

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET  
HELD ON 22 APRIL 2014 AT 2.00 PM  
AT ASHCOMBE SUITE, COUNTY HALL, KINGSTON UPON THAMES,  
SURREY KT1 2DN.**

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Cabinet at its next meeting.

Members:

*Mr David Hodge (Chairman)	*Mr John Furey
*Mr Peter Martin (Vice-Chairman)	*Mr Michael Gosling
*Mrs Mary Angell	*Mrs Linda Kemeny
Mrs Helyn Clack	*Ms Denise Le Gal
*Mr Mel Few	Mr Tony Samuels

Cabinet Associates:

Mr Steve Cosser	*Mrs Kay Hammond
*Mrs Clare Curran	*Mr Mike Goodman

\* = Present

**PART ONE**  
**IN PUBLIC**

**70/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Mr Cosser, Mrs Clack and Mr Samuels.

**71/14 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 25 MARCH 2014 [Item 2]**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2014 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

**72/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

There were none.

**73/14 PROCEDURAL MATTERS [Item 4]**

**(a) MEMBERS' QUESTIONS [Item 4a]**

One Member question was received from Mrs Watson. The question and response is attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

Mrs Watson asked a supplementary question which was - would the future of the Runnymede Centre be considered at a formal committee meeting so that the decision could be subject to scrutiny? The Leader of the Council responded by stating that the County Council had a statutory duty to provide school places for all Surrey children and the right decision had been taken to help with increased demand in the Runnymede area. He also understood that the decision to use the Runnymede Centre for a new secondary school in the area had been well received by local residents.

#### **74/14 PUBLIC QUESTIONS [Item 4b]**

No questions from members of the public were received.

#### **75/14 PETITIONS [Item 4c]**

No petitions were received.

#### **76/14 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED ON REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE [Item 4d]**

No representations were received.

#### **77/14 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 1 to these minutes**.

The Chairman of Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee attended the meeting. He thanked Cabinet for a comprehensive response and said that he had no further questions.

The Leader of the Council formally thanked the Welfare Reform Task Group for their work.

##### **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 2 to these minutes**.

The Vice-Chairman of Children and Education Select Committee said that he had discussed the response with the select committee's Chairman and had nothing further to add.

#### **78/14 SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN [Item 6]**

The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning presented the Surrey School Organisation Plan 2013-14 - 2022-23, which she said was a 'refresh' of the Plan presented to Cabinet in November 2012, and would be going onto Council in May for final approval.

The Surrey School Organisation Plan for 2013-14 – 2022-23 was a complex document that set out the policies and principles underpinning school organisation in Surrey. It highlighted the increased demand for school places, as projected, over a 10 year forecast period and sets out the potential changes to provision that may be required in order to meet the statutory duty to provide suitable and sufficient places, by Borough and District.

Other Members welcomed the Plan and reiterated the projected increase in demand for both primary and secondary school places.

Finally, the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning publically thanked officers from the School Commissioning Team for its delivery.

**RESOLVED:**

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.

**79/14 CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: RE-COMMISSIONING FOR 2015 - 2020 [Item 7]**

The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning praised the achievements to date since the launch of the new commissioning model for Services for Young People, as highlighted in Section 1 of the report. She also informed Cabinet that the transformation of services for young people had been achieved with a significant reduction in gross expenditure in 2011/12. She asked the Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools and Families to introduce the report because she was Chairman of the Project Board.

The Cabinet Associate said that the purpose of the report was to obtain agreement for the strategic direction for re-commissioning services between 2015 – 2020, to ensure that every young person had the best chance to make informed choices about their lives.

She highlighted the three sections of the report: (i) Achievements 2012-14, (ii) Changes proposed for the next commissioning cycle, (iii) Strategy and Commissioning Intentions 2015 – 20. She also said that the Council had worked closely with local partners transforming services from 'place based' to 'needs based'.

Other Members also highlighted key areas of success, in particular:

- The reduction in young people who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)
- The increase in numbers, aged 16-18 years old, who had started apprenticeships
- The 26 youth centres who had achieved NYA Quality Mark Level1
- That 290 homeless young people had been placed in safe accommodation since November 2012

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families informed Members of a recent visit of Members from the Welsh Assembly, who were impressed with Surrey's work in this area and said that the County Council would be working closely with them to help reduce NEETs in their area.

The Leader of the Council said that he would be writing formally to thank the Assistant Director for Young People and his team for their efforts in achieving these results.

**RESOLVED:**

- (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 with 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.

**80/14 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY 2015 [Item 8]**

Prior to consideration of the report on the outcome of the consultation of Surrey's Home to School Transport Policy, Mr Cooksey addressed the Cabinet relating to his motion on this topic, which had been referred from the meeting of the Council on 10 December 2013.

Mr Cooksey made the following points:

- That, following the consultation on the Home to School Transport policy, this was the final report and therefore there was no opportunity for a Members' Start and Finish Task Group to assess the findings of the consultation
- That the stated intention in advance of the consultation was not to propose any change to the Council's Home to School Transport policy for 2015 which had been the case apart from one change
- There had been a very low response rate to the consultation
- There was little flexibility in the present policy

- Finally, he commented on the tabled response to each of the six points of his motion.

The motion and the Cabinet's response is attached as Appendix 4 to these minutes.

The Leader of the Council responded by firstly referring to the scrutiny of this policy by the Children and Education Select Committee and the Cabinet's tabled response. He said that it was not the role of Council / Cabinet to set up task groups, that was the remit of the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee / select committees. He considered that this was a comprehensive report and that the Admissions and Transport team did an excellent job in this area of work.

Cabinet Members were asked to vote on the referred motion. The Cabinet's tabled response was agreed and the motion was lost.

The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning introduced the report, informing Members that apart from the withdrawal of discretionary transport on faith grounds to denominational schools, Surrey's Home to School Transport Policy had not been reviewed since 2006 and therefore, she believed that this review was timely.

She confirmed that there had been extensive consultation on this policy and considered that the low response rate was due to the generally smooth running of this provision. She said that Surrey's policy for mainstream children generally only provided free home to school transport for children who met the statutory eligibility criteria and currently 6500 children were eligible to receive it. She also referred to anomalies and the options available to consider cases on an individual basis.

Referring to the report from the Children and Education Select Committee and their suggested proposals, she explained why their recommendation (1), relating to siblings had not been taken forward and included in the final report. She stressed the importance of a fair and equitable Home to School Transport policy for all Surrey children.

Finally, she referred to the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA), attached to the report, and which the Cabinet Associate for Fire and Police Services also mentioned, stating that a full EIA was not required because there were only minor changes to the policy.

Mrs Watson had requested to speak and was invited to address Cabinet on her concerns relating to families in her division from Oakwood Hill, Ockley, Walliswood and Forest Green (paragraph 86 of the submitted report). She asked for the Council to recognise Borough and District boundaries and provide free Home to School Transport to the nearest Borough / District school over the qualifying distance.

Both the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning did not think that this request would be feasible. However, the Cabinet Member agreed to investigate and provide a written response to Mrs Watson.

## **RESOLVED:**

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

### **81/14 AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT [Item 9]**

The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning said that the Council had a requirement to provide transport services for eligible children with special educational needs. These contracts provided transport for Surrey's most vulnerable children who often needed to travel with escorts. Currently, this requirement was covered by the current Sole Provider contracts that expired on 31 July 2014.

Approval was sought to award four contracts for the provision of home-to-school transport services to AMK Chauffeurs Ltd and Supreme Freedom to Travel Ltd starting on 1 August 2014, for a three year period with the option to extend up to a further four years, for provision at four SEN Schools.

The proposed 'Sole Provider' contract arrangement would mean that one transport provider was responsible for delivering the entirety of a School's

home-to-school transport for the duration of the contract and that these children would have their own dedicated driver.

Due to the commercial sensitivity involved in the contract award process, the details of the evaluation process and scores, as well as full financial details were included as confidential information in Part 2 (item 15).

**RESOLVED:**

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

**82/14 FLASH OUTTURN REPORT FOR 2013/14 AND PROPOSED CARRY FORWARD REQUESTS FOR 2014/15 [Item 10]**

The Leader of the Council said that this flash outturn budget report presented an early snapshot of the key components of the Council's provisional financial position for 2013/14. The year end position would be finalised and the final outturn report presented to the next Cabinet meeting on 27 May. The final outturn report would also include updates on the financial position as well as efficiencies, capital investment, staffing, reserves and balances and flooding.

**On Revenue he said that:**

- The provisional outturn for 2013/14 was a £6.1m underspend, which was a minor change of +£0.3m, to February's forecast which would have been greater had the Council not absorbed pressures arising from the loss of significant Public Health funding.
- This was the fourth consecutive year the Council had achieved a small underspend or a balanced budget, demonstrating tight financial management by budget holders.
- In keeping with the Council's multi-year approach to financial management, services have requested to carry forward £4.9m of underspent funds, to enable them to complete projects in 2014/15 that were not finished by 31 March 2014.

**On Capital he said that:**

- The Council's capital programme not only improved and maintained the Council's services, but was also a way of investing in Surrey and generating income for the Council. The provisional outturn for 2013/14 was £225.2m investment, a small overachievement against the budget of £224.7m.
- Finally, he said that as many of the capital programme schemes run over multiple years, services have requested to carry forward £39.4m to complete projects in subsequent years and the final outturn report would highlight the phasing of the capital carry forward requests

Other Cabinet Members were invited to highlight the key points and issues from their portfolios, as set out in the Annex to the report.

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Highways and Environment corrected a typo under the Environment and Infrastructure Directorate, namely, that the flood enforcement action was required on the A22 Eastbourne Road and not the Godstone Road.

The Cabinet Associate for Fire and Police Services highlighted the Fire Service's defibrillator project and the need to work with partners on it. She also said that work needed to be undertaken to establish the location of all defibrillators in the County, which the Leader of the council asked her to co-ordinate.

**RESOLVED:**

- (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.

**83/14 JOINT WORKING THROUGH GUILDFORD LOCAL COMMITTEE [Item 11]**

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Community Services, the Cabinet Associate for Fire and Police Services introduced the report and said that this was an opportunity to strengthen and extend the remit of the existing Local Committee arrangements between Surrey County Council (SCC) and Guildford Borough Council (GBC) through the creation of an enhanced Local Committee, with a wider set of advisory functions in the areas of parking, transportation and infrastructure plus greater focus on community involvement through local divisional 'Cluster' meetings. These proposals would build on the strong track record of collaborative working to date between both Councils and were put forward as a result of the joint work between SCC and GBC which had been a shared process.

Mr Brett-Warburton, Chairman of Guildford Local Committee was invited to speak and highlighted the benefits that these proposals would have for their residents, in particular the 'Cluster' meetings which would have funding from both the County and the Borough to enable them to address local issues and support local initiatives.

The Cabinet Associate for Fire and Police Services referred to the Public Value Review, in relation to Community Partnerships and commended the business case for taking his initiative forward to Cabinet.

**RESOLVED:**

- (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.

**84/14 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]**

The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning referred to the significant demand for new schools places within Spelthorne, resulting from increases in the birth rate and inward migration into the County. This demand was being addressed through the County's five year 2014-19 Medium Term Financial Plan.

Spelthorne Primary School had recently amalgamated into an all through primary school from separate infant and junior schools and as part of the amalgamation the school was expanding from two forms of entry (420 places) to three forms of entry (630 places) from September 2015 providing an additional 210 places.

Spelthorne Primary School had been identified as requiring expansion to meet the demand in the Spelthorne area and this project was being carried out in 3 phases. Phase 1 was an enabling works package and delivered a new staffroom in September 2012. Phase 2 delivered the refurbishment of the Foundation unit providing 60 new places and completed in September 2013.

Cabinet was now being asked to agree the business case for the final phase 3 of the overall expansion project. The work is being planned to take place over the summer 2014 and 2015 in order to minimise disruption to the school.

**RESOLVED:**

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.

**85/14 LEADER / DEPUTY LEADER / CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST CABINET MEETING [Item 13]**

**RESOLVED:**

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.

#### **86/14 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC [Item 14]**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

PART TWO – IN PRIVATE

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS OF BUSINESS WERE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE BY THE CABINET. SET OUT BELOW IS A PUBLIC SUMMARY OF THE DECISIONS TAKEN.

#### **87/14 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]**

The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning requested that Cabinet approved the business case for Phase 3 of the project to expand Spelthorne Primary School.

##### **RESOLVED:**

- (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.

#### **88/14 AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT [Item 16]**

This was the Part 2 report, relating to item 9 which set out the confidential Financial and Value for Money implications relating to the award of these contracts.

##### **RESOLVED:**

- (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
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(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.

**89/14 PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS [Item 17]**

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Assets and Regeneration Programmes, the Cabinet Member for Business Services introduced the reports for both Property Transactions.

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

Cabinet was asked to approve the sale of land as part of the Horley North West Sector Development following further negotiations with the purchasers that takes the consideration payable above that approved at Cabinet on 28 February 2012.

**RESOLVED:**

- (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**

**RESOLVED:**

- (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.

**90/14 PUBLICITY FOR PART 2 ITEMS [Item 18]**

That non-exempt information relating to items considered in Part 2 of the meeting may be made available to the press and public, as appropriate.

[Meeting closed at 3.30pm]

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**Chairman**

**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 getWiSE 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 getWiSE to:*

*(a) promote the getWiSE 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, getWiSE 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**

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**