

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT
WOODHATCH PLACE, 11 COCKSHOT HILL, REIGATE, SURREY,
RH2 8EF, ON 22 MARCH 2022 COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM, THE
COUNCIL BEING CONSTITUTED AS FOLLOWS:**

Helyn Clack (Chair)
Saj Hussain (Vice-Chair)

Maureen Attewell	Rachael Lake
Ayesha Azad	Victor Lewanski
Catherine Baart	David Lewis (Cobham)
Steve Bax	David Lewis (Camberley West)
* John Beckett	Scott Lewis
Jordan Beech	Andy Lynch
Luke Bennett	Andy MacLeod
r Amanda Boote	Ernest Mallett MBE
Liz Bowes	* Michaela Martin
Natalie Bramhall	r Jan Mason
* Stephen Cooksey	Steven McCormick
Colin Cross	Cameron McIntosh
Clare Curran	* Julia McShane
Nick Darby	Sinead Mooney
Fiona Davidson	Carla Morson
* Paul Deach	Bernie Muir
r Kevin Deanus	Mark Nuti
Jonathan Essex	r John O'Reilly
r Robert Evans	Tim Oliver
Chris Farr	Rebecca Paul
Paul Follows	* George Potter
Will Forster	Catherine Powell
John Furey	Penny Rivers
r Matt Furniss	* John Robini
Angela Goodwin	Becky Rush
Jeffrey Gray	Tony Samuels
Tim Hall	Joanne Sexton
David Harmer	Lance Spencer
* Nick Harrison	Lesley Steeds
Edward Hawkins	Mark Sugden
Marisa Heath	* Richard Tear
Trefor Hogg	* Alison Todd
Robert Hughes	Chris Townsend
Jonathan Hulley	Liz Townsend
Rebecca Jennings-Evans	r Denise Turner-Stewart
Frank Kelly	Hazel Watson
Riasat Khan	Jeremy Webster
Robert King	r Buddhi Weerasinghe
* Eber Kington	* Fiona White
	Keith Witham

*absent

r = Remote Attendance

Before moving to the first agenda item the Chair noted that regarding the minutes of item 3: Statements by Members for the Council - Informal meeting on 18 January 2022, Eber Kington had requested that an informative note be added to the minutes of that meeting to correct a comment that he made in his statement concerning the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure. Eber Kington had also issued an apology to the Cabinet Member and the Chair confirmed that she would ensure that an informative note would be added to the minutes for that item. The Chair reminded Members to ensure the accuracy of statements made at Council.

17/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]

Apologies for absence were received from John Beckett, Stephen Cooksey, Paul Deach, Nick Harrison, Eber Kington, Michaela Martin, Julia McShane, George Potter, John Robini, Richard Tear, Alison Todd, Fiona White.

Members who attended remotely and had no voting rights were Amanda Boote, Kevin Deanus, Robert Evans, Matt Furniss, Jan Mason, John O'Reilly, Denise Turner-Stewart, Buddhi Weerasinghe.

18/22 MINUTES [Item 2]

The minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 8 February 2022 were submitted, confirmed and signed.

19/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were none.

20/22 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS [Item 4]

The Chair noted:

- That her full announcements could be found in the Council agenda front sheet and led the Council in a one-minute silence in solidarity for Ukraine.

21/22 LEADER'S STATEMENT [Item 5]

The Leader made a detailed statement. A copy of the statement is attached as Appendix A.

Members raised the following topics:

- That the war in Ukraine was a humanitarian crisis, millions faced daily horrors and sought sanctuary.
- Welcomed the change in rating from Inadequate to Good overall for Youth Offending Service and noted that three areas were rated Outstanding.
- Welcomed the change in Ofsted rating in Children's Services from Inadequate to Requires Improvement overall.
- That the problems raised in the Ofsted inspection report needed to be acknowledged and that greater progress needed to be made at pace.
- That whilst Surrey Corporate Parenting Board meetings had strong engagement, Surrey's Corporate Parenting Strategy was outdated.

- That the decision to remove the highway functions of the Local and Joint Committees was conducted with little consultation and questions remained unanswered.
- That regarding the decision to close eight care homes, repairs should have been made earlier and sought reassurance that redevelopment would be considered imminently.
- Agreed that the Ukraine conflict put local political disagreements into context and welcomed the cross-party motions and support.
- Hoped that the administration would continue to listen to the suggestions of the opposition, noting the positive engagement with the Liberal Democrat Group regarding flying the Ukrainian flag, to offer support to refugees and for the Surrey Pension Fund Committee to review its investments in Russia.
- Praised the efforts of staff in the change of Ofsted rating in Children's Services and hoped that the original motion 8 (ii) would help progress to be made.
- That the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee robustly reviewed Your Fund Surrey and hoped that the Cabinet would agree the recommendations made and all recommendations from the Select Committees going forward.
- That with the improved rating, the Council was on its way to rating of Good which was a testament to the work of the late Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Culture, the current Executive Director and staff.
- Shared the frustration of many that little was being done to simplify the process in the UK of offering sanctuary to Ukrainian refugees.
- That the economic sanctions on Russia and Belarus remained inadequate.
- That more could be done in Surrey such as relinquishing stocks of Russian investments in the pension funds.
- That a recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said that scientific evidence was unequivocal that climate change was a threat to human wellbeing and the planet, imminent action was needed.
- The tripling in the forecast rise in household energy bills by October, yet geopolitics was dominated by the dependence on fossil fuels and their rising prices were driving the UK's cost of living crisis.
- That the Council must lead by example in an invest to save scheme and energy advice services for all, home insulation would cut winter fuel bills and Your Fund Surrey could be used to transform the energy efficiency of Surrey's community buildings.
- That the Council could renegotiate Surrey's bus fares and services with bus companies and the Government to provide free bus fares for journeys to school and for key workers; increasing demand and reducing pollution.
- Asked the Leader to consider an emergency response for Surrey - expanding on that for Ukraine - to deal with the cost of living and the climate crisis.
- Echoed the comments made on the brutality of Putin's regime and the kindness of Surrey's residents towards Ukraine.
- That the Ofsted report on Children's Services highlighted that homeless children were being failed, there were risks around children being subjected to female genital mutilation, there was a lack of support to vulnerable children and permanent staffing was vital.
- Looked forward to rapid improvements to the highways in relation to pothole repairs and poor surface dressings on footpaths.
- That Surrey failed to offer cradle to grave services, the closure of the eight remaining care homes was an appalling record.
- Asked the Leader to review the Mayor of Greater Manchester's work on bus contracts, Surrey could offer better services and fares for residents through franchising.

- That the Government's restrictions around offering sanctuary to Ukrainian refugees were appalling.
- Questioned why the Local and Joint Committees were being destroyed as they connected with residents and gave powers to non-executive Members.
- That tackling the war in the Ukraine was a cross-party issue.
- That Farnham Town Council was working alongside volunteers to host Ukrainian families from Kharkiv, welcomed the document circulated by the Leader to Members which would help answer some of the logistical questions.

22/22 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME [Item 6]

Questions:

Notice of twenty questions had been received. The questions and replies were published in the supplementary agenda (items 6 and 8) on 21 March 2022.

A number of supplementary questions were asked and a summary of the main points is set out below:

(Q4) Lance Spencer highlighted the table on the number of referrals to children's social care provided in the written response which showed a drop of nearly 2% nationally compared to an increase of just over 4% regionally between 2017/18 and 2019/20. In Surrey the decrease was around 38% or just over 5,000 children that had disappeared from the system annually, he noted the concern when the Sure Start centres closed that many children without high needs would fall through the system. He asked whether the Cabinet Member for Children and Families had observed that to be the case and whether there were plans to recover those 5,000 children.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families disagreed with the Member's interpretation of the figures, children were not disappearing. She explained that the table detailed referrals as opposed to contact made and when children entered the social care system referrals were made by professionals and families. She was happy to follow up with the Member on the matter.

(Q6) Hazel Watson asked whether the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure agreed that the Council should publicise the fact that residents should not trail electric vehicle (EV) charging cables across pavements and should deter residents from doing that as they cause a safety hazard.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure agreed with the Member noting that as per the written response, the Council published advice on its website on not trailing EV charging cables. He would liaise with the Council's Communications team to see what more could be done via social media.

(Q9) Nick Darby expressed delight that there were defibrillators at Woodhatch Place and the reception staff had been trained on how to use those. He asked whether it would be useful to have clear signage so that Members and staff know their location.

The Chair suggested that it would be good to have a training session for Members on how to use the defibrillators.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Property and Waste agreed that signage and possibly a map of their location should be in place and should be sent to Members. She would look into a training session and the appropriate team to deliver it.

(Q11) Lance Spencer highlighted the Council's ambitious plan to attract £120 million funding under the Bus Back Better scheme but noted disappointment that the Council would get only £18 million. He noted that it was necessary to invest in zero emission buses. He asked how the Council would encourage greater use of buses going forward, noting the increased fares and reduced frequency of buses.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure noted disappointment that the bus sector was continuing to struggle particularly around the recruitment of drivers. Stagecoach had committed to getting back to previous levels from their temporary reduction in services. Bus and travel operators were at 70% capacity compared to pre-Covid and the continued provision by the Government of the recovery grant to October was positive. The Council's own investment of £9 million annually was vital to encourage greater bus use - to ease congestion and benefit the environment - with forthcoming plans for half price bus travel for all those aged under twenty years old. He noted that encouraging the greater use of buses would be achieved through a combination of ways.

(Q12) Stephen Cooksey was not present to ask a supplementary question.

Lance Spencer highlighted a recent meeting of the EV Member Reference Group where debate was had about how officers would deal with the distribution of 10,000 EV charging points around Surrey over the next seven years. The conclusion was that in the absence of the highway functions from the Local and Joint Committees, each Member would need to look at each application individually and liaise with the relevant Borough and District Council. He asked the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure to explain how the Council would deal with the distribution.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Communities emphasised that nothing had changed in respect of the community engagement through the Local and Joint Committees. The communities' teams were increasing their engagement with residents and a Member seminar would be run in May or June setting out how Members would be helped with engaging with their communities and how partners would engage with Members.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure explained that a few pilots were underway on EV charging points. The Council was awaiting the next Government grant announcement about EV charging points. He noted that the Council would shortly be given a direct award with a private operator which would see the rapid increase on EV charging points in the county over the next few years. He would update Members on the matter in due course.

(Q14) Jonathan Essex asked the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure to confirm when the new grass cutting contracts on highway verges would be let and in the meantime what the Council would do to encourage those eight Borough and District Councils to reduce their grass cuts.

Rachael Lake asked that when the grass cutting contracts for highway verges expire, could consideration be given to local conservation groups to wildflower them as that would make a huge difference to the biodiversity and give residents a choice.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure noted that as per the written response the Council was offering a one-year extension to April 2023 to the existing agency agreements with the Borough and District Councils until the final changes to contracts were made. He explained that the Council paid for a set number

of cuts which was four in urban areas and two in rural areas annually as well as one weed spray. The Council was encouraging the Borough and District Councils not to cut, the frequency varied between six to eleven across the county.

The Cabinet Member explained that the Council was actively encouraging residents to get in touch with the Highways team, he highlighted that the Council supported the Blue Campaign to reduce mowing and increase the planting of wildflowers. He noted that Elmbridge Borough Council would be moving into the county programme.

(Q17) Jonathan Essex looked forward to hearing the results of the pilot in Elmbridge on the use of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) used as enforcement, which could be rolled out further. He asked the Cabinet Member for Environment to indicate how many households the Sustainable Warmth funding would support. He also asked how many low income and off-gas homes there were in Surrey, in order to understand the scale of the challenge and funding required.

Robert King referred to the pilot in Elmbridge to identify private rental properties in breach of the MEES and asked whether it would be an opportunity for the Council to explore a licensing scheme to the private rental sector, to be promoted in the Boroughs and Districts.

Lance Spencer expressed concern that in the Green Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan the target was to deliver improvements to insulation and heating to over 32,000 properties by 2025 and to date such improvements had been made to only 547 homes. He asked whether the Cabinet Member thought there was a chance that the targeted number could be achieved.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Environment welcomed the question and the matters raised were important for the Council in reaching its goals. She noted that she would provide the figures requested on Sustainable Warmth funding in due course.

The Cabinet Member noted that licensing was broadly done at Government level and welcomed an elaboration on the suggestions around licensing. She was happy to follow up on the matter with the Member.

The Cabinet Member noted that pilots were underway and that the Council was awaiting an update on Government funding. The targets were in place to be met and the Council would carry on with its objectives, working with its partners.

(Q18) Lance Spencer asked that if the Your Fund Surrey plan was delivered in that £100 million would be spent by 2025, could the Cabinet Member for Communities confirm that would cost £3 million per year for the next fifty years.

Edward Hawkins welcomed that written response that noted that officers continued to listen to feedback and made further refinements to Your Fund Surrey, and that Members were encouraged to speak with their communities. He asked whether the Cabinet Member could re-examine the issue in his division of taking a local road out of highways thereby making it available for a bid through Your Fund Surrey.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Communities stressed that the Council did not stipulate that it would spend £20 million annually for five years, that figure was an even breakdown out of the £100 million which had no time limit to be spent. To date £1.5 million had been awarded via Your Fund Surrey despite Covid-19 and work ceasing during last year's County Council elections. It was a scheme that was not seen elsewhere in the country and momentum in awarding funding was increasing.

The Cabinet Member noted that he would follow up the matter with the Member around the issue of the local road as a highway. He explained that fundamental to Your Fund Surrey was for communities and residents to come forward with projects and to directly bring them into fruition, which excluded highways.

In response, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources noted that £3 to £4 million for every £100 million borrowed covered the cost of the Council's interest payable and the cost of repaying that borrowing. The Council borrowed on an asset-by-asset basis and therefore the time spent to pay that back differed. An affordable level of borrowing was built into the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the Council used its own cash balances to minimise borrowing.

(Q20) Jonathan Essex noted concern in the negative consequences of drinking alcohol during pregnancy on the foetus and child later in life. He referred to 'already drinking dependently' in the written response which highlighted the need for more early and preventative action to reduce the consequences. He asked the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health what additional funding or Government support the Council needed to minimise substance abuse and the occurrence of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS).

In response, the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health thanked the Member for raising the profile of the condition which has potentially catastrophic outcomes. She provided reassurance of the focus on prevention and early intervention across Adult Social Care and Public Health. She noted that there needed to be early messaging of the impact of even social drinking during pregnancy, so women can make informed decisions. She explained that Surrey's Substance Misuse Strategy was being reviewed this year and focused on early intervention and prevention. She would bring the Strategy to Members' attention when consultation started. She would look into the comment made with the Director of Public Health on the funding needed to address the issue.

Cabinet Member Briefings:

These were also published in the supplementary agenda (items 6 and 8) on 21 March 2022.

There were no questions asked by Members.

23/22 STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS [Item 7]

Mark Sugden (Hinchley Wood, Claygate and Oxshott) made a statement on the recent approval of a Your Fund Surrey application for the Claygate Community Pool project at Claygate Primary School. He thanked all those involved and noted that the project would provide a significant long-term sustainable benefit for the community.

Rachael Lake (Walton) made a statement on the recent work which had started on a new free school: Heathside Walton. Whilst welcome, it was being built near the roundabout off Terrace Road which would mean four schools and leisure facilities in close proximity. The Council was running feasibility studies for two of those schools - to follow - the plots identified were on Green Belt sites with one on a flood plain and landlocked. She hoped that her concerns would be looked at.

24/22 ORIGINAL MOTIONS [Item 8]

The Chair explained that regarding original motion 8 (v) standing in the name of Tim Oliver which was published in a supplementary agenda (item 8) on 17 March 2022, she had agreed with Group Leaders that as Chair she would be proposing the motion. This fifth motion - agreed cross-party - was received after the fourteen-day deadline, in accordance with Standing Order 11.8 'An original motion may be considered without notice if the Chairman decides that the matter is urgent'. The Chair noted that due to the subject matter she had decided to take the motion first.

Item 8 (v)

Under Standing Order 12.3 the Council agreed to debate this motion.

Under Standing Order 12.1 Helyn Clack (Chair) moved:

This Council notes:

That the Russian attack on Ukraine is not just an invasion of a sovereign state, it is an attack on everything we believe in and stand for. It is an attack on freedom, democracy and self-determination.

That the terrible experiences of the people of Ukraine cannot be ignored and warrant the strongest possible action on simple humanitarian grounds as well as in support of freedom, democracy and self-determination.

This Council:

- Deplores the situation in Ukraine brought about by the unwarranted, unprovoked and unprecedented Russian leadership's aggression and invasion of the country.
- Stands in solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

This Council resolves to:

- I. Fully engage in and support national schemes for Ukrainian refugees, to identify accommodation and homes for those arriving in Surrey, (provided by public agencies as well as Surrey householders), to assist those fleeing the country to find a safe haven here for as long as is necessary, and to facilitate their return to Ukraine as and when it is safe to do so.
- II. Review and work to immediately relinquish any connections that the Council's energy supplies, and general investments have to Russian interests.
- III. Support the decision of the Surrey Pension Fund Committee to immediately suspend making any further pension investments in Russia and Belarus and continue to review existing investments with a view to exiting. This Council urges the Committee to do so as soon as possible.
- IV. Promote as widely as possible the mechanisms by which Surrey residents can donate and support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

- V. Continue to fly the Ukrainian flag as a gesture of support at our Council Headquarters in Woodhatch Place and other buildings, until such time as hostilities cease.

Helyn Clack made the following points:

- That it was a motion of solidarity with the Ukrainian people following an unprovoked and continuing war initiated by Russia.
- That there had been wide news coverage and heartfelt descriptions of the situation.
- That the invasion was an attack on freedom, democracy and self-determination, rights enjoyed in Surrey through democratic accountability.
- That her heart went out to the Ukrainian people with many fleeing and some staying behind, led by their brave President.
- Had been moved by correspondence from residents offering to open their homes to the refugees, noting the Council's cross-local authority immigration group working with partners to house refugees from around the world, recently from Afghanistan and now Ukraine.

Tony Samuels arrived at 11.24 am.

- That the Council must review and relinquish any connections that its energy suppliers and general investments have to Russian interests, the Surrey Pension Fund had made its position clear on investments in Russia and Belarus.
- That the Council's Communications team must disseminate information on how Members and residents can support and donate to the Ukrainian cause.
- That the Council had raised the Ukrainian flag alongside its flag, she encouraged Members to raise awareness across their social media.
- Called on the Council to support the motion and show solidarity.

The motion was formally seconded by Nick Darby, who made the following comments:

- Noted the terrible chain of events which had unfolded suddenly.
- That whatever political disagreements there were locally, there were democratic processes in place permitting differences of opinion.
- That the Council offered its unequivocal support to Ukraine, it was harrowing that many were homeless and separated from loved ones.
- Noted confidence that Surrey's residents would play their part and that the Council would be thinking about how it can offer support through accommodation.
- That at some stage the war would end and many would wish to return, urged the Government to look at how it could support a rebuilding project.
- Emphasised the Council's support and solidarity to Ukraine.

Eleven Members made the following comments:

- That all were horrified by the misery and loss of life suffered and the events demonstrated that the Council's responsible investment policy must consider the financial risks of Governments who do not believe in democracy.
- That the Surrey Pension Fund Committee acted as a trustee to the Surrey Pension Fund's assets and the committee had taken the views of the Fund's

members and employers, and the Council into account with £6 million of Russian equity investments having exited. To be followed by the exiting of £6 million of Russian bond assets in due course.

- That the committee was working to identify any indirect investment exposure to Russia and Belarus, such as through BP and Shell.
- That without any movement by Russia and Belarus to comply with the UN Sustainable Development Goals there would be no future prospect to have direct or indirect investment in Russia or Belarus, or end to their sanctions.
- That by Thursday it would have been one month since Russia invaded Ukraine, noting the tyranny of Russia's President against the courage shown by Ukraine's President.
- That the invasion was an illegal and barbaric attack on democracy, noting the recent air strikes on a maternity hospital.
- Welcomed the international support in standing up to Russia's President, yet more needed to be done for example Surrey must stand up to Russian oligarchs in the county.
- Welcomed the Council's response including the flying of the Ukrainian flag and response concerning investments.
- That the Government needed to redouble its efforts in its support for Ukrainian refugees - so far five million in Europe - and to remove the barriers faced, hoped that the Council and the Borough and District Councils would work together to show support for the refugees.
- Praised the many thousands in Surrey who had offered their homes up to Ukrainian refugees and had organised collections to support them.
- Noted an example of a Ukrainian individual who was running supplies down to Folkestone with goods transported into the heart of the war zone.
- Noted support for the Homes for Ukraine visa scheme whereby Ukrainians coming to the UK would have the same rights as settled persons, yet the private visa process remained overcomplicated with no way of matching Ukrainian families to a sponsor.
- That the Ukrainian individual highlighted was keen to join up efforts and welcomed ideas for further support such as the use of Council buildings to enable Ukrainian refugees to meet together.
- Stressed that it was important that the Council recognises those Russians in Surrey who were appalled at their President's actions.
- Noted concern on the visa scheme which in one local case a child might be offered a visa and the mother not as they shared different surnames, noting that it would be helpful for additional information to be included on the Council's website to reflect such cases.
- That the Nationality and Borders Bill would make refugees travelling independently second-class citizens.
- Highlighted the issue of those with settled status offering refugee cards being denied free transport on public transport that they are entitled to for six months, asked the Chair to discuss the matter with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure.
- That it was important to learn from the skills and opportunities found throughout Covid-19 and for the Council and the Borough and District Councils to continue to empower its communities.
- Noted that it was important to recognise the evolving list of how the Council would offer its support therefore the Council should resolve 'at least to'.
- That the Council must empower the Leader through various forums such as the County Councils Network to show that solidarity with the Ukrainians sits at all levels of government.

- That the Government needed to extend, elaborate on, and simplify the visa scheme process.
- That through relinquishing connections immediately with Russia in energy supply, the Council was committed to take swift action and so too in the case of the Surrey Pension Fund and its investments.
- Hoped that the motion provided an opportunity for collaborative working and that Surrey's voice would join those nationally who had agreed similar motions.
- Stressed that words must be coupled with action, urged Surrey's residents if able to take in Ukrainian refugees.
- That whilst immense solidarity was rightly shown to Ukraine, it was important not to forget the impact on other eastern European countries such as Poland and to support them.
- Looked forward to Chelsea Football Club's removal of any Russian connections through its sale.
- That residents were showing solidarity for Ukraine, noting that seventy-five Ukrainian flags would be flown in Cobham High Street alternating with the Union Jack, welcomed the flying of the Ukrainian flag at Woodhatch Place and hoped that Members and their divisions would encourage similar shows of support.
- The Vice-Chair thanked Surrey's residents for their generosity in providing sanctuary, donations and storage space for supplies, and welcomed officers' support.
- Noted the view that the properties and wealth of Russian oligarchs should be used to help the refugees and to rebuild Ukraine once the war is over.
- Noted issues with the visa scheme were being resolved, noting a positive story of a Surrey resident to shortly be reunited with their family.
- Highlighted the brave Russian citizens who were standing up to their President and stood in solidarity with them.
- The Leader recognised the difficult time faced by Ukraine and was heartened to see the Council and country come together, noting a divisional example of a rally held in support for Ukrainian refugees and the arrival of one of the first Ukrainian families in Cobham.
- The Leader noted the need to simplify the visa scheme and that the Council would continue to work with the Government to address the practical issues, lobbying was happening via the County Councils Network.
- The Leader noted that regarding the second resolution for the Council to relinquish any connections with companies that have Russian interests, clarified that the Council had terminated its contract with Gazprom in 2020 used for the eight care homes earmarked for closure and noted that the Council now bought all its energy through the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework.
- The Leader noted that many schools in Surrey bought their utilities through the CCS framework but were not obliged to so could potentially be buying gas from Gazprom and noted that schools should contact the Council.
- The Leader noted that the Council had adopted the guidance notes produced by lawyers for the Local Government Association in relation to contracting with Russian organisations and there would be further internal guidance issued as necessary.
- The Leader noted that local authorities were awaiting confirmation of the funding of £10,500 per Ukrainian refugee, the Council was working with the Borough and District Councils on the practicalities.
- The Leader urged residents to do whatever they can to show support for Ukrainians.
- The Leader noted that it was an attack on world democracy and all must stand together and oppose dictators.

- The Leader emphasised that the motion was just the start of the work that the Council would do to support Ukrainian and other refugees.

Helyn Clack (Chair) as proposer of the motion, concluded the debate:

- Welcomed the moving comments made which would be followed up.
- Noted that it was a long road ahead before a solution would be found.
- That standing together with Ukraine, it was vital to ensure that democracy prevails and that all can be done in Surrey to make sure that happens.

The motion was put to the vote and received unanimous support.

Therefore, it was **RESOLVED** that:

This Council notes:

That the Russian attack on Ukraine is not just an invasion of a sovereign state, it is an attack on everything we believe in and stand for. It is an attack on freedom, democracy and self-determination.

That the terrible experiences of the people of Ukraine cannot be ignored and warrant the strongest possible action on simple humanitarian grounds as well as in support of freedom, democracy and self-determination.

This Council:

- Deplores the situation in Ukraine brought about by the unwarranted, unprovoked and unprecedented Russian leadership's aggression and invasion of the country.
- Stands in solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

This Council resolves to:

- I. Fully engage in and support national schemes for Ukrainian refugees, to identify accommodation and homes for those arriving in Surrey, (provided by public agencies as well as Surrey householders), to assist those fleeing the country to find a safe haven here for as long as is necessary, and to facilitate their return to Ukraine as and when it is safe to do so.
- II. Review and work to immediately relinquish any connections that the Council's energy supplies, and general investments have to Russian interests.
- III. Support the decision of the Surrey Pension Fund Committee to immediately suspend making any further pension investments in Russia and Belarus and continue to review existing investments with a view to exiting. This Council urges the Committee to do so as soon as possible.
- IV. Promote as widely as possible the mechanisms by which Surrey residents can donate and support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.
- V. Continue to fly the Ukrainian flag as a gesture of support at our Council Headquarters in Woodhatch Place and other buildings, until such time as hostilities cease.

Item 8 (i)

Under Standing Order 12.3 the Council agreed to debate this motion.

Under Standing Order 20.3 (a) Catherine Powell moved a proposed alteration to the original motion standing in her own name, which had been published in the supplementary agenda (items 6 and 8) on 21 March 2022.

The proposed alteration to the motion was as follows (with additional words in bold/underlined and deletions crossed through):

This Council notes that:

Surrey Highways devotes a great deal of time and resource working with utility companies to identify unmarked assets requiring repair. Surrey Highways is committed to making sure that assets are kept temporarily safe until the utility company makes a permanent repair to their asset.

Currently, Surrey Highways has access to a limited number of asset maps for utility companies which are very useful and allow rapid identification of asset owners. However, Surrey Highways have no information at all for the majority of utility companies which makes identifying unmarked assets time consuming, resulting in adverse impacts on the travelling public for longer periods than necessary.

The six month grace period granted to utility companies to leave in place temporary repairs before making permanent repairs can often have an adverse and unreasonable impact on residents and businesses.

Therefore, this Council requests the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure to lobby Government to:

- I. Introduce a statutory requirement on utility companies to share any electronic asset maps with Local Authorities, updated at least annually, to support the Local Authorities in identifying the ownership of unmarked assets for repair work.
- II. Introduce a statutory requirement for utility companies **to introduce an easy identification system of assets** ~~to~~ **to support** ~~work with~~ Local Authorities **in identifying third party assets** using technology **which is compatible with Local Authority systems** such as passive RFID (radio-frequency identification) tags ~~to support easy identification of assets owners~~ starting with areas of:
 - a. Significant number of assets owned by different organisations where maps are less effective;
 - b. Regular damage to assets by vehicles or vandalism.
- III. Reduce the interim reinstatement period from 6 months to 1 month.
- IV. Extend the 2-year guarantee period of utility repairs undertaken by utility companies to 5 years.
- V. Introduce a timescale for repairs for 'Section 81' (of NRSWA) for Defective Apparatus, so that utilities must complete repairs in a short time period once reported of no more than 3 months.

Under Standing Order 20.3, the proposed alteration to the original motion was put to the vote and Council agreed to the proposed alteration and it was therefore open for debate.

Catherine Powell made the following points:

- Welcomed the collaboration with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure on the motion.
- Recognised the challenging experiences Members may have had with assets owned by utility companies causing problems in their division, such as in relation to identifying the relevant utility company and ensuring repairs.
- That as all utility companies increased their use of modern technologies such as electronic data asset maps and asset identification systems, it was right that such data was made available data to aid the Council.
- Outlined the resolutions requesting the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure to lobby the Government.
- Hoped that Members would support the motion which would place an increased responsibility on the utility companies and make the work of the Council easier, more efficient and reduce its costs.

The motion was formally seconded by Matt Furniss, who made the following comments:

- Supported the motion and highlighted the importance of protecting the Council's increased investment as a highway authority on its roads.
- Noted that 70% of all interventions on Surrey Highways concerned utility companies and the Council reported over 2,500 Section 81 defect apparatus reports annually - improved response times from the Government were needed.
- That 25% of all utility repairs by utility companies - which were reported following the Council's inspections - failed their safety code within the two years.
- That the Council was putting £100 million a year into the highway network and its structures to ensure that Surrey keeps moving and the Council must ensure that its partners do the same.
- That by getting those longer periods for which utility companies are bound, it was hoped that would make their reinstatements and asset repairs right the first time.
- That continued Government support was vital to ensure that the utility companies take responsibility for their actions on the highway network.

Six Members made the following comments:

- Highlighted an example of a local road in Send village which underwent slot cutting at night followed by work on the water mains and on the gas infrastructure; stressed that utility companies must show a duty of care to residents and should notify the Council on the intended timings.
- That the Council would work to facilitate the work of the utility companies and vice versa, to be made easier through the new technology outlined in the motion.
- Noted an example of an extreme case in the past whereby contractors were killed during digging trenches to lay assets as the maps were inadequate. Technology had since developed and it was essential that anyone working on the highways should have access to accurate maps.
- Supported the simplification of the processes set out in the motion.
- Shared those frustrations felt by residents when utility assets on the highways are not reinstated properly, therefore supported the reduction in the interim reinstatement period and the extension of the guarantee period.

- That the Council had made significant changes and progress in how it engages with utility companies - notably the Lane Rental Scheme - and the motion would provide more control and greater collaboration.
- That the motion would make a large difference and supported the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure in writing to the Secretary of State for Transport to set out a strong case for the reforms needed.
- That the Council needed to do more towards the utility works and to improve the relationship with the utility companies, noting an example of a local road which after having undergone costly resurfacing by the Council, the utility companies renewed the pipes constantly month after month.
- Noted a current local issue of two sewerage leaks yet the service operator had said that they had no pipes in that area, stressed that the issue would have knock-on effects to nearby areas including Green Belt land.
- Welcomed the motion which would benefit residents.
- That the infrastructure providers needed to be encouraged to work with the Council such as through regular high-level meetings to address any difficulties.
- Requested that the results of the lobbying outlined in the resolutions are provided to Members in due course.

The Chair asked Catherine Powell, as proposer of the motion to conclude the debate, she made the following comments:

- Thanked Members for their supportive comments and noted that it was interesting to hear the number of negative experiences faced.
- Expressed sympathy in response to the issue of the sewerage leaks raised, having faced a similar incident in Farnham Park recently.

The motion was put to the vote and received unanimous support.

Therefore, it was **RESOLVED** that:

This Council notes that:

Surrey Highways devotes a great deal of time and resource working with utility companies to identify unmarked assets requiring repair. Surrey Highways is committed to making sure that assets are kept temporarily safe until the utility company makes a permanent repair to their asset.

Currently, Surrey Highways has access to a limited number of asset maps for utility companies which are very useful and allow rapid identification of asset owners. However, Surrey Highways have no information at all for the majority of utility companies which makes identifying unmarked assets time consuming, resulting in adverse impacts on the travelling public for longer periods than necessary.

The six month grace period granted to utility companies to leave in place temporary repairs before making permanent repairs can often have an adverse and unreasonable impact on residents and businesses.

Therefore, this Council requests the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure to lobby Government to:

- I. Introduce a statutory requirement on utility companies to share any electronic asset maps with Local Authorities, updated at least annually, to support the

Local Authorities in identifying the ownership of unmarked assets for repair work.

- II. Introduce a statutory requirement for utility companies to introduce an easy identification system of assets to support Local Authorities in identifying third party assets using technology which is compatible with Local Authority systems such as passive RFID (radio-frequency identification) tags starting with areas of:
 - a. Significant number of assets owned by different organisations where maps are less effective;
 - b. Regular damage to assets by vehicles or vandalism.
- III. Reduce the interim reinstatement period from 6 months to 1 month.
- IV. Extend the 2-year guarantee period of utility repairs undertaken by utility companies to 5 years.
- V. Introduce a timescale for repairs for 'Section 81' (of NRSWA) for Defective Apparatus, so that utilities must complete repairs in a short time period once reported of no more than 3 months.

Item 8 (ii)

Under Standing Order 12.3 the Council agreed to debate this motion.

Under Standing Order 12.1 Jeremy Webster moved:

This Council notes:

- The Ofsted inspection report on children's services in Surrey published on 9 March 2022.
- That the overall effectiveness of our services is judged to have improved since the last inspection in 2018, and acknowledges that Surrey's leaders have achieved significant change in that time and that they are implementing a clear and comprehensive improvement programme.

This Council further notes:

- That this improvement is described as "...a strong foundation to strive for excellence."; but that this programme of improvement needs to continue in order for our services to be seen as good. The findings of the inspectors are entirely consistent with the self-assessment audits and the inspection team confirmed they had confidence that the current improvement plan was not only the right one but that it was being appropriately implemented.
- In particular that:

"Children and their families benefit from effective early help services."

"The children's single point of access service responds effectively to most contacts and referrals," and "Most assessments are thorough..."

"The implementation of the local authority's practice model has significantly strengthened work to tackle domestic and substance abuse..."

"Many children are successfully diverted from care, as social workers work effectively with parents and risks to children are reduced" and "When children go missing from

home, they receive timely return home interviews which lead to insightful assessments of vulnerability...”

“Senior managers have expanded the capacity of the inclusion team to respond to the increased number of children who are missing education or moving to elective home education. These children and young people are supported appropriately and according to their individual circumstances.”

In light of the positive progress made as outlined above, this Council resolves to:

- I. Re-affirm its commitment to implementing the further improvements recommended in the report as our highest priority, and that the Children’s Services improvement journey will continue until Surrey has achieved a level of provision that can be seen as being outstanding in every area of children’s services.
- II. Extend its thanks to the children’s services workforce, who carry out their roles with pride, and seek to do their best for children and families in Surrey, particularly over the difficult period of the pandemic; and asks members of the Council to reflect upon their own role in future improvement work through scrutiny and challenge and by developing our community leadership of the wider children’s system in Surrey.

Jeremy Webster made the following points:

- That having worked for Children’s Services in Surrey from 2014 for a number of years, saw first-hand the impact of the Ofsted reports and what the inspectors were looking for.
- Witnessed the efforts made to make the service more child-centred, focused on early help and prevention, and to create sustainable improvements for children.
- Emphasised the complexity and volume of the work that social workers do.
- Had been responsible for an average of forty plus children in 2017, was pleased to report that had since halved for current social workers.
- Outlined the resolutions.

The motion was formally seconded by Liz Bowes, who made the following comments:

- That the Council must thank its current and past senior officers for making sure that Children’s Services was now on the right path.
- That it was reassuring that the strengths and areas requiring development were recognised in the Ofsted report, ensuring that the service could accurately self-evaluate and could make the necessary improvements.
- That bringing about change is never easy and the Council has fostered many new initiatives and ways of working to get to its current position.
- That it was vital that the Council paid tribute to its workforce who provide daily care despite the challenges and that the Council fully supports them on the path to further improvements.

Jonathan Essex moved an amendment which had been published in the supplementary agenda (items 6 and 8) on 21 March 2022, which was formally seconded by Nick Darby.

The amendment was as follows (with additional words in bold/underlined and deletions crossed through):

This Council notes:

- The Ofsted inspection report on children's services in Surrey published on 9 March 2022.
- That the overall effectiveness of our services is judged to have improved since the last inspection in 2018 and acknowledges that Surrey's leaders have achieved significant change in that time and that they are implementing a clear and comprehensive improvement programme.

This Council further notes:

- That this improvement is described as "...a strong foundation to strive for excellence."; but that this programme of improvement needs to continue in order for our services to be seen as good. The findings of the inspectors are entirely consistent with the self-assessment audits and the inspection team confirmed they had confidence that the current improvement plan was not only the right one but that it was being appropriately implemented.
- In particular that:

"Children and their families benefit from effective early help services."

"The children's single point of access service responds effectively to most contacts and referrals," and "Most assessments are thorough..."

"The implementation of the local authority's practice model has significantly strengthened work to tackle domestic and substance abuse..."

"Many children are successfully diverted from care, as social workers work effectively with parents and risks to children are reduced" and "When children go missing from home, they receive timely return home interviews which lead to insightful assessments of vulnerability..."

"Senior managers have expanded the capacity of the inclusion team to respond to the increased number of children who are missing education or moving to elective home education. These children and young people are supported appropriately and according to their individual circumstances."

In light of the positive progress made as outlined above, this Council resolves to:

- I. Re-affirm its commitment to implementing the further improvements recommended in the report as our highest priority, and that the Children's Services improvement journey **targets** will continue until Surrey ~~to~~ **has** achieved a level of provision that **is classed** ~~can be seen as~~ **Outstanding by Ofsted** ~~outstanding~~ in every area of children's services.
- II. Extend its thanks to the children's services workforce, who carry out their roles with pride, and seek to do their best for children and families

in Surrey, particularly over the difficult period of the pandemic; and asks members of the Council to reflect upon their own role in future improvement work through scrutiny and challenge and by developing our community leadership of the wider children's system in Surrey.

Jonathan Essex spoke to his amendment, making the following points:

- That the amendment to the first resolution was intended to be forward looking.
- Achieved by clarifying that the Council aims to be outstanding not just in how it is seen, but as it is judged externally by families and through Ofsted's Outstanding rating.
- That it was important that the Council moves from its current plan of getting to an Ofsted Good rating, towards a new plan of getting to an Outstanding rating and having that reflected in its culture.
- That by shifting its ambition the Council must strengthen its plans and practices as well as continuing the excellent pathway in which the Council had now set itself on.

The amendment was formally seconded by Nick Darby, who made the following comments:

- Reiterated that the main changes proposed sought for the Council to head for an Ofsted rating of Outstanding rather than simply being outstanding.
- Hoped that the amendment could be supported.

Jeremy Webster accepted the amendment and therefore it became the substantive motion.

Seven Members spoke on the motion and made the following comments:

- That the public had been made more aware of the importance of Children's Services as a result of the recent national trials for the murders of two young children.
- Supported the motion but noted that the inclusion of selected positive quotes of the Ofsted report was unnecessary.
- Supported the motion as the Council must be forward looking, that after four years for the Council to now be rated as Requires Improvement meant that the Council was not good enough.
- That the Council had issues in staffing, with foster carers and the carers' performance and around the transition of its children and young people out of care and into education or work.
- That children's education and family services are not to be politicised.
- That there remained a number of 'buts' as for example 'overall effectiveness' needed improvement and the Council must continue to work hard to reach an Outstanding rating.
- That whilst not being able to support the motion, would not vote against it out of respect for the many officers in Children's Services who were working diligently to improve the Council's performance.
- Applauded the progress made however a rating of Requires Improvement was not adequate for Surrey's children, as corporate parents the Council should not be happy with that rating.
- That Surrey was an affluent county yet had been independently rated as failing its Looked After Children since 2015, in six years the Council had moved one rating from Inadequate to Requires Improvement.

- Comparatively less affluent local authorities have an Outstanding rating as do some of Surrey's neighbours.
- That the Ofsted report notes that services were no longer inadequate which was positive, however overall progress had been slow since 2015.
- Offered support to the administration to help in any way possible and would continue to actively participate in future improvement work through scrutiny and challenge.
- Highlighted that Ofsted had recognised that the Council was implementing a clear and comprehensive improvement programme and that the Council had made good progress.
- That the Ofsted report highlighted that children were safer and they and their families benefitted from effective early years services, and that Surrey leaders had achieved significant change and were determined to continue.
- That findings from the recent inspection of the Council's Youth Offending Service were that the Council had a well-motivated and knowledgeable service backed up by targeted training opportunities and a well-resourced specialist hub, the quality of casework was impressive, and the management team and practitioners knew the children well and addressed their needs through a wide range of services.
- That it was vital that staff in Children's Services feel supported by the Council to maintain the improvements made and to make further improvements and support them to ensure that no one is left behind.
- That to deliver true transformation it was important to work in partnership to understand the issues and causes, the Ofsted report identifies clear areas where improvement is required.
- Highlighted an area of improvement in the Ofsted report around the continued significant shortage of local foster carers, the removal of transport to contact provided by the Council had negative effects on foster carers as reported via a survey undertaken by the Surrey Foster Care Association, such as feeling unsafe to travel and considering leaving the service.
- Invited Members to meet the Surrey Foster Care Association executive and members to understand the challenges they face and how to work together to resolve them.
- That foster carers worked tirelessly to provide a vital service and to get to a rating of Outstanding the Council needed their help.
- Highlighted another area of improvement in the Ofsted report, that for a small number of disabled children there was insufficient attention to the capacity of their parents, noted a letter on the matter from a resident.
- That the Council must acknowledge and encourage the good work by the Surrey Corporate Parenting Board, to ensure that as many of Surrey's children as possible were looked after in the county and to ensure that Surrey's foster carers were supported such as through a cross-party group working with foster carers to ensure that they have a voice.
- Called for a Member briefing so that all Members as corporate parents could understand the full implications of the Ofsted report and encourage the creation of a revised Surrey Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- That the Council would work to address the areas highlighted in the Ofsted report which need improvements such as around staff turnover, as the quicker the Council could improve its rating the better.
- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families hoped that despite some of the comments made, Members could agree that the continued improvement of Children's Services was the Council's highest priority in order to improve the lives of its vulnerable children through transformational social work.

- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families noted that the Ofsted report said that the senior leadership team and Council leaders had a credible commitment and a drive to improve services.
- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families thanked the current Executive Director for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, for her work and that of her team, all members of staff in the service who worked tirelessly despite the challenges of the pandemic, and the guidance provided by the previous portfolio holder for children.
- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families asked Members to reflect on their role through the appropriate committees in supporting the improvement of Children's Services through scrutiny and challenge.
- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families noted that common to local authorities with a Good or Outstanding rating in Children's Services was the involvement of Members in all matters relating to children and young people.
- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families responded to the criticisms around the slow progress made, noting that the Ofsted report stated that progress had accelerated since 2018 which was in line with the Council's clear improvement plan, thanked the late Executive Director for his work.
- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families noted that recounting previous Ofsted rating on Inadequate in reports back to 2008, the Council had a long history of inadequacy and it was a difficult journey back.
- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families noted that the 2018 Ofsted report stated that the likelihood of improvement gaining momentum was more realistic than at any time since 2015, comparatively to similar local authorities the Council's improvement journey was consistent.
- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families noted that the Council was not complacent with its improved rating, Surrey was a large county and it would take time to embed change and further improvements in the consistency and delivery of its services.
- The Cabinet Member for Children and Families noted that the Council recognised that more progress needed to be made and was striving for excellence for Surrey's children and young people.

The Chair asked Jeremy Webster, as proposer of the motion to conclude the debate, he made the following comments:

- Highlighted some positives of the Ofsted report which were that the Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA) was working which provided targeted support and meant that caseloads were more manageable, the Council was becoming more child-centred, new assessment tools were becoming more embedded, the work with family courts was becoming more effective, the Council understood the health needs of children better, and the mental health services were highly effective.
- Recognised that challenges remained such as regarding the transition of children into adulthood, where to find more foster carers and how to reduce staff turnover in social workers.
- That Surrey's Corporate Parenting Strategy requires updating and Members should be involved in that process.

The motion was put to the vote with 51 Members voting For, 1 voting Against and 9 Abstentions.

Therefore, it was **RESOLVED** that:

This Council notes:

- The Ofsted inspection report on children's services in Surrey published on 9 March 2022.
- That the overall effectiveness of our services is judged to have improved since the last inspection in 2018 and acknowledges that Surrey's leaders have achieved significant change in that time and that they are implementing a clear and comprehensive improvement programme.

This Council further notes:

- That this improvement is described as "...a strong foundation to strive for excellence."; but that this programme of improvement needs to continue in order for our services to be seen as good. The findings of the inspectors are entirely consistent with the self-assessment audits and the inspection team confirmed they had confidence that the current improvement plan was not only the right one but that it was being appropriately implemented.
- In particular that:

"Children and their families benefit from effective early help services."

"The children's single point of access service responds effectively to most contacts and referrals," and "Most assessments are thorough..."

"The implementation of the local authority's practice model has significantly strengthened work to tackle domestic and substance abuse..."

"Many children are successfully diverted from care, as social workers work effectively with parents and risks to children are reduced" and "When children go missing from home, they receive timely return home interviews which lead to insightful assessments of vulnerability..."

"Senior managers have expanded the capacity of the inclusion team to respond to the increased number of children who are missing education or moving to elective home education. These children and young people are supported appropriately and according to their individual circumstances."

In light of the positive progress made as outlined above, this Council resolves to:

- I. Re-affirm its commitment to implementing the further improvements recommended in the report as our highest priority, and that the Children's Services improvement journey targets Surrey to achieve a level of provision that is classed as Outstanding by Ofsted in every area of children's services.
- II. Extend its thanks to the children's services workforce, who carry out their roles with pride, and seek to do their best for children and families in Surrey, particularly over the difficult period of the pandemic; and asks members of the Council to reflect upon their own role in future improvement work through

scrutiny and challenge and by developing our community leadership of the wider children's system in Surrey.

Item 8 (iii)

Under Standing Order 12.3 the Council agreed to debate this motion.

Under Standing Order 12.1 Will Forster moved:

This Council notes:

- That the Government are scrapping free coronavirus tests for most people as part of the 'Living with Covid' plan.
- Concern that stopping providing free tests for all will make it harder to fight coronavirus. Charging for essential tests would hit those who can least afford it hardest, at a time when families are already being clobbered by soaring energy bills.

This Council resolves to:

- I. Call on the Government to continue with free PCR and lateral flow tests for those residents in critical groups, such as front-line workers and those who are eligible for free prescriptions.
- II. Agree to explore the option of providing free asymptomatic testing for staff working in health and social care, vulnerable residents in care homes and other similar groups for up to one year.

Will Forster made the following points:

- That having recently recovered from Covid-19, noted the importance of providing free asymptomatic tests especially whilst cases were high.
- That as part of the Government's 'Living with COVID-19' plan, free Covid-19 testing would be stopped for most people in the country and there was concern that the move was premature, as it could lead to local outbreaks and add to the cost-of-living crisis.
- That the motion called on the Council to lobby the Government to continue to provide free Covid-19 testing for critical groups like frontline workers in health and social care, as well as vulnerable individuals.
- That the Council needed to send a strong message to the Government against removing the provision of free testing and in the absence of national change the Council must step up and provide free Covid-19 testing to critical groups that the Council has a duty of care for.
- Hoped that the Leader would write to the Government calling on them to reverse its decision and to extend free Covid-19 testing and that the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health would work with officers to deliver a local testing programme in Surrey as soon as possible.

The motion was formally seconded by Sinead Mooney, who made the following comments:

- Welcomed the collaboration on drafting the original motion.
- Noted that the Council had continuously followed national policy on Covid-19.
- That whilst awaiting further national policy guidance on the 'Living with COVID-19' plan, welcomed the motion and the opportunity to explore further the option

for free asymptomatic testing for Surrey's most vulnerable residents and frontline workers.

Two Members spoke on the motion and made the following comments:

- That the situation regarding free Covid-19 testing should be reconsidered.
- That currently the Council followed national policy on Covid-19, including testing and awaited further guidance on the asymptomatic testing policy at the end of March, as well as the offer to specific settings and testing in response to outbreaks.
- That once that guidance was published the Council's Public Health team would be considering how best to implement it locally.
- That testing should continue for health and social care workers who look after vulnerable individuals such as those in care homes often requiring constant contact, many with dementia, co-morbidities or were immunosuppressed living in close proximity which meant an increased chance of transmission especially with the Omicron variant.
- That as a result of Omicron the Government was offering Covid-19 boosters for those aged over 75 years, residents in care homes, and those over 12 years old who were immunosuppressed.
- That health and social care workers were no longer required to have Covid-19 vaccinations, and neither were residents or visitors and given the nature of the work it was vital to encourage regular testing.
- That the Council should lobby the Government for free testing and it should continue to support the vulnerable groups outlined in the motion.
- That Covid-19 had not gone away so all should be vigilant.
- Thanked all in Surrey for following public health guidance throughout the pandemic and all should continue to follow key precautions to help stop the spread such as getting vaccinated, wearing a face covering in crowded settings, letting fresh air in, washing hands regularly and staying at home if unwell.
- That vaccination statistics showed that the vaccine remained the best form of protection for Covid-19, noting that it was never too late for those eligible to book a vaccine.
- That as one those groups being eligible to still get free testing, supported the motion to protect vulnerable people as the country was in a state of transition concerning Covid-19.

The Chair asked Will Forster, as proposer of the motion to conclude the debate, he made the following comments:

- Thanked Members for their comments.

The motion was put to the vote and received unanimous support.

Therefore, it was **RESOLVED** that:

This Council notes:

- That the Government are scrapping free coronavirus tests for most people as part of the 'Living with Covid' plan.
- Concern that stopping providing free tests for all will make it harder to fight coronavirus. Charging for essential tests would hit those who can least afford it hardest, at a time when families are already being clobbered by soaring energy bills.

This Council resolves to:

- I. Call on the Government to continue with free PCR and lateral flow tests for those residents in critical groups, such as front-line workers and those who are eligible for free prescriptions.
- II. Agree to explore the option of providing free asymptomatic testing for staff working in health and social care, vulnerable residents in care homes and other similar groups for up to one year.

Item 8 (iv)

Under Standing Order 13.1 the time limit for debating motions had been reached, therefore Council did not debate this original motion.

25/22 SELECT COMMITTEES' REPORT TO COUNCIL [Item 9]

The Chair welcomed the report which was the first of its kind presented to Council.

The Chair of the Select Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs' Group introduced the report and highlighted that the newly introduced update report would be provided to Council three times a year in addition to the Scrutiny Annual Report. He thanked the Select Committees' Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Members and Scrutiny Officers. He welcomed feedback from Members.

RESOLVED:

1. That Council reviewed the work summarised in the report providing feedback to Scrutiny Chairs as appropriate.
2. That the Select Committees report to Council three times a year.

26/22 REPORT OF THE CABINET [Item 10]

The Leader presented the report of the Cabinet meetings held on 22 February 2022 and 7 March 2022.

Recommendations on Policy Framework Documents:

There were no reports with recommendations for Council.

Reports for Information/Discussion:

22 February 2022:

- A. Working with the Big Fostering Partnership
- B. Local and Joint Committee Highway Functions
- C. Accelerating the Introduction of Ultra-Low and Zero Emission Vehicles - Approval to Procure 34 Hydrogen Fuel Cell Buses

7 March 2022:

- D. Department for Education Safety Valve Agreement
- E. Quarterly Report on Decisions Taken Under Special Urgency Arrangements: 01 February 2022 – 14 March 2022

RESOLVED:

1. That Council noted that there had been one urgent decision in the last month.
2. That the report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 22 February 2022 and 7 March 2022 be adopted.

27/22 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETINGS [Item 11]

No notification had been received by the deadline from Members wishing to raise a question or make a statement on any matters in the minutes.

[Meeting ended at: 12.54 pm]

Chair

Leader's Statement – County Council, 22 March 2022

Madam Chair, Members, once again we meet in the midst of yet another global crisis, with the despicable attack on Ukraine, dominating the world agenda.

Firstly, our collective thoughts are with the Ukrainian people and their government at this time. Our support and solidarity with them as they fiercely defend their country is unequivocal.

For those Ukrainians who have had their homes and livelihoods destroyed by Putin's senseless and illegitimate violence, we stand ready to help you in every way we possibly can.

Our communities – as ever – have already sprung into action, with donations, messages, and offers of all kinds of support flooding in.

The people of Surrey are generous, welcoming, and passionate about helping those in need – making sure that no one is left behind, and that includes people they may have never met, from countries they may have never visited.

We are here as residents of Surrey, and we are here as Surrey County Council.

Members, I and officers here have held several calls with central government about the routes through which we can help, and we expect to see the first Ukrainians arriving here within days.

We will continue those calls with government colleagues, and partners here in Surrey, including Districts and Boroughs and the voluntary sector, to ensure that the right support can be provided, the right safeguarding in place and the right funding provided to make sure refugees – from all countries – can arrive here safely and sustainably.

Madam Chair, I know you have spoken on this issue in recent days also, expressing your support and that of the Council, and Members I am sure you will echo those sentiments both here today and in your communities.

We have set up dedicated webpages on our website with all the latest information – about government schemes, charitable appeals, how people can help and the support available. We will continue to promote this information to try to ensure those who want to help, can, and those who need help can access it.

As we see those brave people stand up and defend their land, and their belief in democracy so passionately in Ukraine, let us all reflect here that we, as Elected Members, have those fundamental beliefs in common.

I am certain that all of us in this room are here for the right reasons, with a shared passion for fairness, freedom, and a desire to do right by the people we represent.

Let us remember that commonality, which often gets lost in the cut and thrust of political debate in this country.

Madam Chair, away from the brutality and heartbreak of war, this last month has seen some incredibly important developments here in Surrey.

As all Members will no doubt be aware, we finally received the outcome of Ofsted's inspection of our Children's Services – something we had been waiting for, for quite some time.

To put the importance of this report into context – our Children's Services had been deemed inadequate by Ofsted on the last two inspections. We had commissioners appointed and ultimately had not been trusted to deliver that service without government oversight for at least eight years.

For a local authority that is one of the ultimate challenges. And turning around a failing service is not an easy thing to do, or something that can be done with soundbites or simple political will.

But Madam Chair, I am pleased to say that the service has been turned around, with all the might, all the expertise, all the sheer hard work of both the leadership and the staff of this organisation.

And it's been done while facing numerous storms including a 2 year pandemic.

It is official.

Ofsted do now have confidence in our Children's Services, and its leadership.

We are no longer 'inadequate'. We are trusted.

The inspectors noted 'significant change', that our leadership is already implementing a "clear and comprehensive" improvement programme, with a "strong foundation" to strive for excellence.

We have achieved that very difficult first rung on the ladder, and while yes, we do still require further improvement, it is clear that we are on the right path, making progress and picking up speed.

This report will help us accelerate further, especially in the area of recruitment of more permanent staff, breeding further confidence in what we're doing.

I must pay tribute to Rachael Wardell and her team, and to the late Dave Hill before her - for their dedication and expertise in turning that service around. I would very much hope that this Council will recognise the huge amount of progress that has been made right across the board and indeed pay tribute to the fantastic staff that have made this possible. I know that we are not there yet and there is more to do over the coming

months to ensure that the good practice we are seeing is replicated and deeply embedded across all areas of Children's Services.

I know the team will have taken the briefest of deep breaths, before cracking on again - implementing that further improvement, and we look forward to OFSTED capturing that continued progress on their future visits.

Supporting, caring for, and keeping our young people safe is central to our role as a County Council, it is paramount in making sure no one in Surrey is left behind.

I care deeply about that - rooting children and families in our hearts and minds - and I am heartened by the fact that we're in a much better place.

Another huge milestone in terms of the progress this organisation is making was also achieved this month – with our Youth Offending Service rated as Good by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.

Again, this service was rated inadequate just three years ago.

The improvement and transformation is remarkable, and further proof that this Council is well on the way to delivering a brighter future for everyone in Surrey.

Here, I must simply echo HMIP's Chief Inspector:

“To go from an ‘Inadequate’ to ‘Good’ rating, in just a few years, is quite an achievement. Surrey's Youth Offending Service is now an organised and focused service that understands the children under their supervision. They have an impressive range of innovative services for each child, which look to deter them from further offending at the earliest opportunity.

“I commend the staff at Surrey YOS – they have shown a commitment to improvement and a dedication to a once-struggling service. They faced the challenge and have succeeded to become a developed, well-motivated and knowledgeable service.”

Not my words Members, but the words of an independent inspector.

This month has also seen independent auditors produce their report following inspection of our financial management and value for money.

Their detailed report was very positive outlining our ability to ‘maintain an improved financial position’, despite the challenges of COVID-19 and the short-term nature of government funding settlements.

There are no areas of significant weakness identified across financial sustainability, or our improving economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

As with our Children’s Services, and our Youth Offending Service, our financial management has been transformed.

We are seen as an industry leader, with our finance academy model and expertise already guiding other local authorities through financial challenges.

Madam Chair, these official, independent, detailed reports into this Council are evidence of the massive improvement undertaken over the last few years.

And this is just what’s been published in the last few weeks.

Add to this, three years’ worth of balanced budgets, increased satisfaction from residents, an improved report from HMICFRS into our Fire Service- and yes Members, while still filling potholes and repairing roads.

I have said it many times, I have recognised poor practice and areas of failings, but I have also outlined a vision for a brighter future, I've defended our services and our staff from political point scoring.

But here we have it in black and white.

This Council has made huge strides across the board. This is not just talking about what we are going to do – it is absolutely about delivering that improvement.

And we've done it while guiding this county through the biggest challenge it's faced in a generation in the form of Covid-19.

Rest assured however, we're not celebrating, we're not complacent and we're not going to slow down on our efforts to get this Council to where we want it to be.

We're accelerating this improvement even further and we will not let up in our effort to deliver the very best for our residents.

We've got so much more we can do, with detailed plans already in place to deliver.

Madam Chair, you will have noticed being here in Woodhatch, that there is a buzz around the place.

Here we are in our Surrey HQ – another promise delivered I might add – working hard, with more of our staff now able, and more confident to come to into the office after two years of remote working.

We know that this transition into the new normal of proper agile working will take some time to settle, and we will continue to look to improve the practicalities and experience for staff.

But there is no doubting our workforce's enthusiasm and passion for what they do.

We're cracking on in delivering for the people of Surrey.

Our Climate Change Delivery Plan is in place, our budget has identified hundreds of millions of pounds to help deliver it, and work is underway with partners, with schools and residents to make sure we are a net-zero Council by 2030, and a net-zero County by 2050.

More trees are being planted – hundreds handed out to residents at libraries this month – and more electric vehicle charging points are going live all the time.

Investment is secured and committed for electric and hydrogen buses, there has been huge engagement in our local cycling and walking plans, with more cycle routes going in and our roads being made safer for active travel with more traffic enforcement cameras being rolled out.

We will press ahead in tackling the Climate Emergency, I know many Members here are equally passionate in this endeavour, and we will hold ourselves to account as we do it.

We all have a role to play.

Madam Chair, another key area of delivery that is picking up momentum is Your Fund Surrey.

Now into its second year, there are tens of millions of pounds worth of projects logged on the system, with applications underway at various stages, and our excellent project team working through to support them.

This is a Fund designed to harness the positive visions from our communities, to help deliver their ambitions both big and small, to include more residents, to generate conversations and improve wellbeing for every local area and every group in Surrey.

We have had to find the right balance of being prudent and responsible with public money, while stimulating big ideas and making the process as simple as possible within that responsibility.

We're just over one year in, and funding has already been granted to several projects that are going to make a real difference in their communities. However, I do acknowledge that members want to see funding being released for many more schemes and now that we are up and running we will be picking up pace.

I know all members will be looking to support their communities in finding suitable opportunities to make their local area a better place, and having been out to visit some of these projects myself, it is wonderful to see the energy and positivity from communities who are actually making it happen.

Plenty of other projects and improvements are underway too.

With funding approved last year for the River Thames Scheme, detailed design has begun, and public engagement will start in the next couple of months to share the plans for the biggest flood alleviation scheme this county has ever seen.

Huge progress has been made in Farnham on their town centre masterplan working with local partners and the community.

Similar town centre infrastructure improvements are making good progress in Weybridge alongside our NHS partners, with plans to be presented to the public in May.

Spades are in the ground on further modern accommodation for adults and children with complex needs who need tailored support.

More Special Educational Needs places are being provided – on top of the extra already delivered – to make sure children can go to school near to where they live.

Our new highways contract begins in a matter of days, and residents will see even more road improvements – Members, those potholes are being fixed and our roads and being made safer.

Madam Chair, as I've outlined, this Council is making huge progress.

For some years we've talked about transformation, doing things differently and wanting to be the very best we can be for the residents of Surrey.

Over the last few weeks, there is proof that we really are delivering.

We have our eyes wide open – we know we need to continue – but there is no doubt whatsoever that this organisation, our leadership, and our staff, are all heading in the right direction.

We will keep going, we will accelerate, and we will do everything in our power to ensure that no one is left behind. That is our vision, that is our ambition, and that is what we will deliver. Thank you.

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