligible for the entirety of the school year for which the assessment has been made. If someone moved out of eligibility during the year, then for the following year, it seems appropriate to suggest that there would also have to be a new assessment of places available. If, for example, a pupil was registered at their third nearest school and at reassessment neither of the two nearer schools had places available, then transport support would continue as the school had, by default, become the nearest suitable with places available.

Surrey's Admissions and Transport team follows this guidance and as such, where a child loses their transport entitlement due to a parent no longer receiving the maximum level of Working Tax Credit or a benefit that entitles the child to free school meals, then transport would only be reviewed at the end of the academic year.
- ii. The law only requires free transport to be paid to the nearest qualifying school, without regard to County Council boundaries. Any extension of policy to provide transport to a child's nearest Surrey school would be discretionary where there was another nearer school outside of Surrey and this would be likely to commit the County Council to additional expenditure. That said, it is recognised that families living in Surrey may often have greater alliances with Surrey schools and that a policy to provide transport to the nearest Surrey school might help to support some schools. For this reason a recommendation has been put to Cabinet to consider whether Surrey's Home to School Transport policy should be extended to provide transport to a child's nearest Surrey school where transport would need to otherwise be paid to a nearest school out of County.
- iii. The law provides for free transport to be paid to a child's nearest qualifying school. The nearest qualifying school is one that has a vacancy and that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child. The point at which a school will be determined as having a vacancy will be the point at which places are allocated. In this way, only schools which would have been able to offer a place had the parent applied will be considered in the assessment of nearest school. Denominational schools which have only offered places according to faith are disregarded in this respect because there would be no way of determining whether or not a child would have been eligible for a place had they applied. In this way, families whose nearest geographical

school is a faith school should not be disadvantaged in the assessment of home to school transport.

- iv. When assessing entitlement to home to school transport, generally the shortest available walking distance is considered between the home and the school. A route will be available if it is a route that a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety to school. In this way, the route to school would take account of physical obstacles.

In addition, the Home to School Transport policy makes provision for walking routes to be assessed for their safety by a Community Travel Advisor where there is any dispute.

- v. The law only requires free transport to be paid to the nearest qualifying school. With approximately 124,000 Surrey children of school age and only 6,500 children currently in receipt of free home to school transport, a commitment to provide free home to school transport according to the parent's school of choice, for any child whose nearest school was over the statutory walking distance would be financially untenable.
- vi. If a child is not eligible for a place at their nearest school because they fall outside the school's catchment area, that school will be discounted when assessing home to school transport. In this way, whilst catchments will influence which children can be offered a place, they will not disadvantage a child in receiving home to school transport to their next nearest school if they cannot be offered their nearest school.

**Linda Kemeny**  
**Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning**  
**22 April 2014**

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