

MINUTES of the meeting of the **CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING & CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 7 April 2022 at Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Reigate, RH2 8EF.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Wednesday, 1 June 2022.

Elected Members:

- * Ayesha Azad (Vice-Chairman)
- * Liz Bowes (Chairman)
- * Fiona Davidson
- * Jonathan Essex
- * Rachael Lake
- ** Michaela Martin
- * Mark Sugden
- Alison Todd
- ** Liz Townsend
- * Chris Townsend (Vice-Chairman)
- * Jeremy Webster
- * Fiona White

Co-opted Members:

- * Mr Simon Parr, Diocesan Representative for the Catholic Church
- ** Mrs Tanya Quddus, Parent Governor Representative
- Mr Alex Tear, Diocesan Representative for the Anglican Church, Diocese of Guildford

** Remotely attended

9/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Alex Tear, Liz Townsend, Michaela Martin, and Tanya Quddus.

Liz Townsend, Michaela Martin, and Tanya Quddus attended remotely.

10/22 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 18 OCTOBER 2021, 13 DECEMBER 2021 AND 17 JANUARY 2022 [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed.

11/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

None received.

12/22 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

Witnesses:

Rachael Wardell, Executive Director – Children, Families, and Lifelong Learning

Liz Mills, Director – Education and Lifelong Learning

1. Four questions were received from Fiona Davidson.
2. As a supplementary question, the Member sought clarification that the Safety Valve agreement contained requirements from the Department of Education (DfE) that were not just financial.
3. The Executive Director clarified that there were measures that were non-financial, as they would drive financial outcomes and followed the direction of travel of the SEND Transformation Programme. These included measures such as increasing the number of SEND children educated in mainstream schools. The Director added that the agreement focussed on early intervention and support, as well as being in keeping with the council's overall vision to keep children closer to home. This included partnership working with schools to drive them towards inclusive environments. The accountability across education, health and social care would remain.
4. The Member asked about the Education Service's greatest concerns regarding the agreement.
5. The Executive Director acknowledged that there were many ways that the agreement could go wrong, however, the council put themselves in a position to walk away if there were no advantages to the agreement. The financial benefits were carefully calculated and there were benefits to having consistent and rigorous evaluation of the Transformation Programme. An agreement would not have been reached if it was not for the benefit of the children.
6. As a final supplementary question, the Member asked how the Service was planning to incentivise academy schools to increase their intake of SEND children.
7. The Director responded that academy schools and trust leaders had been part of the driving force of the work around inclusion focused on enabling SEND children to thrive alongside their peers. The Director noted that they needed to think about the ways in which they would work together. The Team Around School pilot was a successful example of pooling resources and expertise to make it possible for children to remain in their mainstream setting. The Director explained that the vast majority of children would start their schooling in a mainstream setting;

therefore, it was often about maintaining that environment rather than moving them back into a mainstream environment.

13/22 CARE LEAVERS SERVICE REPORT [Item 5]

Witnesses:

Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children and Families

Rachael Wardell, Executive Director – Children, Families and Lifelong Learning

Siobhan Walsh, Assistant Director – South West Surrey

Key points raised in the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member introduced the item, noting that the Care Leavers Service was subject to close review and scrutiny by the Corporate Parenting Board, in which they focussed on specific areas in greater detail. The Cabinet Member informed the Members that the council was keen to sign up to the Care Leavers Charter and emphasised the importance of the Celebration Fund.
2. The Assistant Director introduced the report, noting that the Service was in a strong position and had received positive feedback from both the Ofsted monitoring visit and the full Ofsted inspection. There was stability in the workforce, with a high number of staff permanently recruited, as well as good skillset of Personal Advisors (PAs). An area of improvement was to ensure that they were consistently responsive to care leavers and to work with PAs to ensure that they understand the complexities of the Service.
3. A Member asked about the changing levels of demand for services over the next few years and how this would be managed, with note to the medium-term financial strategy (MTFS). The Member also asked about the differing needs and funding of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) who often became care leavers. The Assistant Director explained that the Service was well placed in terms of capacity, but there was some work to be done with the 16-year-old cohort. The biggest threat was the impact of international circumstances, as Surrey received high numbers of UASC. There was a dedicated team for this cohort, with a capacity of 100 children. There were currently around 15-16 new arrivals each month, thus, if the predicted arrival rate continued, then this would place a large demand on the Service. The over-18 cohort had increased to 318 asylum experienced care leavers. There were two county-

wide care leaver teams for this cohort, who understood the specific needs of these young people. There were also specialist mental health services in place to support those young people who presented a different type of trauma.

4. The Executive Director added that children who grew up in Surrey were likely to leave the Service prior to becoming a care leaver, however, as UASC arrived without family and usually at an older age, they were likely to be eligible for services until 25 years old. It was expected that the demand would continue to rise. Practices within the Safeguarding Service intended to drive down the number of children who became care leavers, however, this was more difficult during the pandemic. The Executive Director commented that care leavers should be funded by the Home Office, although they were not adequately funded currently. As demand could change quickly, this was closely monitored and factored into financial planning.
5. A Member queried whether the accommodation for asylum experienced care leavers was different to the accommodation of the wider cohort. The Assistant Director explained that the accommodation was, provided based on need and not significantly different to that of the wider cohort. The Service had an extensive offer of supported accommodation available and had recently increased the number of beds available by around 100. The Assistant Director acknowledged that there was a legacy issue of some young people being placed outside of Surrey where there was not sufficient provision in county, however, this position was changing. The Member asked whether the Assistant Director could provide the numbers regarding differences in accommodation following the meeting.
6. Regarding the rising cost of living, the Member asked about the support provided for care leavers. The Assistant Director responded that the Service had access to the Household Support Fund and they had increased payments to care leavers during the pandemic. There was still work to be done to ensure that care leavers received all that they are entitled to. Independence skill training was even more important now to ensure they understand how to budget. The Member also asked how issues highlighted by the Ofsted monitoring visit regarding delayed support payments had been addressed. The Assistant Director explained that she had investigated the issue with colleagues in finance and it had been addressed. The Member enquired about the energy efficiency of the accommodation of care leavers, as well as support for those in accommodation that was more expensive to run. The Assistant Director noted that some providers had started to allocate smart meters to young people but acknowledged that this did not address it entirely. If a young people encountered specific hardships, there was

flexibility with the policy which would be raised with their PA. The Executive Director added that the teams were not resourced nor prioritised to understand the energy ratings of accommodation. They were conscious of the council's Greener Futures plan and it would fit into this in the future.

7. A Member asked when the Service would be in the position to implement the care leavers housing protocol. The Assistant Director explained that they were close to finalising it and it would likely be implemented in the next fortnight.
8. In response to a question on targets for increasing the number of care leavers in county, the Assistant Director explained that ideally, they would want all young people to be in Surrey. The exact targets could be provided following the meeting. They would not want to move a young person who was settled, thus, the focus was now on preventing young people moving outside of Surrey. It was often the case that UASC wanted to be placed in London, partially due to cultural understandings, and work to manage those expectations needed to be done. There were some challenges for PAs as they would not have as thorough understanding of the offers available outside of Surrey. It could make negotiations harder, but outcomes were not necessarily worse.
9. A Member queried whether the council maintained the financial responsibility for a UASC care leaver if they moved out of the county. The Assistant Director clarified that any UASC that had arrived in Surrey and remained in the Service's care for at least 24 hours, became the responsibility of Surrey County Council until they are 21 or 25.
10. A Member asked about the impact of moving young people back into Surrey once they become a care leaver. The Executive Director explained that when any young person becomes a care leaver, the work completed with their PA was individualised. Care leavers had the opportunity to 'stay put' with their foster carers. The Executive Director noted that the transition to adulthood was difficult and there were no pre-determined outcomes.
11. In response to a question on accommodation stability and supported accommodation, the Assistant Director explained that a care leaver was likely to experience at least two changes in accommodation, but the precise data could be provided after the meeting. Around 95-97% of care leavers were placed in suitable accommodation. There needed to be more work on the offer of supported lodging. There had been interest for bids for staying close, as a step-down option from residential accommodation.

12. A Member asked about houses in multiple occupation (HMO). The Assistant Director responded that they had been developing an HMO offer in areas where care leavers lived close to colleges. The Service commissioned floating support to help with tenancy management and had worked with Money Works, a charity that helped with financial literacy and management.
13. A Member noted a number of points which came out of the session with care leavers earlier in the week, such as: a lack of PAs, pathway plans feeling like a tick box exercise, and a lack of training for the transition into adulthood. The Member acknowledged that some care leavers did emphasise the positive relationship they had with their PA. The Assistant Director explained that caseloads were in line with national guidelines and were reasonable. Some PAs could have more young people; however, some would be 16 years old and thus, the level of contact would be much lower. Ofsted had a similar view on caseloads. There was an inconsistency around pathway plans, with some being creative and collaborative, and others not so. The Assistant Director noted that workforce stability was fairly good, the greatest turnover of staff was in the east of the county; however, most PAs were permanent. The Service had resources for preparing for independence, especially for those in residential homes. The Service needed to get the message out to young people about the importance of this work and to start it at a younger age. The UVP team had been working on this, for example, by encouraging care leavers to write letters to their younger self. The Assistant Director added that they were hoping to develop some trainer flats to help with the transition. The Executive Director clarified that the primary worker for a 16-year-old looked after child was still their social worker, rather than their PA. The Cabinet Member added that a lot of positive comments had come out at the pre-meets with looked after children and care leavers for the Corporate Parenting Board meetings, especially on transitions.
14. A Member asked whether a care leaver was able to remain in their foster care home. The Assistant Director explained that the conversation would take place in their review and if both parties wanted it to happen, arrangements could be facilitated. The Member also asked about support for a mainstream young person at risk of becoming homeless. The Executive Director explained that the term 'young person' covered both children and adults. If they were under 18 and presented as homeless, they could become a looked after child or receive help for housing from their District or Borough Council. If they were a young adult, the County Council would not be involved in finding them support, this would come from the District or Borough Council.

15. A Member raised concern regarding a small number of care leavers who lacked suitable accommodation which had been noted in the Ofsted monitoring report. The Executive Director explained that there had been an ongoing dialogue between the Service and District and Borough Councils to address this. Members, especially those who were twin hatters, could help to support this collaboration. Care leavers could now make a housing application for more than one District or Borough. The Assistant Director noted the importance of understanding each other's roles and responsibilities with regards to social care and housing. They were meeting next week with District and Boroughs about the findings from the Ofsted visit. The Assistant Director emphasised that bed and breakfast accommodation should only be exceptionally used and for a short period of time.
16. A Member requested that future reports highlighted both positive areas and those that required improvement to ensure that the Select Committee received a balanced picture. This was noted by the Executive Director.
17. A Member asked what proportion of 16-year-olds had a PA allocated to them and how this compared for those out of county. The Member additionally asked about how issues identified in pathway plans were addressed and the timeliness of reviewing the plans every six months. The Assistant Director explained that the target for pathway plans was that there were in place by 16 years and 3 months and were undertaken predominantly by their social worker months before. It covered all areas of their life including where they were now and preparing for independence. The Service was currently 20% below their target for pathway plans in place by 16 years and 3 months. There were performance clinics to monitor this and supervision with team managers and social workers. Timeliness of reviews were 7% below target. There were pathway surgeries in place to ensure that social workers understood the quality that was expected. There were different expectations of a PA regarding their involvement with a 16-year-old. There was no difference for those placed out of county. Work was needed to ensure that plans were updated when significant changes in a young person's life took place and to ensure when a plan was handed over to a PA from a social worker, that any issues were addressed. The Member asked about recruiting suitable PAs for UASC or those with language barriers. The Assistant Director explained that they had a number of PAs who were fluent in other languages, but they were still largely reliant on interpreting services and tried to enrol UASC care leavers into English language lessons early on.

18. The Cabinet Member encouraged Members to think about any opportunities that they could facilitate for looked after children or care leavers.

Actions:

- i. The Assistant Director – South West to provide the provide the data on the differences in accommodation between asylum experienced care leavers and the wider cohort.
- ii. The Assistant Director – South West to provide the targets for the number of care leavers in county and associated timescales.
- iii. The Assistant Director – South West to provide data on the number of changes of accommodation experienced by care leavers.

Resolved:

1. The Select Committee recommends that the Corporate Parenting Service work with the Council's Greener Futures Team to understand the energy efficiency of current care leavers accommodation and opportunities for its improvement, and seek to place care leavers in energy efficient accommodation wherever possible going forward.
2. The Select Committee agrees to write to
 - a) all district and borough councils in Surrey encouraging them to support the housing needs of care leavers; and
 - b) all County Councillors requesting those who are also members of district or borough councils to encourage those councils to act to support the independent accommodation needs of care leavers.

14/22 PROPOSED CHANGES TO HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY [Item 6]

Witnesses:

Denise Turner Stewart, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Rachael Wardell, Executive Director – Children, Families and Lifelong Learning

Hayley Connor, Director – Commissioning

Key points raised in the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member introduced the report, noting that the service currently cost around £45 million a year and that the council was investing £139 million to increase the number of school spaces in county which would reduce demand on travel assistance services. There were significant challenges to securing transport provision due to market challenges, rising fuel costs and growing inflation, which was a national issue. There had been good engagement during the consultation period from key stakeholders and residents.
2. The Director and Assistant Director presented slides on the consultation responses, which were published as an agenda supplement. There were 694 responses which were largely positive; nine out of the thirteen proposals were supported by a majority of respondents. It was noted that the proposals were for both mainstream children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Assistant Director reminded Members that there had been a complete refresh of the policy in 2020 and this was an update to the existing policy. Only around 10% of those with Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) would qualify for adult social care services, and of those, only around 4-5% would qualify for support from health partners for complex medical health needs. Therefore, there was a significant focus on developing independence and preparing for adulthood.
3. A Member asked about the causes of increased demand. The Director explained that there were national drivers for demand, particularly around SEND. As Surrey was a large rural area with a few areas that were congested and highly populated, it meant that transport arrangements were difficult to negotiate. The rise in fuel and energy prices and shortage of drivers had also created challenges in meeting demand.
4. The Member also asked about the financial impact of the proposed changes, as well as any inherent risks. In terms of efficiencies, the Director explained that it was important to deliver services to children who needed them most, however it was also important to deliver value for money. There had been detailed financial analysis on the savings, although much had changed since the work had started, such as the price of fuel. Calculations were still being made in some detail. The Assistant

Director added that the number of places for independent travel training would increase to 200, and then 400, to help and prepare young people for future employment. It was about shifting resources to approaches which helped to develop independence, where it was appropriate for the young person. The Director explained that the capital investment to increase school places and encourage more children to be educated in Surrey which would positively impact the costs. The Member noted that the number of school children in Surrey would likely decrease in the next few years due to falling birth rates. The Director explained that they were managing the financial impacts and risks carefully and co-production with stakeholders should be maintained. The Executive Director added that they were changing community transport arrangements and introducing a rounded package of measures. There had been consideration since receiving the results from the consultation about how to address the proposals that received a negative response. A risk could be individual human behaviour, because if families did not like the arrangements, they may choose to transport their children themselves. The Cabinet Member added that there were significant investment programmes, such as improving the bus network and making public transport easier to use. The proposed changes had been considered in parallel with these investment programmes.

5. A Member asked whether the proposed changes aligned more greatly with national policy guidance. The Director explained that generally they did align, but they were seeking flexibility to move away from always implementing the guidance. This flexibility was particularly in terms of increasing journey times, when it was considered appropriate for a child. It was important to note that it was guidance and viewed as best practice. The proposals were about internal processes to provide clarity for when to move away from the guidance around journey times.
6. In response to a question on the proposed changes to the Member appeals panel, the Director confirmed that it would be a mixed Member-officer panel. The Member noted that there would be cases where children cannot share transport due to their needs. The Director explained that they would consider those children and their specific circumstances, it was about strengthening definitions around medical support. The Member sought assurance that children would have travel arrangements in place by the first day of term. The Executive Director explained they could not guarantee that but would always endeavour to make sure they did; however, sometimes

arrangements did fail, which could be for reasons out of their control.

7. A Member asked about the cost savings of more school places in Surrey; the risk of bus driver shortages; performance against other councils; whether electric vehicles were a requirement; and an increase of smaller mainstream schools. The Executive Director responded that an increase of smaller mainstream schools was not likely due to the instability of them and the direction of national policy. The focus was on increasing SEND places. The Director explained that the proposed changes were part of a much broader review of how the council provided transport. It was important for children to be able to get to and from school on public transport. The benchmarking process was completed pre-pandemic, however the County Councils Network produced a report which provided information about how Surrey compared to other local authorities and a series of national recommendations. The Assistant Director added that the key issue was scale, as currently a lot of vehicles were required. Greater SEND places within Surrey allowed scale, as a minibus did not cost much more than a taxi but could allow larger groups to travel together. The service was looking to move away from a 100% commissioned service.
8. A Member asked about the process of evaluating needs for home to school transport and families' involvement in this. The Director clarified that there were no plans to change the process from what was currently in place, the proposal was to build in further conversations with the family to ensure that the needs of the child were understood. The Assistant Director added that they were going to produce a parent guide with Family Voice outlining expectations of the service and of families.
9. In response to a question on the assessment of a SEND child's transport needs, the Assistant Director explained that there was an application process, then their eligibility would be assessed and they would be transferred to the transport coordination centre, who would liaise with the school, and there would usually be a narrative in the application from the family as well. If they also had a medical need, there was an arrangement in place with health partners to share information. They would provide advice, and if appropriate, someone medically trained would travel with the child.
10. A Member asked about the percentage of solo transport for SEND children and the expected number of children that would be considered appropriate to share, as well as the associated

savings. The Assistant Director shared that around 70% of solo travellers were SEND children. They had been working with families to understand how to move away from those arrangements. There were currently 650 solo routes. The Cabinet Member added that a primary driver was to make such provision available to those with greatest needs.

11. A Member commented on the proposed change to the Member appeals panel suggesting that it implied that Members were not doing an effective job. The Cabinet Member explained that it was about streamlining service, as currently it was frustrating for families if there were delays due to not enough Members being available. The Member also asked about the proposed changes to the maximum journey time. The Director explained that they planned to create a set of supplementary guidance which made it clear what journey time was considered suitable, with references to ages and stages. Their primary concern was around a child going to the best school for their needs and flexibility in the policy could allow this. The Assistant Director noted that of 2,100 routes, 313 were close to the 45-minute time limit. The proposal was to introduce flexibility, not to move all routes to 75 minutes limit (for secondary aged children). For children accessing a mainstream school, the main issue was to consider the requirement of a 2-to-3-mile walking distance to the school.
12. A Member asked how often arrangements were reviewed and how independent travel training worked. The Assistant Director explained that independent travel training was a one-to-one service, usually lasting a month. An adult would travel with the child from door to door and gradually they would start to shadow the child instead. At the end, there would be an assessment to see whether the child was able to travel independently safely and if so, a bus or train pass would be provided where necessary. The arrangements were not reviewed unless the provider changed, or the family contacted the council about a change.
13. The Chairman asked about the notice period for the removal of travel assistance and why respondents disagreed with the proposal. The Director explained that for some families who move out of a low-income status, a month may not be enough time to work out new travel arrangements for your child. The current arrangement allowed arrangements to continue until the end of the academic year. It was about nuancing the policy. There were also concerns around who would determine what was considered to be a safe walking route. The Executive

Director added that 47% were not in favour, 53% were in favour or neutral. A Member commented that the end of term could be more appropriate.

14. The Chairman enquired about collection points. The Assistant Director explained that they would be the equivalent of a bus stop, however there would be a number of children with SEND for whom collection points would be unsuitable. It was a parental responsibility to get their child to school and collection points would reduce the overall journey time. It would be appropriate for SEND children on a university pathway. There would be further consultation with families on any route where it was planned to introduce a collection point.

15. A Member asked about the numbers of children affected by the proposed maximum journey time of 75 minutes. The Director explained that 541 students travelled on routes that take approximately 45 minutes. At this stage it was not known how many children's travel routes would be redesigned, but feedback from both the consultation and the Select Committee would be accounted.

The meeting adjourned at 1:02pm for a briefing on the Safety Valve agreement, and Simon Parr left the meeting.

The meeting was reconvened meeting at 2:18pm.

16. A Member suggested that there should be at least a greater majority of Members to officers on the Member appeals panel. The Executive Director explained that whilst she agreed with this in principle, it would not achieve the objective with regards to quorum and Member availability.

Action:

- i. That future Select Committee meetings allow for sufficient time for each agenda item and a lunchbreak where appropriate.

Recommendations:

1. The Cabinet Member for Education and Learning ensure the Home to School Travel Assistance Policy reflects the following recommendations before it is referred to Cabinet for agreement:
 - a) The 45-minute maximum intended journey time for primary-aged pupils contained in statutory guidance be maintained and only exceeded in exceptional circumstances, such as journeys which enable a child to attend the setting which best meets their needs or where

it would be impractical or disproportionately expensive for a journey to be shorter than 45-minutes – journeys should always enable children to arrive at school ready for a day of study and be suitable, safe and reasonably stress free.

- b) Collection points be situated in locations which protect the safety and wellbeing of children.
- c) In the case of an appeal against a withdrawal of travel assistance, assistance not be withdrawn until the appeal is complete.
- d) There be no change to the appeals panel membership; and that steps be taken promote member attendance at appeals panel meetings.

- 2. That Cabinet agree the reported changes to the Home to School Travel Assistance Policy subject to the changes recommended in recommendation 1.

15/22 ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PLAN [Item 7]

The Actions and Recommendations Tracker and Forward Work Plan were noted.

16/22 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 8]

The Select Committee noted that its next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 6 July 2022.

Meeting ended at: 2.39 pm

Chairman

Question to Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee – 7 April 2021

1. I understand that the recently announced additional £100m for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) allocated by the Department for Education to Surrey County Council is to address the existing and projected SEND (High Needs Block) deficit. How and when will this money be made available to Surrey? What – if any - conditions are associated with this additional funding?
2. How will Surrey County Council fund any remaining existing and projected deficit over and above this £100m? At what level are the remaining projected deficits per year, over the period of the £100m funding?
3. How will Surrey County Council's safety valve agreement impact (a) the council, (b) the wider education and SEND systems and (c) service users?
4. Are Surrey County Council's safety valve agreement and SEND Transformation Programme consistent with the content of the recently published special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision green paper?

Fiona Davidson

Response

Question 1 Response:

The Department for Education has agreed to make a financial contribution of £100m to address Surrey's existing and projected High Needs Block (HNB) deficit as follows:

Year	The Department agrees to pay to the authority an additional £m of Designated Schools Grant (DSG) by year end
2021-22	£40.5m
2022-23	£12.0m
2023-24	£12.0m
2024-25	£12.0m
2025-26	£12.0m
2026-27	£11.5m

The first payment of £40.5m was received on 31/03/2022 and the condition of this and future Safety Valve payments are that this funding must be put towards reducing the authority's cumulative HNB deficit.

Further Safety Valve payments will be made in installments and subject to continued satisfactory progress along the financial trajectory set out in the Safety

Valve agreement (a combination of estimated growth and cost containment). This financial trajectory will result in the authority reaching a positive in-year balance on its HNB by the end of 2026-27 and in each subsequent year. If SCC does not achieve the financial trajectory then payments will be paused until it is back on track.

The full details including the financial trajectories are included within the [Surrey Safety Valve agreement](#).

Question 2 Response:

There will be a cumulative deficit of £143m at the end of 2026/27, after the £100m DfE funding is received. This will be funded from the council's existing High Needs Block reserve.

The deficits per year are shown in the following table:

	HNB Deficit brought forward £m	In Year Deficit £m	DfE Contribution £m	HNB Deficit c/f £m
2021/22	83.3	35.1	-40.5	77.9
2022/23	77.9	33.2	-12.0	99.2
2023/24	99.2	34.3	-12.0	121.5
2024/25	121.5	31.4	-12.0	140.8
2025/26	140.8	25.5	-12.0	154.4
2026/27	154.4	0.0	-11.5	142.9
Total	83.3	159.5	-100.0	142.9

Question 3 Response:

The expected impact of the safety valve agreement are as follows:

- a) Impact on Surrey County Council: To ensure its accounts are sustainable the council already contributes to a separate reserve (the High Needs Block Reserve outlined in question 2 above) from its general fund equal to the High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit each year. The agreement ensures that there will be no High Needs deficit after 2026/27. This means that the council will not have to contribute to a reserve after 2022/23 (when the reserve will be £143m) which will free up funding for other council services from 2023/24.
- b) Impact on the wider education and SEND systems: To balance in year by 2026/27, transfers from the Schools Block of c£8m (1% of schools annual DSG) are required for five years from 2023/24 and a one-off transfer of

surpluses on other blocks (schools and Early Years) of £15m will take place. The one-off transfer of surplus balances will come from the existing c£19m of balances available and is profiled to take place in 26/27. This will mean that schools as well as the council are invested in reaching a balanced position. This should further improve inclusivity in Surrey's maintained schools.

- c) Impact on service users: Service users will not be directly impacted by the safety valve agreement as decisions will continue to be made on a case by case basis depending on what is most appropriate for the individual child or young person. Service users should continue to be positively impacted by the improvements to provision for children and young people with additional needs that are already underway as part of the Surrey 'SEND' Partnership Strategy – these same strategies and plans also form the basis of the safety valve agreement.

Question 4 Response:

Based on initial reviews of the recently published Green Paper for special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision, the assessment is that this is largely consistent with the strategies and plans already in place in Surrey. Further review is ongoing, and briefings and consultation responses will be developed across the partnership within the 13 week consultation period.

Response prepared by Liz Mills, Director for Education and Lifelong Learning

Liz Bowes, Chairman – Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee

This page is intentionally left blank