

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT
WOODHATCH PLACE, 11 COCKSHOT HILL, REIGATE, SURREY, RH2 8EF,
ON 9 JULY 2024 COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM, THE COUNCIL BEING
CONSTITUTED AS FOLLOWS:**

Saj Hussain (Chair)
Tim Hall (Vice-Chair)

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

*absent

r = Remote Attendance

49/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (including Annex A - Approval of County Councillor Absence) [Item 1]

Apologies for absence were received from John Beckett, Amanda Boote (remote), Stephen Cooksey, Chris Farr (remote), Will Forster, John Furey, Jonathan Hulley, David Lewis (Camberley West), Cameron McIntosh (remote), Rebecca Paul, Chris Townsend.

The Assistant Director - Governance and Democratic Services noted a major incident on the motorway which meant that several Members would be late.

The Chair referred to Annex A - Approval of County Councillor Absence published yesterday in the fourth supplementary agenda.

RESOLVED:

That John Furey may continue to be absent from meetings until October 2024 by reason of ill health. The Council looks forward to welcoming him back in due course.

50/24 MINUTES [Item 2]

The minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 21 May 2024 were submitted, confirmed and signed.

51/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were none.

52/24 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS [Item 4]

The Chair:

- Congratulated Surrey's recipients of His Majesty The King's Birthday Honours 2024. Twenty-one residents across the county were recognised for their significant contribution across a range of services in Surrey and the country; including Tim Oliver, Leader of the Council, and Rachael Wardell, Executive Director for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning at Surrey County Council, who had both been awarded Orders of the British Empire (OBE).
- Congratulated Rebecca Paul and Will Forster, newly elected Members of Parliament for Reigate and Woking respectively, and wished them success.
- Paid homage to those Members who stood in last week's General Election but were unsuccessful, recognised their efforts in putting themselves forward for public service to stand up for the rights of others.
- Asked Members to put former Members in touch with the Chair's Office should they wish to be kept updated of Council news.
- Noted that the rest of his announcements could be found in the agenda.

53/24 LEADER'S STATEMENT [Item 5]

Liz Bowes, Fiona White and Keith Witham arrived at 10.10 am.

Carla Morson arrived at 10.13 am.

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

Members raised the following topics:

- Congratulated the Leader and Executive Director for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning for their OBEs; and to the two Members who had been elected to Parliament, and all those who stood for election.
- Hoped for positive change at Westminster that would address some of the issues the Council was struggling with.
- Noted the failure of the processes for assessing and meeting need for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Noted that schools were struggling to meet that need, early intervention was vital to address the increased demand and complexity of need.
- Highlighted the ageing population and more SEND children transitioning into adulthood, a secure funding system was needed to enable the building of the right accommodation and support attracting the required staff.
- Stressed that strategies were needed to reduce climate change by decreasing the use of fossil fuels by generating more green energy and efficient homes, and by improving resilience to climate change by not building on flood plains.
- Hoped for systems and processes to become more efficient and more effective, removing unnecessary bureaucracy.
- Noted negative changes during the current Council term: removal of Local Committees, verge cutting and on-street parking enforcement brought back in-house, and the restructuring of the highways teams. The Council had become increasingly reactive with issues reported by residents not being resolved.
- Welcomed the additional Educational Psychologists, but correspondence with parents, carers and schools, and the delivery and support for places for children and young people was inadequate.
- Welcomed the significant capital investment programme: building new children's homes, extra care housing for older residents and those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, building more SEN schools and increasing provision in others.
- However, noted that the level of scrutiny was disappointing, the scoping, local Member engagement and project management was poor, leading to ineffective, delayed and costly delivery; called for Members' skills to be utilised.

Angela Goodwin, Julia McShane and Liz Townsend, arrived at 10.24 am.

- Welcomed that there were two more people in Parliament with experience of local government who could highlight the struggles faced.
- Noted that Members must now refocus energy on their remit, a new government would not be able to solve the problems faced for many years quickly, called for working collectively to tackle the challenges.
- Highlighted a case where the Council was instructed to pay compensation to the family of a boy with complex medical needs who lost twenty-seven days of education and special needs provision after his school transport was cancelled.
- Was horrified by the decisions made regarding Home to School Transport, the Council must use its resources efficiently to not disadvantage more children.

John Robini arrived at 10.26 am.

- Noted that the Council had to pay out more than £540,000 of compensation in the last year to families who complained about Children's Services.

- Noted that the Council had worked hard over the last five years to get to a relatively stable position, yet in-year budgets were under pressure and several funding streams were set to end in the next few years affecting valued services.
- Suggested that it was time to update Sir Andrew Dilnot's recommendations concerning Adult Social Care, that required cross-party agreement across all levels of government.
- Welcomed that the new government recognised the need for infrastructure as a precursor to development and hoped that the Council would support that.
- Noted concern that planned future reductions in spending in the commissioning of social care services through partners in the voluntary sector would negatively affect the Council's relationship with those organisations; sufficient support was needed to prevent gaps in the services particularly to vulnerable residents.
- Noted the many major changes in the Corporate Leadership Team and directorships, was pleased that looked like it was coming to an end and looked forward to welcoming and working with the new Chief Executive going forward.
- Highlighted that Sir Keir Starmer is the first UK Prime Minister to come from Surrey on its present boundaries.
- Noted that the long list of challenges that the new government would face was a sorry legacy of fourteen years of Conservative Party and Conservative-Liberal Democrat Parties governments.
- Believed that SEND and education would be at the forefront of the new government, the Labour Party had always been progressive on education and Surrey had supported that agenda around the introduction of comprehensive schools and ensuring a good education reputation; hoped that would continue.
- Stressed that Adult Social Care was a large challenge and more so in Surrey due to its larger ageing population, that increase nationally and in the number of people with age-related illnesses was a challenge; a new and better system of funding for Adult Social Care was needed.
- Regarding devolution, urged caution against a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Noted that it was fortunate that voters in the UK could oust a government at the ballot box and hoped all Members would embrace the forthcoming change.
- Supported the Leader's plans to lobby for increased funding for SEN, to provide sufficient funding to match increased demand for school places and school SEND provision; and to tackle the challenges around social care.
- Called on the Leader to lobby central government on increased overall funding for local government in line with the Local Government White Paper and for devolution to solve national challenges around transport and retrofitting homes.
- Called for the Department for Transport to stop requiring Network Rail to sell off its assets and for the Department for Education to publicly confirm that it would provide the money to refurbish Reigate Priory School on its current site.
- Congratulated Sarah Finch on her successful legal challenge against the Council's planning decision to permit oil drilling at Horse Hill shortly after the Council voted to declare a 'climate emergency'.
- Noted that just as oil wells should consider the climate impact of burning the oil extracted, asked for the Council to support the consideration of the full climate impact of Gatwick Airport Limited's plans for a second runway through increased flights and increased road traffic.

Bernie Muir and George Potter arrived at 10.35 am.

- Highlighted frustration in the Council and other county councils not being given enforcement powers over vehicles blocking pavements and called for the Leader to lobby the new Secretary of State for Transport to address the issue.

- Noted the Leader's dedication to public service, despite some national and local chaos in the Conservative Party.
- Praised the cross-party working on Brightwells Yard and the Farnham Infrastructure Programme to be delivered over the next eighteen months, and thanked the Leader, local Members and colleagues in Waverley Borough Council and Farnham Town Council.
- Looked forward to the Waverley Borough Council Leader's help to progress the Guildford-Waverley Partnership.

54/24 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME [Item 6]

Questions:

Notice of twenty-three questions had been received. The questions and replies were published in the third supplementary agenda on 8 July 2024.

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

(Q1) Joanne Sexton asked whether the message that she was to deliver to residents was that they should be thankful that the Council would meet its climate change target in 2050 by reducing the number of cuts per annum. That expectations were too high for the Council to accommodate and only some of the complaints had merit. That cuts would not be to the same standard as those made by residents to their own garden or as good as Spelthorne Borough Council used to cut the grass verges.

Robert Evans OBE asked whether the Cabinet Member personally met with Ringway which had been given the contract in Spelthorne. If so, what was discussed, what assurance did he seek from them and what assurances were gained.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways noted that previously the borough and district councils helped the Council in cutting the verges which resulted in a better service for residents, the onus was now on the Council alone so there would be fewer cuts. The four cuts per year had been increased to six and further improvements had been made since last year based on the feedback of the task and finish group. The Council had also improved the identification of areas it was responsible for, technology solutions were in place to monitor what was being done. He acknowledged that residents want a high standard of service, which the Council was working towards using the resources it has.

Responding to Robert Evans OBE, he noted that he would check with officers about the discussions with Ringway. He had spoken to the assistant director who noted that Ringway would be an additional resource, providing the Council with flexibility to be able to send in an additional contractor to areas where it was falling behind.

(Q3) Tim Hall asked whether the Cabinet Member would agree with the need to link in other networks and partners going forward. He noted that the Family Centre in North Holmwood must be linked to other communities such as Box Hill and Leatherhead North.

Jonathan Essex asked how the figure of 1,282 families supported in the first course of the contract by the eleven Family Centres compared to the number of families supported when there were 58 Children's Centres across Surrey.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning agreed with the need to have a close community-based network of Early Help across the county, not just in Mole Valley. The Early Help networks help to keep families safe and stop problems escalating. She noted that the Council had worked hard over the last few years to strengthen the Early Help offer to families with children of all ages. The former 58 Children's Centres were focused on families with young children, whereas the eleven Family Centres work with children and young people of all ages. The Family Centres were linked in with the new Intensive Family Support Service and the Council was bringing in its new integrated supporting adolescents team to address the disproportionate number of teenagers entering the social care system. She explained that the Early Help offer was underpinned by a whole network of community connectors who work across the county. She noted that the voluntary sector had an important role to play as not all Early Help services were delivered by the Council. She noted that partners were working together under Families First.

Responding to Jonathan Essex, the Cabinet Member noted that she would try to find the comparable figures, however she reiterated that the former Children's Centres had a smaller range of children and had a different outreach.

(Q4) Helyn Clack welcomed that the interventions put in place were resulting in improvements in timeliness. She asked whether the Cabinet Member could share the information with Members regarding outstanding payments to schools, academies and trusts, to provide assurance and to advise local providers that it was being addressed.

Lance Spencer understood the ambition of getting 100% of the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) completed within the legal 20 weeks but asked whether the 60% target was the right target, as that meant that 40% of children would not get their EHCPs in a timely manner. He noted the improvement compared to last year where only 25% of Annual Reviews were completed in a timely manner and asked whether the target was for 100% completion within the year.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning noted the improvement in the timeliness of the EHC Needs Assessments, the 60% target had been surpassed at around 72%. She hoped that the timeliness increases to as close to 100% as possible. Regarding Annual Reviews, she noted that 75% was inadequate and that needed to be close to 100% particularly for vulnerable children. She noted that an unintended consequence from accelerating many EHCPs over the last few months was a backlog of payments in the system to schools. She noted that the Leader called for all outstanding payments to be cleared by the end of term, she was confident that would be achieved. She noted that the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources had worked with the teams to change the processes to avoid a repeat.

(Q5) Catherine Powell asked whether the Cabinet Member would agree to a meeting to discuss the outcome of the data analysis work expected to be completed next month regarding the update of the Surrey Highway Hierarchy Definition before the recommendations go to Cabinet. Regarding vegetation adjacent to the highway, she asked whether the Cabinet Member could share the primary routes that were automatically being managed so that local Members could identify missing routes, particularly concerning schools. She noted concern that the system was dependent on residents reporting issues other than highway defects and asked whether the Cabinet Member would consider a social media campaign to encourage residents to report such issues. She welcomed that there were self-guided walking routes around the countryside and that work was underway on resources for cycling and asked whether the Cabinet Member was still willing to consider and trial local Members to help create local walking and cycling maps using their own plans and strategies.

Edward Hawkins asked whether the Cabinet Member was aware that he was supporting two local schools on the Feet First: Walking Training programme using the Your Councillor Community Fund, to encourage young children to be able to walk safely on Surrey's roads. He asked whether he was aware of the progress being made on the signalised school crossings, one had been running for at least a year and was popular, the second one was under construction. He noted that the work carried out by the county streets team was popular.

Catherine Baart noted that the emphasis was on taking a proactive approach to vegetation and she asked for the key routes that were being managed proactively.

George Potter noted that he had been trying to help residents with a particular road for two years regarding an overgrown private hedge. He asked whether the Cabinet Member was aware that when residents and Members contact Surrey Highways, often the response was that the overgrown hedge was not fully obstructing the footpath so no action was required. He called for a renewed look at the issue, to ensure the proactive monitoring of hedges and action to ensure that footpaths are maintained at the original width.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth noted that he was happy to have a meeting on the data analysis. He noted that the Surrey Highway Hierarchy Definition would be received by the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee before the Cabinet. He noted that he would provide Members with the key routes that regularly get checked and cleared. He noted a discussion yesterday about a social media campaign reminding residents of reporting such issues.

Responding to Edward Hawkins, the Cabinet Member welcomed the Member's support of the Feet First: Walking Training programme, which along with Bikeability were important in educating young people about how to get to school safely. He noted an imminent announcement that any child on free school meals would get free Feet First: Walking Training programme and Bikeability training.

Responding to George Potter, the Cabinet Member explained that residents would receive a card reminding them to cut their vegetation back to their boundary.

(Q7) Eber Kington asked whether the Cabinet Member would arrange for his office to set up the site meeting, inviting the divisional Member for Epsom Town and Downs, and any county and borough officers and business organisations that he thinks might be able to assist with solutions.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth responded that he was happy to do so.

(Q8) Nick Darby asked the Cabinet Member to confirm that Ringway were not involved directly or indirectly in the assessment. He also asked him to confirm what criteria was used to assess the payment of claims, the response indicated that it was between the Council and Ringway.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources noted that he would seek advice from officers regarding the involvement of Ringway in making the assessment of the claims. He understood that the split between the Council and Ringway related to whether the pothole for example had previously been reported. Regarding the last financial year, he noted that there were 2,640 claims received and of those claimed, 118 were referred to

Ringway and 270 were settled by the Council. The total compensation claimed was £83,638.

(Q9) Robert Evans OBE noted that the issue put the Council in a poor light where a new costly bit of pavement or road is laid and shortly afterwards it is dug up. He acknowledged the need for emergency works and asked the Cabinet Member whether he would agree that the utility companies must do more to find out what new connections were planned.

Robert Hughes noted that emergency utility works did happen and were a nuisance for residents, he noted that in Send there was a sewer collapse and Thames Water did the work quickly and the road was repaired. However, he noted that at the main junction in the middle of Send Barnes Lane and Send Hill, the repairs by Thames Water two years ago left a road with rough terrain. He asked the Cabinet Member to ensure that utility companies repair the roads properly after their works and for him to revisit the road at the main junction of Send Hill and for that to be fixed.

Helyn Clack noted that her residents felt boxed in regarding the A24 diesel spillage and the SGN gas works on the A25. She noted that when such incidents occur, residents' frustration concerned how the Council reacted to that with protecting rural and country roads from large heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) which get stuck stopping residents from leaving their homes. As well as the inability of the contractor to put out notices that such roads are unsuitable for HGVs. She called for the need to support the task and finish group in ensuring that utility companies understand that they cannot divert huge amounts of traffic onto rural roads and must protect those.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth shared the Member's frustration around utility companies and their sweeping powers concerning emergency works. He noted that the Council and County Councils Network continued to lobby central government - encouraged contact with local MPs on the matter - and he noted the utilities task force trying to get the companies to understand the cost to the local economy and to the taxpayer of their works.

Responding to Robert Hughes, he noted that he would pick up the matter with the team about Send Hill. He noted that Surrey Highways had almost doubled the number of inspections it does against utility companies ensuring that roads are repaired like for like; the Council must therefore ensure that the roads are in the best condition.

Responding to Helyn Clack, he noted that the team had been out twice to check all the sign diversions, the issue was out of the Council's control in terms of anyone choosing not to follow the official diversion route. He noted that the Council would ask the companies including SGN, to consider additional signage. He noted that the Council managed to get the businesses open as usual signage up which SGN neglected at the beginning; would continue to look at rural areas across the county.

(Q10) Steven McCormick asked whether the Cabinet Member could provide the action plan along with the date on which the system was planned to be live and confirmation of the date when reports on available Section 106 funds would be provided to all divisional Members.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth noted that he would send the Member the proposed plan in writing. He noted that the Council had over £40 million Section 106 funds that it needed to spend across Surrey, that was being looked at by the teams to deliver other areas such as local highway schemes. He noted that the information would be shared with Members in due course.

(Q11) Mark Sugden referred to the response to question a) and asked whether the Cabinet Member could outline how many queries had been made to the School Admissions Team and how many of those concerned his division.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning noted that she would ask the School Admissions Team whether they could provide that information. She noted that she had received three queries from residents in her division on the matter, which she had referred to the School Admissions Team. Should Members receive such queries from residents, she recommended that they urgently call the School Admissions Team who would provide the necessary advice.

(Q12) Tim Hall noted that the edge of Norbury Park was vulnerable and anything the Cabinet Member could do to encourage the various agencies to coordinate and prevent fly tipping around Salvation Place, Young Street, Leatherhead such as installing CCTV on the road would be appreciated.

The Cabinet Member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure believed that CCTV was likely the solution in that area and would try to get it sorted.

(Q13) Catherine Powell asked the Cabinet Member to advise how many hours in June the HGV enforcement camera was in use on the Upper Hill Road and whether any warning letters were issued.

Robert Evans OBE noted that the issue affected part of his division, he asked if the cameras were to be installed who would monitor those. He asked whether the Cabinet Member accepted that many companies write off the odd £70 fine, as the option of going around a longer way or a different route would be worse or more costly to them.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways noted that he would need to consult with officers before responding in writing to both Members, regarding the deterrent point the levels of fines for example could be looked at.

(Q14) Eber Kington thanked the Cabinet Member for agreeing to the change of policy.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning noted her commitment.

(Q15) Nick Darby understood that having reviewed the list of those consulted, it did not include Members and asked whether that was correct.

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways noted that he would respond in writing.

(Q16) Robert Evans OBE noted that he was pleased that there were only twenty schools that had to close to become a polling station. He asked the Cabinet Member whether those schools must then schedule an extra school day to compensate for closing; he asked whether she would agree that weekend voting would resolve that.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning responded yes regarding weekend voting, she noted that she would find out the answer to whether schools that close need to schedule an extra school day.

(Q18) Mark Sugden noted that given that residents had been complaining about the road since 2009, the Council should have determined whether fine milling was appropriate or not. He noted the response stated that if fine milling was appropriate it

would be added to the provisional programme, yet fine milling was already included on the Horizon list as the provisional programme. He also noted that if fine milling was not appropriate then other options would be considered and a revised timescale for the works would be communicated, yet no original timescale was communicated. He thanked Surrey Highways for their recent visit to undertake asphalt repairs. He noted that the entrance of the road backs onto the A309 Kingston bypass and regarding the upcoming visit by Surrey Highways he asked that advanced notice be given to residents in those roads so they can keep their cars off the road to ensure there would be no safety risks.

Jonathan Essex asked what the best practices were regarding the way in which the basic exercises are undertaken on concrete roads before resurfacing was needed, such as filling a pothole or repairing a failed joint. He noted that it did seem that concrete roads were maintained as well as tarmac roads.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth explained that fine milling was a relatively new treatment, the application of asphalt to concrete did not work and had stopped. He would speak to the team about the road, he noted that the road was structurally sound and so had not been prioritised at present. He noted that if fine milling was not appropriate other options would be considered, the Member and affected residents would be communicated with. He would check what advance notice has been given to those residents before the works and he noted that residents were sent a leaflet asking them to keep their cars parked on their drive if possible and not on the road or where the works would be.

Responding to Jonathan Essex, he noted that concrete roads were structurally sound and required less maintenance than tarmac roads. He noted that many tarmac roads in Surrey - particularly in Waverley and Guildford - had been built on sand which meant they needed to be reconstructed, as those were not built to modern standards.

(Q19) Catherine Powell noted that given one quarter of children in Surrey's Children's Homes were not in school and were receiving Alternative Provision for an average of only nine hours a week costing over £50 per hour on average, she welcomed that those staff were being involved in the development of a flexible model of Alternative Provision. She asked the Cabinet Member to advise when she could share that model.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning noted that following the work undertaken by the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee and recommendations made regarding Alternative Provision, as well as the recommendation in the Ofsted Care Quality Commission inspection report after the SEND system inspection last year; there was a specific recommendation around Alternative Provision around the delivery of Alternative Provision. She noted that the service was working hard having developed the new Dynamic Purchasing System for Alternative Provision, the delivery of that provision was being reviewed. She noted that the CFLLC Select Committee would receive an updated report on the issue in the autumn and expected that the model would be included in that report.

(Q20) Eber Kington noted disappointment that the Cabinet Member saw the Council's role in the recruitment and retention of teachers as limited to developing strategies and providing professional development. He asked whether she would agree that the below responsibilities of Children's Services all impacted how challenging the role of the teacher could be and would likely impact retention and potentially recruitment; and if resolved, many teachers' daily work experience would be improved. He referred to the responsibilities: delays in EHCPs resulted in delays in appropriate support being put in place in schools for children, the lack of specialist provision meant that children were in

schools which cannot meet their needs, those pressures children faced were endured by the teachers and support staff who in some cases are physically attacked by children not in the right setting.

Jonathan Essex noted that the response suggested that the reduction in teachers was due to teachers leaving the profession, yet he asked whether the reduction in teachers was also connected to schools not having the sufficient funding to employ the number of teachers and teaching assistants needed. He asked how the number of teaching assistants compared.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning agreed with the statements made by both Members. She noted feedback from her visits to schools around the financial challenges faced, having to lay off learning and support assistance which puts pressure on frontline teaching staff. Having spoken to school leaders, recruitment and retention of school staff including teaching and support staff was one of the most acute challenges they faced. She recognised the challenges faced by teachers outlined by the Member, predominantly due to children in mainstream schools whose needs had not been correctly met.

Responding to Jonathan Essex, she accepted what he said about the financial challenges making it difficult for schools to be fully staffed. However, she welcomed that the new Government was bringing in 6,500 new teachers, which would improve the situation for maintained schools. She hoped that the Government would be able to review schools' funding, giving them adequate resources to give children and young people the best start in life.

In line with Standing Order 10.12, the time limit of 45 minutes had been reached. Members could ask supplementary questions on Q21 - Q23 via email.

Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member Briefings:

These were also published in the third supplementary agenda on 8 July 2024.

Members made the following comments:

Cabinet Member for Environment: on the recipients of the grants through the Rural Prosperity Fund, **Helyn Clack** asked who those twenty-three rural businesses were, along with the further twelve applications being assessed at a total of £604,000 from the £1.2 million budget.

The Cabinet Member noted that she would provide the information requested.

Deputy Cabinet Member to the Leader of the Council: on Hello Lamp Post, Catherine Powell asked whether the Deputy Cabinet Member could commit to providing a briefing to Members on this.

The Deputy Cabinet Member received a briefing on that last week, it was innovative and he noted that Members could be provided with such a briefing.

Jonathan Essex on the new 2024-2025 Communications Strategy, he referred to the focus areas which would feed into the priorities in the Organisation Strategy 2023 to 2028, the strategy included the priority 'enabling a greener future' yet the focus areas did not mention climate or the environment. He noted that the approach taken was concerning and asked whether the Deputy Cabinet Member would commit to including

climate, environment and Greener Futures as a focus area, so as not to leave it behind.

The Cabinet Member for Environment explained that she had many conversations on the issue with the Member, she stressed the intention of continuing to pursue the climate goals. She noted that the communications work had been shared with the Greener Futures Board, to review over a broader spectrum linking into the Greener Futures behaviour change project; the work was being done collaboratively.

55/24 STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS [Item 7]

Nick Darby (The Dittons) referred to highway markings, mentioning several roads in or around his division which did not appear to be included on the list provided to Members. He noted that the following roads were dangerous, needing urgent attention: Scilly Isles roundabout where the lane markings had disappeared, another roundabout near the Imber Court roundabout where the keep clear marking was missing, by Thames Ditton train station there was a short section where the no entry markings had disappeared and it was also a bus route, at the end of that road the junction of Speer Road and Summer Road the mini roundabout's markings had disappeared and it was also a bus route, and Effingham Road on the boundaries of Long Ditton and Thames Ditton a bus stop where the yellow markings had disappeared. Such issues had been reported many times but had not been resolved.

Buddhi Weerasinghe (Lower Sunbury and Halliford) commended the Lower Sunbury Hedgehog Project launched this year led by the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association (LOSRA) and Friends of Sunbury Park. It was an example of a community driven effort to address the decline in the local hedgehog population. He used his Member's Allocation to support the hedgehog survey and the project aimed to create a hedgehog friendly community by improving their habitats and increasing their numbers. A significant impact could be made through small adjustments in gardens creating hedgehog highways, residents could also record sightings. The project aimed to spread the message through schools, neighbourhood watch groups and local organisations. There was a dedicated Facebook page and resources on the LOSRA website for residents to get involved, he called on Members to support it.

Joanne Sexton (Ashford) noted that parents in her division and Spelthorne with children and young people with SEND were unhappy that the Council had received an honour in His Majesty's The King's Birthday Honours 2024 list. She noted that the Council made the process painful and costly, parents should not have to pay for therapy and legal fees to secure a school place; parents win 97% of their cases highlighting the Council's failure to comply with the law. Even after securing a school place, many parents continued to fight for appropriate transport and to keep their children in school. She noted that over 350 councils in England had fewer than 50 complaints annually, whereas Surrey and Kent had over 150 complaints annually. The Council paid around £500,000 in compensation to the families. She highlighted the tragic deaths of Oscar Nash in 2020 and Jen Bridges in 2023, the Coroner noting the Council's failures in their care. Parents and carers want their voices heard.

56/24 ORIGINAL MOTIONS [Item 8]

None received.

57/24 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 [Item 9]

The Chair of the Select Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs' Group noted that scrutiny had strengthened over the last year. She highlighted the scrutiny activity outlined in paragraph four undertaken by the four select committees, reports were made to the Cabinet and numerous recommendations had been implemented. The select committees actioned the objectives from last year's report through various task and finish groups and Member visits, those provided greater breadth and depth to their work. The select committees worked cross-party to do the best for residents, setting their own agendas and questions. The select committees had strong officer support and the Leader supported the role of scrutiny. The select committees seek to provide early input to the 2025/26 budget and in yesterday's finance training session the Deputy Chief Executive of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) was impressed by that early involvement. A training session on how to run effective task and finish groups was planned.

Paul Follows and Penny Rivers left the meeting at 11.54 am.

The Chairman of the Adults and Health Select Committee, called on Members to support recommendation two. He noted NHS England's decision to move the Primary Treatment Centre for paediatric cancer care from the Royal Marsden Hospital - working with the Institute of Cancer Research and Saint George's Hospital, Tooting - to the Evelina Hospital in central London. The change risks damage to the level of care given, families faced travelling from Surrey into central London with seriously ill children, with significantly higher costs and lesser family accommodation than that proposed by St George's. The Evelina Hospital did not provide serious paediatric cancer care and would still require ambulance transfers between multiple centres. The South West London and Surrey Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee unanimously agreed that the decision was damaging to the health services.

A Member thanked the select committee members for their work, noting particular thanks to the CFLLC Select Committee for its work and analysis to lobby for the increase in the budget envelope of £30 million. Also, for its support to get the community-based play and leisure scheme for children with SEND that lost funding in the 2023/24 budget reinstated; and thanked the Leader and the Cabinet for their support. The Member noted disappointment that despite reassurances that it would be the case, the Cabinet agenda last month reflected that the schemes lost had not been reinstated and funding had been allocated to different parts of those services. Whilst the hours had broadly been reinstated, missed provision would not be gotten back and there was nothing to address waiting lists. Those schemes provided children and young people with a relaxing and safe place, and provided their families and carers with respite. She hoped that the SEND Capital Programme and the roll out of the Foster Carers' Charter would be scrutinised effectively over the coming year, with support from officers in sharing information.

A Member praised yesterday's finance training session with the CfGS and welcomed a repeat of it following the 2025 County Council elections, and noted that budget scrutiny should be built into next year's training programme for Members.

RESOLVED:

1. Noted the summary of scrutiny activity provided and the key areas of impact highlighted in the report (para 10-32).

2. Noted the work of the South West London and Surrey Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (para 25) and endorsed the decision to submit a joint request to the Secretary of State to consider a call-in.
3. Further noted that the Constitution will be updated to take account of changes to Health Scrutiny legislation and updated statutory guidance which removes local authority powers of referral to the Secretary of State replacing them with the current system whereby all interested parties can write to request that the Secretary of State consider calling in a proposal via a call-in request form.
4. Supported the areas of improvement identified by the report (para 33-34).

58/24 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY REVIEW 2024 [Item 10]

The Chairman of the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) noted that he was appointed as chair of the MDSG at the start of the new municipal year, he thanked the former chairman, Mark Nuti for his work. He noted that the MDSG was cross-party and had worked with officers to review and update the Member Development Strategy, to ensure it aligns with the Council's organisational priorities and supports the needs of elected Members for the next two years. The revised strategy included the induction plans for 2025. He noted that feedback from one-to-one meetings between Members with senior officers from Democratic Services was fed into the work to update the strategy, around what approaches work best for Members and upcoming training opportunities they would like. Provision for specific skills identified as being key for Members: IT and Digital, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Member-Officer relationships; and external support for Members had been included. He highlighted the round table meeting with county councils in the South East to discuss their approaches to Member development, their 'Be a Councillor' campaigns and plans for Member inductions following next year's elections; as well as how training feedback was gathered and sharing best practice. He noted that similar challenges were faced and the MDSG would review the ideas discussed.

RESOLVED:

Approved the revised Member Development Strategy and its appendices.

59/24 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION [Item 11]

The Chair noted the proposed changes to Parts 3 and 4 of the Constitution.

RESOLVED:

1. Approved the amendments to Part 3, Section 3, Part 3A of the Constitution as set out in Annex 1 of this report.
2. Approved the amendments to Part 4 of the Constitution as set out in Annex 2 of this report.

60/24 REPORT OF THE CABINET [Item 12]

The Leader presented the report of the Cabinet meeting held on 25 June 2024.

Recommendations on Policy Framework Documents:

- A. Youth Justice Plan

RESOLVED:

Approved the 2024/25 Youth Justice Plan.

B. School Organisation Plan 2024

RESOLVED:

Approved the School Organisation Plan 2024.

Reports for Information/Discussion:

25 June 2024:

- C. Delivering For Surrey Through Strategic Partnerships
- D. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Capital Programmes and Specialist Sufficiency to 2031/32
- E. 2023/24 Outturn Financial Report

- F. Quarterly Report on Decisions Taken Under Special Urgency Arrangements: 14 May 2024 – 2 July 2024

RESOLVED:

1. Noted that there had been no urgent decisions since the last Cabinet report to Council.
2. Adopted the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 25 June 2024.

61/24 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETINGS [Item 13]

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: 12.10 pm]

Chair

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Leader's Statement – County Council, 9 July 2024

Mr Chairman, Members,

No one can deny that we are entering a new phase of political leadership in this country.

One that may be of a different political colour to the administration of this council, but a new government that I congratulate and am hopeful of working constructively with for the benefit of Surrey residents.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to congratulate our successful Surrey County Councillors Rebecca Paul, the newly elected Member of Parliament for Reigate, and Will Forster, the newly elected Member of Parliament for Woking, as well as the other Surrey MPs – some new, some returning - who I am sure will be working hard on behalf of our residents over the coming parliament. It's not surprising that this county has produced a multitude of Ministers, Secretaries of State, Foreign Secretaries and Chancellors, and we now have a local Surrey boy as Prime Minister. What a county!

The new government campaigned on an agenda of change, and I trust that it has entered office with its eyes, and its mind, open.

Open to all of the strong avenues of growth and progress that this country holds – whatever the political make-up.

Surrey is one such place.

We are a county that delivers great benefit to the UK – financially, environmentally, socially – and if it's growth they want to deliver, Surrey is the place the new government should champion.

We will continue to innovate to help tackle the challenges our society faces, and we stand ready to grasp any opportunity to deliver better outcomes for our people.

Mr Chairman, national and global politics, over recent weeks, months and perhaps years, has demonstrated one very clear thing – instability simply does not deliver those better outcomes.

I am proud that in this council, our strategic direction and leadership is strong.

Our progress is demonstrable.

Our vision is clear.

We will continue to improve, continue to ensure we're fit for the future, continue to look up and embrace challenge and opportunity head on.

We will stick to our purpose and our ambition that no one in Surrey deserves to be left behind.

I hope the new government will recognise the strength of counties like Surrey, and not just the metro Mayors, and will work with us to tackle the fundamental challenges local government, local communities, and local people are facing.

Some of those challenges are stark and require engagement from the new government urgently.

I want to touch briefly on those issues that need to be at the top of the in-tray for new government Ministers as they get their feet under the table, issues that I lobbied heavily the previous government on.

Firstly, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

I know we have again seen frustrated and understandably angry parents and carers here at Woodhatch today.

They are angry because the system is not working.

They are angry because they feel injustice at having to fight to give their children the opportunities they feel they deserve.

They are angry because they care about their children's future.

The system doesn't work for children, and it doesn't work for schools or councils either.

While reforms expanding eligibility for Education Health and Care plans were made with the best of intentions some years ago, it has led to a huge increase in unfunded demand – the number of EHCPs has more than doubled nationally since 2015 - with an over reliance on specialist school provision.

The cost to councils has also doubled to over £10bn this year, leading to deficits across the country of over £3bn.

This is clearly not sustainable and is clearly not working.

Mr Chairman, we must see the new government address this challenge immediately.

In Surrey we can be part of the solution.

We have invested a huge amount of money to address legitimate frustrations from Surrey parents and carers.

We have developed a deep understanding of the systemic issues that need to be fixed, and we have established better practices ourselves to go some way to improving experiences.

However, we know this is not enough.

Councils like us cannot fix this alone, and we need government to take this opportunity to fundamentally grip this issue - enabling a more inclusive school system, more SEND support in schools, and more levers for councils to pull to shape provision in our local area.

Mr Chairman, another core issue that needs solving is the charging system for Adult Social Care – the biggest single area of spend for us as a council.

We support reform of the charging system to make it fairer for people in need - without hard working people having to give up their life savings and assets too fund care.

However, both the workforce challenge and cost implications for councils under current proposals, must be resolved properly and realistically.

In its current form, the changes suggested – whilst noble in their aims – are simply not deliverable.

This government must further delay any implementation and take stock.

Any reform in this area must be fully funded, a fairer distribution formula must be established, and it must be piloted through trailblazer councils, with proper support provided.

Again, here in Surrey we want to be part of the solution to this complex issue.

We urge the new government to engage with it, face up to the challenge, and work with councils like us to create a better system for everyone.

A further area of huge, unsustainable spend, is high-cost placements for children in care.

Young people in need of social care – in need of a safe and loving home – are some of the most vulnerable people we have a responsibility for as a council.

It's a responsibility we take with the upmost seriousness.

Being a corporate parent to these young people is in many ways the epitome of public service.

Preventing them being left behind is our guiding mission as an organisation – as an administration, as Councillors, as Officers, as compassionate human beings.

The number of children referred to Children's Services has spiked post-pandemic.

Consequently, more children are in local authority care than ever before, and it is one of the biggest areas of overspend for county councils like us.

It has therefore never been more urgent to ensure Children's Services are financially sustainable and deliver the best possible outcomes that can be achieved for our children.

The new government must keep momentum with the strategy for children's social care set out by the previous administration.

Take it further with appropriate funding, better regulation of the market, so our public duty is not taken advantage of, and a system that enables us to more effectively deliver the services that protect children and give young people the best possible start in life.

Mr Chairman, another area that I sincerely hope the government picks up and keeps progressing is that of devolution.

We have made strides – perhaps not huge strides, but certainly significant ones – in the argument for more power to be devolved from Westminster to local areas.

Local councils and communities know our areas better than central government can.

We know what's needed, what works and what doesn't.

We know our people, what they want, and where the greatest need lies.

We know the specific challenges we must face up to, and the opportunities we are equipped to grasp.

The previous government understood this, and through the Levelling Up White Paper, moved in the right direction with a framework that enabled more effective collaboration between county and district authorities, and ultimately a clearer path to devolving more powers to local areas.

By recognising the importance of whole county geographies as the building blocks for devolution outside our major cities, it celebrated counties like Surrey and embraced our potential to provide growth and opportunity.

I strongly urge the new government to build on this.

Keep moving forward and keep momentum.

Keep expanding the scope of powers for devolution, and the funding levers available.

Use devolution – and use counties like Surrey - to help address local government funding challenges, strategic planning, house building, and boosting growth and opportunity for the whole country.

Mr Chairman, there is no place for naivety or partisan political ideology at this moment in time.

The challenges this country has been through over the last few years – pandemic, war in Europe, global inflation – have been monumental.

On entering office, this new government has inherited an extremely precarious situation with finances stretched and the challenges I've outlined above coming to a head.

Local government is at the coalface.

There are fundamental questions to be addressed about what we should be – and can be – delivering.

Any upcoming Spending Review must provide sustainable, long-term funding and solutions for councils.

Don't rely on short-sighted sticking plasters or burdensome restricted bidding processes.

We can be a huge help to the new government, provided they engage with us, and understand these issues.

Here in Surrey, we are part of the solution.

We are already taking action to be fit for the future.

We are determined and clear in our ambition for the people of Surrey.

And we will not let up in our endeavour – hopefully with the new government as an active and constructive partner. Thank you.