

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT  
WOODHATCH PLACE, 11 COCKSHOT HILL, REIGATE, SURREY, RH2 8EF,  
ON 8 OCTOBER 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
Amanda Boote	Andy MacLeod
Dennis Booth	Ernest Mallett MBE
Harry Boparai	Michaela Martin
Liz Bowes	Jan Mason
Natalie Bramhall	Steven McCormick
Helyn Clack	* 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
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	r 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

#### **62/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]**

Apologies for absence were received from Jordan Beech, Nick Darby, Will Forster, Angela Goodwin, Marisa Heath, Riasat Khan, David Lewis (Camberley West), Scott Lewis, Cameron McIntosh, Penny Rivers, Mark Sugden (remote), Fiona White.

#### **63/24 MINUTES [Item 2]**

The minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 9 July 2024 were submitted, confirmed and signed.

#### **64/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

There were none.

#### **65/24 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS [Item 4]**

The Chair:

- Welcomed the Council's new Chief Executive, Terence Herbert.
- Noted the sad news of the passing of former County Councillor for Farnham South between 2016-21, Wyatt Ramsdale and led Council in a moment of reflection.
- Noted the recent service to remember the fiftieth anniversary of the Guildford pub bombings.
- Noted that his full announcements could be found in the agenda.

#### **66/24 LEADER'S STATEMENT [Item 5]**

*Rebecca Paul arrived at 10.10 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:

- Introduced himself as the new Liberal Democrats' Group Leader and noted that his group would be a constructive opposition offering alternatives, working to tackle external and internal challenges.
- Thanked his predecessor, both a Member and now a Member of Parliament who recognised the challenges faced by the Council and local government.
- Noted that change was needed nationally to enable counties like Surrey to continue to support its residents, his group would lobby for that change and noted the difficult task ahead by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer having inherited significant public sector debt and underfunded public infrastructure.
- Noted that Surrey has the power to influence the lives of over one million people, yet devolved powers without funding was a concern.
- Welcomed the new Chief Executive, new Executive Director - Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships and new Section 151 Officer.
- Had been educated and lived in Surrey for most of his life and from personal experience, noted that adult health and social care, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) management and the Council's treatment of parents, carers and children were highly important.

- Noted his roles as a leader at a town council and borough council governing jointly with other political parties, providing assurance that he would work collaboratively to achieve positive outcomes for residents.
- Noted the desire for the improvement of the working relationship between the Council and the borough and district councils.
- Sought greater resident engagement and understanding of the work of local government which should be close to the communities it serves.
- Stressed the need for robust and viable statutory services to ensure that 'no one is left behind'.
- The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimated that the funding per person from central government to councils was 46% lower in 2024/25 than it was in 2010.
- Noted the vicious cycle requiring a huge effort to break regarding the financial strains, less spending on prevention and early intervention, and increasing demand on statutory services; last year's budget task group called on the Council to intervene early and prevent escalating need.
- Noted that her rejected budget amendment focused on supporting charities providing such services and addressing inequalities, valuing the third sector was critical to the outcome to residents.
- Noted the concerns about the capital budget, cost and focus of the borrowing, and affordability of Your Fund Surrey, had queried whether that should have been targeted on areas of deprivation and to SEND schools.
- Highlighted the silos in the Council, joined up teams were needed concerning Children's Services and Adult Social Care, asked for a review of the request to have complex caseworkers.
- Queried whether Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) was a good use of public money, asked for the better use of community transport systems to be reconsidered providing varied services, reducing carbon emissions and building rural communities.
- Called for the streamlining of directors to be reviewed in the budget.
- Noted the need to learn from mistakes and improve, preventing issues from reoccurring, ensuring long-term solutions.
- Noted that frontline staff know where the inefficiencies are, their views and concerns as well as Members' must be heard; eliminating duplication was vital working with third sector partners and foster carers.
- Noted that despite the planning permission for oil drilling at Horse Hill being quashed, the oil company continued to produce oil there, asked the Leader whether that was unacceptable and was contrary to the climate targets.
- Asked the Leader to request that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Deputy Prime Minister should help Surrey deliver affordable homes on council sites rather than helping developers build on Surrey's countryside.
- Noted that Home to School Travel Assistance and SEND placements were huge concerns, queried why it took over ten days to respond to cases.
- Asked whether the Leader would commit to implementing the task force recommendations now, it was unacceptable that children with autism for example travel hours to get to school without assistance.
- Noted that instead of cutting discretionary funding for Home to School Transport, called for the full quota of school age and post-16 years old SEND places needed, to be delivered within budget.
- Referring to the devolution agreement for Surrey, asked the Leader how he envisaged the Council's compulsory purchase powers for housing and regeneration purposes would be used, using brownfield land and grey belt sites.

- Regarding the Council's powers around the Adult Education Budget to secure appropriate facilities for further education for adults, asked the Leader what he envisaged residents could expect.
- Asked whether the Leader had considered forming economies of scale with neighbours regarding fiscal devolution.
- Welcomed that the Leader would not defend the indefensible regarding the long-running issues and hoped that there would be genuine action on SEND and provision for children on Home to School Transport.
- Noted that whilst there were national issues, there were Surrey dimensions to the problem, highlighted a teenager that missed school having had to involve lawyers to get the Council to produce their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), that EHCP was subsequently reviewed.
- Noted that it was unfair that pupils in Surrey were unable to access facilities in the county that neighbouring counties were sending their children to.
- Noted that families were being forced to fight the Council to get a decision to be made, decisions were made late with too much bureaucracy.
- Noted that a large problem in rural areas was the lack of commercial bus services, thanked the Leader for the roll out of DDRT which had transformed that situation, urged for that service to be publicised more.
- Regarding the ability for local government in England to franchise bus services, asked whether the Leader had discussed the matter with the Government on using those powers to improve access for residents and address duplication.

#### **67/24 APPROVAL OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR ABSENCE [Item 6]**

The Chair introduced the report.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That Councillor David Lewis (Camberley West) may continue to be absent from meetings until February 2025 by reason of ill health. The Council looks forward to welcoming him back in due course.

#### **68/24 SELECT COMMITTEES' REPORT TO COUNCIL [Item 7]**

The Chair of the Select Committee Chair and Vice-Chairs' Group introduced the report. She noted that the group met twice between July and September, at one meeting the Leader and interim Chief Executive provided an overview of the Council's priorities for the year and areas for collaborative working between the Cabinet and the select committees. The group reviewed approaches and prioritising activity to ensure scrutiny's effectiveness. The select committees scrutinised a range of important subjects and the group sought to raise the profile of the scrutiny work.

The Additional Needs and Disabilities: parent/carer experience Task Group Lead, noted that the Task Group heard examples of bad experiences faced but also the difference good administration and high-quality education makes. The Local Government Association (LGA) was advocating for the national change needed to develop a sustainable SEND system. The Task Group focused on the changes and improvements needed in Surrey as set out in the report. Welcomed the extra investment by the Council and work of the End-to-End team but progress was slow, therefore welcomed the Leader's suggestion for a session for all Members. Noted the need to empathise, increase knowledge of neurodiversity and the changing impacts on children, increase co-production, and the need to build in mediation, and

commended the work of the Learners' Single Point of Access (L-SPA). Thanked Task Group members and the Committee's Scrutiny Officer.

The Digital Business and Insights (DB&I): Lessons Learned Task Group Lead, noted his thanks to Democratic Services officers, the independent expert, officers and witnesses, the Cabinet Member and Task Group members. Commended the post-implementation review report on SAP to Unit 4 transition. The goal of the Task Group was to review the DB&I programme and to identify tangible deliverables to be used to make improvements to future programme and project delivery, producing realistic recommendations. The review did not seek to find someone to blame, nor did it find anyone, several factors contributed to the delays and overspend. All involved worked hard to deliver the complex programme, which was operational, yet issues remained which were being addressed by the MySurrey Stabilisation Board. The Internal Audit reports would assist in the process and the select committee would review progress.

Members made the following comments:

- Stressed that the work of the select committees was essential to the Council's good governance. Noted the constructive use of the select committee pre-meetings, yet the reports were received with short notice.
- The Chair of the Resources and Performance Select Committee commended the work of the Task Group on DB&I and Task Group Lead. Noted that the implementation did not go completely wrong, it was a complex system. The report sought to produce a template to follow for future purchases of IT and data systems; the progress of MySurrey would continue to be reviewed.
- The Chair of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture (CFLLC) Select Committee endorsed the findings of the Task Group on parent/carer experience and thanked the Task Group Lead. She noted that progress was slow and the needs were not being addressed comprehensively enough, and asked the directorate to review the quality of communications which had not improved two years later. Noted the need to be considerate of the case workers overwhelmed by their caseload.
- Noted that officers strived to get papers to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning and Regulatory Committee in a timely manner.

The Chair of the Select Committee Chair and Vice-Chairs' Group thanked Members for their comments and thanked the select committees' support officers. She would follow up the comments made around ensuring that reports be delivered in sufficient time for Members to read the reports which were often lengthy.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That Council reviewed the work summarised in this report and provided feedback to Scrutiny Chairs.

#### **69/24 APPOINTMENT OF THE SECTION 151 OFFICER [Item 8]**

The Leader as Chairman of the People, Performance and Development Committee introduced the report. He thanked the Director - People and Change, and her team for running a robust process, he thanked the interim Section 151 Officer for her work particularly around next year's budget. He noted that Andy Brown was experienced in local government having worked at other local authorities and his start date was confirmed as 14 October 2024.

**RESOLVED:**

Appointed Andy Brown as the Section 151 Officer of Surrey County Council, with a start date of 14 October 2024; the interim Section 151 Officer to continue until then.

**70/24 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE [Item 9]**

The Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee introduced the report and noted the key sections included. He noted that the committee was concerned with assuring itself that the Council's policies were being implemented and that appropriate systems were in place to provide adequate controls over the Council resources and assets, stressed that those arrangements were not the committee's responsibility. Summarised the work undertaken by the committee over the year, key areas were: risk management, counter fraud, the Annual Governance Statement, internal audit, deep dives into various service areas, the external audit plan and value for money arrangements, ethical standards and the Members' Code of Conduct. He thanked committee members and officers for their work. The committee operated apolitically which was crucial to its effectiveness.

**RESOLVED:**

Noted the work undertaken by the Audit and Governance Committee during the period May 2023 to May 2024.

**71/24 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION [Item 10]**

The Chair noted the proposed changes to Parts 3, 5 and 6 of the Constitution.

The Chairman of the Surrey Pension Fund Committee noted that the Council was both an employer and the administrative authority of the Surrey Pension Fund. Whilst the Council was the largest employer, it was one of over 300 employers in the fund. He noted that the changes recognised the Council's dual role and potential conflicts of interest, it recognised the statutory role of the Senior LGPS Officer and made officer delegations.

**RESOLVED:**

1. Approved the amendments to Part 3 - Section 2 and Section 3 Parts 3A and 3B and Part 5(02) in relation to improvements to the governance of the Surrey Pension Fund, as set out in Annex 2 of this report.
2. Approved the consequential amendments to Part 3 – Section 2 (the terms of reference of the PPDC) as set out in paragraph 10 of this report.
3. Approved the amendments to Part 6(02) of the Constitution (Arrangements for dealing with Member Conduct) as set out in Annex 3 of this report.

**72/24 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME [Item 11]**

**Questions:**

Notice of forty-three questions had been received. The questions and replies were published in the first supplementary agenda on 7 October 2024 (updated response to Q4 is contained in the second supplementary agenda published on 8 October 2024).

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

**(Q1) Robert Evans OBE** asked whether the Cabinet Member agreed that he should have been more specific in his question as he was referring to Brent Council's trial of placing skips in hotspots to encourage residents to deposit their rubbish rather than fly-tip. He noted the Council's responsibility for collecting fly-tipped items.

The Cabinet Member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure noted that the borough and district councils were the waste collection authorities, and the Council was a waste disposal authority. She noted that Reigate and Banstead Borough Council had previously put skips out in certain areas to collect waste in that way, she noted that twin-hatted Members may wish to follow up the suggestion.

**(Q2) Eber Kington** asked whether the Leader agreed that the suggestion in the last paragraph that Members might need training workshops implied that the problem lay with Member's ignorance rather than the quality of the data they received. He asked whether he would arrange for the performance team to fact check the claims made by Civic Watcher.

The Leader suggested that the Member attends one of the select committee meetings to ask questions there.

**(Q3) Jonathan Essex** noted that the data showed that there was a large increase in the number of Looked After Children and Care Leavers who are accommodated in semi-independent accommodation. However, more 16 and 17 year olds were in that type of accommodation compared to five years ago, he asked whether semi-independent accommodation was the best place for them to live and if not what more could be done. Asked whether Looked After Children and Care Leavers, and their former foster carers could be asked those questions.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning noted that it was difficult to equate those figures to the individual stories of those children. She noted that the service and the relevant teams tried hard in every case to find a home that meets that child's needs, which might be semi-independent living. She noted that some Care Leavers were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children where supported accommodation was the right solution.

**(Q4) Catherine Baart** welcomed the table provided of the twenty-nine schools. She asked which of the remaining twenty schools of the original forty-nine schools awaited their road safety improvements that were identified in 2021, and asked how much clearing the backlog would cost.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth would provide a list of the remaining schools. He noted that £3 million would be used as part of the project, to finish this financial year. Discussions were needed about future years and he was looking at identifying capital funding to continue the scheme. He asked Members to encourage their schools to sign up to the Feet First and Bikeability training, that equipped pupils with the skills to travel to and from school safely.

**(Q5) Andy MacLeod** noted that the problem was typically caused by old houses being built on narrow roads with no off-street parking. The Council had few powers to deal with the matter. He noted that there had been no outcome since the Department for Transport's (DfT) 2020 consultation and asked the Cabinet Member whether he agrees that the DfT should deal with the problem and provide solutions to it, and whether the Council and other councils should lobby them.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth noted that he would write to the DfT asking for the outcome of the consultation. He noted that the Council could in some cases ban pavement parking but that was limited, noted the signage for partially sighted people. Noted that the Member might want to follow up with the borough and district councils, for them to review their parking standards so that pavement parking is considered when new housing is approved.

**(Q6) Catherine Powell** asked the Cabinet Member to confirm that the answer to her question was that minutes of the Multi-Disciplinary Team panels were not made, but the key points from discussions were recorded in a database and were not shared with parents and carers. She asked whether the Cabinet Member believed that recording the key points from discussions but not sharing those with parents and carers was compliant with section 36 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and the General Data Protection Regulation. She noted a poll of 100 parents and carers where more than 90% had not received a rationale regarding decisions being shared. She asked the Cabinet Member to review the response and whether she recognises that an EHC Needs Assessment should be undertaken in accordance with section 36, paragraph eight of the Children and Families Act 2014, that was not the same as the criteria for issuing an EHCP in the Cabinet Member's response.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning noted that her response stated that verbatim minutes were not kept of meetings, the key points were recorded and a decision letter produced which was sent to the parent. She provided assurance that the processes in assessing and issuing EHCPs were compliant with the relevant legislation and SEND Code of Practice. She was unaware of the poll mentioned and noted that the Member could follow up with her on the matter.

**(Q7) Joanne Sexton** had no supplementary question.

**Robert Hughes** noted that several parish councils spent money clearing out gullies which were left full of mud. He asked whether the Cabinet Member could review whether parish councils could be paid for their work undertaken, or for there to be an arrangement where they do that work on behalf of the Council.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth noted that as part of the task and finish group findings, the amount for gully cleaning repairs had increased. An extra £3 million would be injected into the Highways service for the rest of the financial year to tackle all elements of street cleaning within the Council's responsibility. He noted that Members could use their highways revenue allocation to tackle any spot checks not done by the services and they could alert him to issues. He was happy to meet the Member's parish councils to see whether anything could be done, there had been schemes in the past with parish councils, those were costly.

**(Q8) Fiona Davidson** asked the Cabinet Member if she could confirm that the parents and carers of children with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) would be actively involved in the proposed study, regarding their experiences in accessing diagnosis and treatment. She noted that under the current Children's Community Health Contract there was provision for that, but parents reported that the situation differed in reality. She hoped that under the new contract the provisions would be actively enabled and delivered.

**Catherine Powell** noted that a child in her division had been waiting for an FASD assessment for years despite it being confirmed during pregnancy. She asked the Cabinet Member to advise whether the Council or NHS keep records on the number of children in Surrey waiting for assessments and the length of the wait. She asked



her to advise whether the Council keeps records of where FASD was suspected to be a contributing factor to children struggling in mainstream settings.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning thanked the Chair of the CFLLC Select Committee for her persistence on the issue. She noted that the Public Health team and the Children's Commissioning team were scoping out the work, and she would work with the Chair of the select committee to ensure that the work needed to be done is carried out, which she expected would be co-produced with parents and carers. She would join with the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, and Public Health to ensure the issue is raised. Regarding Catherine Powell's question, she would liaise with the Public Health team to find out what information was known and records kept.

**(Q10) Becky Rush** asked who approved the works. She noted that the asset programme manager had emailed her confirming that the Highways service had no plans to resurface the road, the response indicated that it was not a resurface however the road was dug up and the plan was to replace 400 metres. She asked how it was approved and escalated to be carried out as an emergency with no notice. She noted that residents did not believe the road was closed due to fly-tipping. She asked again to be involved in future decisions about the road.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth would follow-up with the Member.

**(Q11) Will Forster** had given apologies so had no supplementary question.

**Lance Spencer** asked the Cabinet Member to confirm that Woking Borough Council had no information on how much Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money had been spent on the projects that the Council had provided a delivery capability for, and that the Council had no information on how much delivery it had done in Woking on the project.

**Rachael Lake BEM** congratulated the Member on becoming a Member of Parliament. She asked Group Leaders to consider that many of the Member questions could have been answered before the Council meeting by email to an officer or Cabinet Member.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth responded to Lance Spencer noting that he did not know the project referred to. He urged twin-hatted Members to encourage Woking Borough Council to accept CIL bids from Surrey County Council, he noted that it would be good to have joint working going forward. He noted that he could discuss the matter with the Member further.

*Eber Kington raised a point of order under SO 10.1 asking the Chair to preserve the right of opposition Members to ask questions and have those answered properly.*

**(Q12) Lance Spencer** asked whether it was correct that the table implied that 32 young people had not been assessed in autumn 2024, and 71 young people were not yet assessed from 2023/24. He noted the bad use of language in the wording used in the reviews that the Council would not provide 'nice to have transport for special educational needs children when they are 16 years old', as parents and children faced a traumatic experience at the appeals panels. He asked whether the Cabinet Member could review the change in the implementation of the impacted policy.

**Jonathan Essex** asked that a review includes information on the distances and numbers of young children that had been affected and where, to understand why they were required to make those journeys by themselves.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning noted the significant budget overspend in-year and more than half of that was from an overspend in the Home to School Travel Assistance budget. She clarified that the Council had no statutory responsibility to provide Home to School Travel Assistance for anyone not of statutory school age, it may provide such assistance at its discretion, depending on their circumstances as assessed and parents could appeal. She noted that the Council must ensure that public money is appropriately spent on those who need the Council's support the most. She noted that she would not review the policy because that was the Council's statutory obligation.

**(Q13) Hazel Watson** noted the 15% reduction in early intervention spend in Surrey and asked the Cabinet Member what steps the Council would take to increase early intervention measures and how would it be measured.

**Lance Spencer** queried that between 2010/11 and 2021/22, the decrease had only been 15% as the report suggested it was 46%. He asked the Cabinet Member to provide more detail on the response as it seemed unrealistic.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning highlighted that the information related to a report detailing expenditure in 2021/22 which would likely relate to the previous year's spending in the previous administration and before she joined the Cabinet. Since then, the administration was focused on spending on early help and on prevention and early intervention. With a significant uplift in the Children's Services budget and over the past year an increase on spending on early help, the early help system was effective with a reduction in child protection plans and the number of Looked After Children; and Ofsted made a positive judgement on it. She noted that the CFLLC Select Committee did a recent deep dive into early intervention and early help spending which showed that the Council spent significantly more in certain areas of early health compared to other councils.

**(Q14) Stephen Cooksey** noted that many Members believed that the franchising system or a municipal bus company might have advantages for the provision of bus services, he queried whether an assessment of those changes would cost millions of pounds. He asked the Cabinet Member whether the Council would undertake a comprehensive review following the publication of the Better Buses Bill.

**Robert King** noted that DDRT excluded many residents in Runnymede and Spelthorne and asked whether there was a plan to expand that into those boroughs.

**Edward Hawkins** asked the Cabinet Member to let Surrey Heath divisional Members know when the roll out of DDRT would happen in the borough in the coming months.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth noted that the feasibility around franchising was being considered. He stressed that the risk currently sat with the bus operators, the risk would sit with the Council if it goes for the full franchise system. He noted that Surrey had a competitive system with twenty-two bus operators compared to less than four elsewhere. He noted that there were some small and medium sized family businesses too which would be unable to compete on a franchise system level. He noted that Surrey Connect was in Surrey Heath, there was a third phase being looked at around the roll out to other areas including

Runnymede and Spelthorne, the focus was on areas without a good public transport network.

**(Q16) Liz Townsend** was disappointed by the response and noted that she had asked for the rationale to be provided to parents and carers and whether the decision to withhold the information reflected statutory requirements or was based on a Surrey policy and practice. She noted that the response did not indicate what information parents and carers should expect to receive in terms of the minutes and the rationale for the decision-making process, as many parents reported that they received nothing; asked why there was a disparity between what the Cabinet Member was saying and what parents reported.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning reiterated her apology to those families who felt the service provided by the Council was inadequate. She was unable to answer the question about why that disparity exists and noted that it was the Council's ambition to work in a more open and relational-based way with parents. That was in line with an objective from the End to End Review to work more closely with parents before decisions go to the panel to ensure a better understanding of the process and the information that would be shared.

**(Q17) Ashley Tilling** noted that it was unacceptable for the situation to continue beyond eighteen months regarding the four cherry trees being cut down by the Council. He noted that officers had concluded that the crossing would not be moved, meaning that there was unspent CIL money available. He asked that the four damaged trees be replaced without further delay.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth said that he would speak to officers and a policy was in place that any removed or damaged trees be replaced.

**(Q18) Penny Rivers** had given apologies so had no supplementary question.

**Lance Spencer** asked the Cabinet Member whether it would be possible to schedule training for Members on the changes to the 20 mph policy and how Members could access funding to pay for the consultation and speed strips.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth noted that Members had training on the matter but that could be re-provided. He encouraged Members to contact their highways engagement officer so they could provide advice on how to use their highways allocation for speed surveys and consultation.

**(Q19) Paul Follows** noted that as the Government would not allow anyone but the local transport authority - the Council - to franchise bus services, he asked whether the Cabinet Member would commit to working with the borough and district councils, and the town and parish councils to provide hyperlocal services. He noted that Godalming Town Council and Waverley Borough Council were both willing to work with the Council and provide funding and support to deliver that.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth encouraged the Member to write to him to discuss any particular routes or areas being missed.

**(Q21) Chris Townsend** asked the Cabinet Member how it was not a change in policy or strategy when the response stated that the five-year strategy was nearing its conclusion. He noted that the organisations had been visited to explain the end of the

tenancy agreements, however he asked why those organisations were not being informed of how the change would work.

**George Potter** noted that the response focused on what was technically permissible rather than addressing the question of what was right or wrong. Whilst the Council did have the permission, he asked whether it was right for a youth centre to be closed without any alternative provision being put in place. He asked whether there were plans to put in place a new five-year strategy once the existing one ends.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning said that she would follow the matter up with Chris Townsend as there were local issues which were not part of a county-wide policy. She noted that it was a Land and Property issue concerning the management of a building and not about service delivery.

**(Q22) Robert Evans OBE** asked whether the Cabinet Member would agree that it would not look good to residents if grass cutting happens after street sweeping.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth noted that the Council shared information about its schedules with the borough and district councils regarding grass cutting and drain cleaning. Ideally, grass cutting would be followed by street sweeping and then gully cleaning. He noted that the Council was open to working more closely with the borough and district councils on the coordination.

In line with Standing Order 10.12, the time limit of 45 minutes had been reached. Members could ask supplementary questions on Q23 - Q43 via email.

#### **Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member Briefings:**

These were also published in the first supplementary agenda on 7 October 2024.

Members made the following comments:

**Cabinet Member for Property, Waste and Infrastructure:** on Reigate Priory School, **Catherine Baart** noted that ISG went into administration and as the application was joint with the Council she asked what the implications were for the proposal to relocate the school.

The Cabinet Member noted that she would follow-up with the Member on the application.

**Jonathan Essex** on the new location for the temporary library in Redhill, he understood that the temporary library would be needed until mid-next year, but its current location Consort House would have a new lease from the end of the month. He asked if the Cabinet Member could confirm whether the library would remain in Consort House with the new lease owners, or whether there would be a move to somewhere else and where. He hoped that the service would continue to be provided seamlessly to the new location.

The Cabinet Member noted that the library was a priority to get delivered, it would move from Consort House and would be in the centre of Redhill. The new tenant would take over Consort House once the new library building is finished with upgrades and Super Access - a service in Surrey Libraries providing extended opening hours.

**Deputy Cabinet Member for Strategic Highways:** provided an update on the work of the Street Works Taskforce, which last met in late September and a key outcome of that meeting was that the fourteen utility providers and Council representatives agreed to talk to the Greater London Authority (GLA) about a new online tool mapping service. That mapping service would be useful to residents, utility providers and critical to the Council. He thanked the Assistant Director - Highways – Network and Asset Management for her work in chairing the taskforce.

**Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning:** on Independent School fees, **Rebecca Paul** noted that the new Labour government had decided to put a 20% VAT on those fees which was a concern, particularly as it was happening mid-year in January 2025. She asked whether the Council had assessed the impact of the potential influx of students into the state system and for Members to receive an update on a divisional basis.

The Cabinet Member noted that the secondary school admissions window was open and the team were monitoring the additional number of admissions to secondary schools, and it would do the same for primary schools. She noted that between June and September the School Admissions team received 161 in-year admissions, the team was working to assess that in partnership with Independent School providers across Surrey. She noted that information could be provided to Members but she was unsure whether that could be done on a divisional basis.

**Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth:** on highways communications, **Eber Kington** noted that the Cabinet Member had been advised that the painting of the yellow line parking restriction was prioritised and consequently was completed in early October. However, he noted that the yellow line had not been painted and he asked the Cabinet Member where he got that information and to confirm the new expected completion date.

The Cabinet Member would speak to the team and provide the revised date.

**George Potter** on highways communications, was surprised that the Cabinet Member replied to his local Facebook group on drain clearances. He was also surprised to see an announcement that drains should be funded out of the divisional maintenance budget. Asked whether the Cabinet Member felt that £7,500 per member, per year was sufficient to clear all the drains across Surrey.

The Cabinet Member noted that he was not happy with the service's response to residents regarding the case referenced and so responded directly, he had spoken to the team and revised communications would be circulated to residents. He noted that the amount to clear gullies and tackle the backlog of defects had increased by £5 million. He noted that the use of local allocation would ensure a quick response, with teams funded through the task and finish groups to undertake the extra work.

**Robert King** on the Integrated Transport Schemes (ITS) award, asked whether the Cabinet Member would communicate the recent changes on the ITS award to include a lack of duplicates and a year's bidding round on divisions. He noted that his ITS had been vetoed despite it scoring the highest in the independent panel's discussion for a neighbouring ward and he was not informed on why that happened.

The Cabinet Member apologised that the change was not communicated to the Member, he noted that he was trying to be fair as the Member was successful in the ITS programme last year. He noted that the criteria would be changing for the ITS to vary the schemes as there were many pedestrian crossings being prioritised, other

schemes missed out. He noted that rural areas were struggling to submit their ITS bids and missed out on the scoring because often those areas did not connect up to pavements or cycleways. He noted that Members should have received a response from the Highways team alerting them as to whether they had been successful or not with their technical assessment. Once the future scoring criteria for the ITS programme is agreed, the recommendations would be taken to the select committee.

**Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways:** on the weed spray programme, **Ashley Tilling** noted that some streets in Elmbridge had yet to be sprayed. He asked whether there was an issue with the poor timeliness of placing contracts for weed spraying and asked whether the contracting process was under review to prevent future delays. Given the Council's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, he asked whether the use of non-glyphosate weed killers could be explored such as Foamstream.

The Deputy Cabinet Member acknowledged the issue in Elmbridge, noting that the contractor made a later start and had been affected by the wet weather so the weed spraying was unfinished. The programme was under review to see whether the timeliness could be improved for next year, potentially adding a second spray. He noted that the alternative options to glyphosate were more expensive.

**Mark Sugden** on a potential second weed spraying, asked who would decide that, how would it be funded and what was the process to make that happen.

The Deputy Cabinet Member noted that it was being reviewed by the Cabinet, further discussions were needed and further information would be provided in due course.

**John O'Reilly** on the weed spray programme, sought assurance that the weed spraying in Elmbridge would happen this year and would not be delayed until 2025.

The Deputy Cabinet Member confirmed that the weed spray would happen, it had been left late in the year to undertake and despite the wet weather it was worth doing. He noted that there were some streets in Elmbridge where the weeds were out of control and needed to be addressed as quickly as possible.

## **73/24 STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS [Item 12]**

Chris Townsend noted that Ashted Youth Centre was run and managed well by the Friends of Ashted Youth Club charity. There was a youth club, and other organisations and charities used the centre and the money from them helped maintain it. However, the buildings housing such youth centres across Surrey were being taken back by the Council's Land and Property team. When the communication was given by the relevant Council staff they did not know how it would happen and that caused concern to those running the service and the users of youth centres. There was no consultation with those organisations. He noted that the Leader agreed to put a halt to the situation to find out what centres were open and what the centres were doing.

Catherine Powell provided examples of one week's emails on SEND in her division, in one case an autistic child in a mainstream secondary school attended without an EHCP and no to assess was upheld, she queried whether anyone reviewed the information from the school. In another case a child with autism spectrum disorder hyperactivity in a mainstream primary school had an EHCP which identified specialist provisions, had been suspended and consultation with three specialist schools had been unsuccessful. In another case there was a tribunal concerning a child in nursery

and the EHCP for specialist provision was accepted but the matter remained with the tribunal team and the child would miss the first term of school. She noted that there were many other cases and called for all to work together to break down the silos.

Joanne Sexton shared a message from a resident about the vital role of Ashford Youth Club. Post-Covid-19 it had been a lifeline opening during the day, offering a safe space for anxious families and helping children thrive. There was a community garden, and free youth programmes funded from renting the building. The resident was concerned about the club's future and uncertainty whether families would have to pay for activities, they felt left out of the decision-making process. The youth club's hours would be limited as it was told that adolescent services needed the building, some financial support would be provided to cover the loss. She understood that the current arrangement set out in the youth work strategy had changed and asked how the future of such essential programmes would be safeguarded.

*Nick Harrison and Victor Lewanski left the meeting at 12.35 pm.*

## **74/24 ORIGINAL MOTIONS [Item 13]**

### **Item 13 (i)**

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

Under Standing Order 20.3 (a) Steven McCormick moved an updated proposed alteration to the original motion standing in his own name, which had been published in the second supplementary agenda on 8 October 2024.

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

#### **This Council notes that:**

Home delivery via motorcycles and pedal cycles from takeaway outlets is becoming increasing popular. It responds to customer demand, adds to the local economy and provides employment opportunities for delivery drivers. However, like some other changes of shopping behaviour and consumer preferences, it can also raise unexpected, and sometimes unwanted consequences.

~~Currently, in too many areas of Surrey, high streets and shopping centres are facing a need for parking spaces by delivery drivers and, too often, that is leading to inconsiderate, dangerous and illegal parking on the pavement to the detriment and safety of pedestrians and shoppers and, currently, there is no agreed response from SCC.~~

**Surrey County Council should be consulted on applications for outlets by the district planning authorities. In the case of purpose built sites Transport Development Planning have ensured that there is sufficient space for delivery drivers and are additionally mindful of the need to build in provision for mopeds and motorcycles on applications the Surrey County Council is consulted on.**

**In some areas of Surrey, high streets and shopping centres are facing a need for parking spaces by delivery drivers and, too often, that is leading to inconsiderate parking on and illegal driving over the pavement to the detriment and safety of pedestrians and shoppers.**

In light of the factors listed above, and with reference to the [Transportation Development Planning Good Practice Guide](#) this Council calls upon the Cabinet to commit to:

- I. ~~Create a new piece of 'Standing Advice' for local planning authorities to consider, that new retail developments, and changes of use, factor in the requirements for motorcycle delivery parking.~~
- II. ~~Write to central government to request a consultation on a nationwide scheme whereby delivery companies will suspend riders for a period of time on receipt of photographic evidence, from Highways or the Police, if one of their riders access or park on the pavement or in contravention of the law.~~
- III.
  - I. Write to delivery companies (Uber Eats, Deliveroo, Just Eat, etc.) to highlight the issue of motorcycle delivery parking **on pavements and issues caused by riding on and across pavements.** and ~~to~~ request that they introduce a policy whereby delivery companies will suspend riders for a period of time on receipt of photographic evidence, from Highways or the Police, if one of their riders access or park on the pavement or in contravention of the law. **information from these companies on the training and guidance given to their riders and for them to provide information on their policies for dealing with evidenced poor rider behaviour involving the highway or pavement.**
- IV. ~~Create a new piece of 'Standing Advice' for input into Local and Neighbourhood Plans, requiring sites with takeaway outlets to have designated parking areas close to the high street where motorcycles can be left securely.~~
  - II. **To request a round table meeting with all delivery companies and Surrey Police to discuss best practice guidelines for delivery riders in Surrey.**
- V. ~~Work with take-away outlets, local landowners and borough and district councils across Surrey to identify sites for designated parking areas close to the high street where motorcycles can be left secure.~~
- VI.
  - III. Work more closely with partners, the **with Surrey Police, as the enforcement authority,** and borough and district councils, to enforce more effectively the current parking restrictions, and to identify measures to discourage all motorised vehicles accessing the footway. **to tackle key areas where this issue occurs and educate the drivers on their driving behaviour where appropriate.**

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

Steven McCormick made the following points:

- Noted that the issue related to moped delivery riders riding on and parking on the pavement outside fast-food outlets on Epsom High Street.
- Noted that Members and borough councillors had correspondence from concerned and impacted residents and business owners.



- Noted a plea from the manager at Swale House, Epsom that mopeds and bikes on the pavement were an obstacle course for the blind and partially sighted.
- Noted a recent interview by BBC Surrey on the problem, for one week there were no bikes on the pavement following the interviewer reaching out to the delivery companies.
- Noted that the solutions concerned several agencies, delivery companies and the restaurants and fast-food outlets could speak to the delivery riders.
- Noted that the Council, and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, and Surrey Police could enforce certain aspects; however that parking enforcement only temporarily resolved the issue.
- Noted a recent multi-agency meeting at Epsom with some of those stakeholders, action points were agreed. Thanked the Council's officers for their work and the contributions by the Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways.
- Noted that the motion highlighted the issue and suggested proactive steps to take forward, working in partnership with stakeholders and agencies.

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

- Thanked the Member for making the updated alteration, which would allow the Council to work with the other agencies, particularly Surrey Police which has the enforcement powers for parking on and driving over pavements.
- Noted that the issue was both county and country wide.
- Noted the need to use the authority's influence to engage with the companies as they were responsible for their employees and their actions.

Ten Members made the following comments:

- Noted that the issue affected many of Surrey's communities, had spoken to disabled and partially sighted individuals who struggled to navigate the town centre because of the obstruction created.
- Noted the alarming headlines in Dartford with nuisance food delivery drivers putting lives at risk.
- Noted that Ealing Council took a multi-agency approach, it ran roadshows and events speaking to the riders to educate them and to look at their safeguarding around unlicensed vehicles and human trafficking.
- Hoped that the Trading Standards team could assist, the solution would be more achievable by tackling it collectively.
- Noted that the issue was more impactful in some areas in Surrey and thanked the proposer for agreeing to the changes to ensure that enforcement sits in the right place.
- Noted that the issue was extremely dangerous with drivers riding on footpaths and down alleyways.
- Noted that it was vital to work with the employers to resolve the issue, as where the police intervened, they found that many drivers were uninsured and unlicensed, with multiple people using the same bike at different times.
- Noted that training and behaviour change were important, but so too was providing the different infrastructure and locations to encourage delivery drivers to pick up from.
- Suggested the need to call on the Government to require food delivery apps to prioritise awarding food collection to drivers that sit in designated areas.
- Noted that delivery vans were also problematic blocking pavements in rural areas forcing children to walk into the road.

- Noted the need to address the issue relating to the new Brightwells Yard shopping centre in Farnham, there were cars pulling up onto pavements outside companies and there would be more to come.
- Noted the worsening of the problem in Guildford town centre even in those areas where there were enforcement powers such as disabled parking bays and waiting restrictions, since the centralisation of on-street parking enforcement there were no enforcement officers to be seen.
- Noted the need to resource parking enforcement and enforce restrictions, asked the Cabinet to consider introducing a byelaw to prohibit pavement parking, to enable enforcement officers to fine motorists.
- Noted the issue in Walton-on-Thames, Churchfield Road off the High Street where delivery drivers park in the designated area, but there was a large overhang of motorbike boxes over the narrow pavement and road, and neither rails or bollards could be put in place.
- Noted anger in the large amount of delivery vans parking on pavements and displaying a disabled badge.
- Noted that home delivery was beneficial for the local economy, employment and consumer choice.
- Noted that on Epsom High Street, there were more motorcycle delivery riders driving on the pavement which meant it was residents' most common concern in June; raised the issue with the Highways team but the responses listed the reasons why nothing effective could be done.
- Noted that a meeting with affected parties had not been set up by the Cabinet Member, despite being agreed in response to a Member question at the last Council meeting.
- Noted that a fellow Member set up a meeting in September to find solutions, attended by Council, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, and business representatives, and residents, it was positive with actions agreed and those solutions were incorporated into the motion.
- Noted that the removal of resolutions which seemed like hard work for the Council such as resolution V was disappointing.
- Noted that the Residents' Association and Independents Group had forced the Council to take the issue seriously, having come up with the local partnerships and links that the Council could work with and solutions.

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

- Acknowledged that the problem was county-wide and noted that the motion was the starting point.
- Noted the comments around safeguarding which was a concern and would be considered, as would the suggestion for having different locations for motorcycle pickup.
- Noted that enforcement officers were available and the bikes disappeared when they turned up.
- Welcomed Members' support and stressed the need to work collaboratively with all Members, to try and achieve a positive outcome for residents.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

Therefore, it was **RESOLVED** that:

**This Council notes that:**

Home delivery via motorcycles and pedal cycles from takeaway outlets is becoming increasingly popular. It responds to customer demand, adds to the local economy and provides employment opportunities for delivery drivers. However, like some other changes of shopping behaviour and consumer preferences, it can also raise unexpected, and sometimes unwanted consequences.

Surrey County Council should be consulted on applications for outlets by the district planning authorities. In the case of purpose built sites Transport Development Planning have ensured that there is sufficient space for delivery drivers and are additionally mindful of the need to build in provision for mopeds and motorcycles on applications the Surrey County Council is consulted on.

In some areas of Surrey, high streets and shopping centres are facing a need for parking spaces by delivery drivers and, too often, that is leading to inconsiderate parking on and illegal driving over the pavement to the detriment and safety of pedestrians and shoppers.

**In light of the factors listed above, this Council calls upon the Cabinet to commit to:**

- I. Write to delivery companies (Uber Eats, Deliveroo, Just Eat, etc.) to highlight the issue of motorcycle delivery parking on pavements and issues caused by riding on and across pavements. To request information from these companies on the training and guidance given to their riders and for them to provide information on their policies for dealing with evidenced poor rider behaviour involving the highway or pavement.
- II. To request a round table meeting with all delivery companies and Surrey Police to discuss best practice guidelines for delivery riders in Surrey.
- III. Work with Surrey Police, as the enforcement authority, to tackle key areas where this issue occurs and educate the drivers on their driving behaviour where appropriate.

### **Item 13 (ii)**

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

Under Standing Order 12.1 Mark Nuti moved:

#### **This Council notes:**

- Council's commitment in its Organisation Strategy and through the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy to reducing health inequalities, particularly in key neighbourhoods and amongst vulnerable groups.
- The significant impact of the cost of living on health inequalities in Surrey; 8.3% of households are in fuel poverty and 8.5% of children aged 0-19 years live in households experiencing relative poverty.
- The Government's pre-election commitment to adopting Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 in England that will require all public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in socio-economic status.

- Good Company (Surrey) - a charity with a mission to see communities 'free of poverty, where everyone can afford life's essentials'; they co-ordinate local food banks, the Poverty Truth Commission and currently work with pupils on free school meals to understand their needs.
- The signing of Good Company's End Poverty Pledge by the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board in July 2024, also adopted by Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership at a first combined meeting in September 2024 and Board/Partnership's commitment to enacting the pledge, including support for Board/Partnership members' organisations to also sign in their own right.

**This Council believes that:**

- Socio-economic disadvantage and financial hardship are barriers to reducing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing in Surrey.
- In the delivery of all our services, we need to consider those in or at risk of poverty.
- Working with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, such as Good Company, that work with those with lived experience of financial hardship is important in ensuring service responses are led by our communities.
- Signing the Good Company's End Poverty Pledge demonstrates that this Council leads from the front in the Surrey system to reduce health inequalities so no-one is left behind.

**This Council resolves to:**

- I. Request the Leader of the Council sign Good Company's End Poverty Pledge on behalf of the Council.
- II. Request that the Leader of the Council subsequently instructs officers to develop an SCC poverty action plan (to include proposed actions such as the adoption of section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 which builds in addressing the inequalities that result from differences in socio-economic status and becoming an anchor institution) for mitigating and preventing poverty amongst Surrey residents.

Mark Nuti made the following points:

- Thanked the Principal Lead - Health and Wellbeing, who was instrumental in introducing the Good Company to the Council and producing the motion.
- Noted that the word poverty was harsh and it was complex, traps people in a cycle and isolates them; it means many things to people such as financial hardship, homelessness, lack of education, and unemployment.
- Urged the Council to take the End Poverty Pledge, to continue the work to mitigate and prevent poverty and inequalities.
- Urged Members to support the pledge personally, to consider how they could make a difference.
- Noted that the Good Company believed that collaboration was the key to preventing people from falling into poverty and supporting people to move out of poverty.
- Noted that winter was a difficult time for many families, especially the elderly, particularly considering the Government's withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Payment, and increase in the energy price cap.

- Noted that as part of Surrey's Fuel Poverty Programme, the Council won a grant of nearly £1 million from the Southern Gas Network to support vulnerable residents.
- Noted that last year, 570,000 households were helped with winter resilience planning. Last winter, around 46,000 residents accessed one of the 43 warm hubs across Surrey.
- Noted that the Surrey Crisis Fund provided support to over 2,000 residents every year and over 86,000 households received support from the Household Support Fund last year.
- Thanked the voluntary and charitable sector for the work done in communities.
- Noted that all could help by being CLEAR: Communication, Listening, Empathy, Agency, Respect; no one wants to live in poverty.
- Noted that poverty was a catalyst that often leads to mental and physical ill health, urged all to sign the pledge to make sure 'no one is left behind'.

The motion was formally seconded by Bernie Muir, who made the following comments:

- Noted that poverty is a reality in Surrey, for example Court ward in Epsom.
- Had signed the pledge as Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Highlighted the actions from the Health and Wellbeing Board, and Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership September 2024 report on the pledge, concerning the key areas: Leadership, Culture, Accountability.
- Noted that the Good Company's Epsom Advice Café and the Epsom Pantry, made a real difference.
- Provided a summary of Ben's story, he had worked since he was twelve years old and was out of work due to ill health, and noted the difficulty of seeking help and the fear of not being able to feed his family was terrifying.
- Noted that recent crises had increased the number of people and families in trouble.
- Emphasised that collaborative working with all stakeholders was vital to create effective solutions.

Lance Spencer moved an amendment which had been published in the first supplementary agenda on 7 October 2024, which was formally seconded by Hazel Watson.

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

**This Council notes:**

- Council's commitment in its Organisation Strategy and through the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy to reducing health inequalities, particularly in key neighbourhoods and amongst vulnerable groups.
- The significant impact of the cost of living on health inequalities in Surrey; 8.3% of households are in fuel poverty and 8.5% of children aged 0-19 years live in households experiencing relative poverty.
- The Government's pre-election commitment to adopting Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 in England that will require all public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in socio-economic status.

- Good Company (Surrey) - a charity with a mission to see communities 'free of poverty, where everyone can afford life's essentials'; they co-ordinate local food banks, the Poverty Truth Commission and currently work with pupils on free school meals to understand their needs.
- The signing of Good Company's End Poverty Pledge by the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board in July 2024, also adopted by Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership at a first combined meeting in September 2024 and Board/Partnership's commitment to enacting the pledge, including support for Board/Partnership members' organisations to also sign in their own right.

**This Council believes that:**

- Socio-economic disadvantage and financial hardship are barriers to reducing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing in Surrey.
- In the delivery of all our services, we need to consider those in or at risk of poverty.
- Working with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, such as Good Company, that work with those with lived experience of financial hardship is important in ensuring service responses are led by our communities.
- Signing the Good Company's End Poverty Pledge demonstrates that this Council leads from the front in the Surrey system to reduce health inequalities so no-one is left behind.

**This Council resolves to:**

- I. Request the Leader of the Council sign Good Company's End Poverty Pledge on behalf of the Council.
- II. Request that the Leader of the Council subsequently instructs officers to develop an SCC poverty action plan (to include proposed actions such as the adoption of section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 which builds in addressing the inequalities that result from differences in socio-economic status and becoming an anchor institution) for mitigating and preventing poverty amongst Surrey residents.
- III. **Request that the Cabinet review any changes proposed for the budgets for 2025/26 to ensure there is no reduction in funding to organisations that Surrey County Council works with to mitigate and prevent poverty in Surrey.**

Lance Spencer spoke to his amendment, making the following points:

- Supported the motion and had received good feedback about the Good Company, which was one of many organisations supporting those most in need across Surrey.
- Read out what Microsoft Copilot said that the Council could do to reduce poverty in Surrey, noting that whilst Surrey was wealthy it had pockets of deprivation and the Council must further act to support those residents. The initiatives underway were noted, but a more sustained and comprehensive approach was needed considering the rising cost of living.
- Targeted financial support and co-production was vital, the Council must expand its funding to community-based projects that address immediate needs and enhance its collaboration with local charities and community

organisations. A more inclusive and supportive environment could be built through empowering communities and encouraging local initiatives.

- Noted that as of February 2024, over 26,000 households in Surrey were on Universal Credit, that was a nearly 10% increase from last year. The number of single parent households on Universal Credit had risen by nearly one third over the last two years, the number of households on Universal Credit with children and adult couples had risen by 10%.
- In the 2023/24 school year there were over 22,000 pupils in state-funded Surrey schools that were eligible for free school meals, the percentage of eligible children increased from about 9% in 2018/19 to nearly 15%. Eligibility rates were highest in state-funded alternative provision schools and special schools.
- Stressed that the funds at local government level were inadequate to support families, voluntary and charity sectors provided support to families yet all funding had stopped for all local charities in Woking.
- Called on the Council to ensure that the funding for the voluntary and charity sectors is not reduced during the upcoming budget setting process.

The amendment was formally seconded by Hazel Watson, who made the following comments:

- Stressed that providing help and support to the most disadvantaged Surrey residents was a vital Council function.
- Noted that often the voluntary organisations working locally provided that support to make a difference.
- Had worked with the Council's Mole Valley Community Link Officer (CLO) and a group of residents in Box Hill to help isolated and disadvantaged residents.
- Noted an event last month with stalls from various organisations.
- Noted the 'a warm welcome' weekly event at the doctor's surgery between November and March providing food, advice and activities.
- Noted that a Council survey of the village to obtain the views of residents on their needs had been carried out and the results were being analysed.
- Suggested that it would be appropriate for the Council's Chair and Chief Executive to write to the CLO to thank her for her work.
- Noted that reducing the Council's funding in next year's budget to the voluntary organisations would be regressive.

Mark Nuti did not accept the amendment and therefore the amendment was open for debate.

Five Members spoke on the amendment and made the following comments:

- Suggested that the amendment's proposer attends a select committee meeting to listen to discussions from officers and Members about addressing poverty.
- Noted that the motion sets the scene, highlighting the pockets of deprivation and recognised that people were suffering; noting the various funds available, the Council knew what needed to be done and where.
- Could not commit the Council to top slicing the budget for next year, the statutory responsibilities to fund SEND children, Adult Social Care, and Highways were priorities.

- Noted that the administration would have agreed wording around the Council protecting the funding of organisations it works with, the Council could not commit to the ask without the relevant organisations being named.
- Noted the active conversation with the voluntary sector, which the Council values and depends upon to help deliver services to vulnerable residents.
- Encouraged Members that wish to speak on the draft Council budget to attend the November Cabinet meeting.
- Noted that borough and district councils were financially challenged, with Citizens Advice in some areas unable to be supported, noted the importance of partnering with voluntary organisations which provide additional services that local authorities cannot.
- Noted that Runnymede Borough Council reviewed its budget on what the council and voluntary sector could best provide, and provided that funding.
- Stressed the importance of the Council partnering with the borough and district councils, with the upcoming determination of Council Tax.
- Noted that several borough and district councils provided full relief for Council taxpayers, it was ridiculous that councils were taking people to court for not paying Council Tax, as they could not afford it.
- Encouraged the Council to pass on the Household Support Funding once received to the borough and district councils.
- Noted that the Council relied on support from the third sector, those organisations were connected to the communities they serve.
- Noted that without the commitment to not reducing the funding in 2025/26, there would be further cuts and a reduction in support to residents; they had low workforce costs and a high impact. Consistency and security in their future funding was needed.
- Supported the work of the Poverty Truth Commission and Good Company.
- Noted that poverty had become an entrenched part of society after a decade of austerity, the use of food banks had become a lifeline for many.
- Noted that the pledge sought to ensure that people should be able to afford life's essentials and those struggling financially should receive compassion.
- Noted that an action plan for the pledge must be financed and the root causes of poverty tackled, addressing people's needs now and the Council must set out what ending poverty would look like in Surrey.
- Regarding the cost-of-living crisis the following were needed: retrofitting to address energy poverty, ensuring adequate affordable housing to address the housing emergency, and to sustain the £2 maximum local bus fares.
- Noted that simply signing the pledge felt hollow, practical action was needed to end poverty; the amendment requested that financial commitment by the administration.
- Noted frustration on the annual settlements from the Government which made planning by organisations difficult.
- Noted that many towns and parishes, and boroughs and districts entered into multi-year Service Level Agreements, the Council should do more of that, planning for how organisations are given secure long-term funding.

Mark Nuti noted the following comments in response to not accepting the amendment:

- Stressed that it was not a budget-setting Council meeting, signing the pledge meant a commitment to join the Good Company in understanding poverty and doing everything possible to mitigate it.



- Noted that there were many things done by staff daily irrespective of the pledge, the Council continues to support communities and provides funding to charities.
- Noted that a commitment could not be made to maintain that funding to the same charities as charity work was reviewed, the Council looked at where the best investment should go to support communities.
- Noted that the request for an action plan for poverty to address the Equality Act 2010 would be included in the Equality Impact Assessment reports.
- Stressed that eradicating poverty required working in partnerships across Surrey irrespective of politics, working from the top down together.

The Chair asked Lance Spencer, as proposer of the amendment to conclude the debate:

- Supported the idea of working together but noted that it had been difficult to do so over the Council term.
- Noted the horrifying situation faced by individuals in long-term and irreversible debt.
- Noted that the suggested alternative wording to the amendment by the administration would have watered it down.
- Noted scepticism that the amendment was a huge ask for the Council.
- Noted that for example, Woking Borough Council was in £2.4 billion debt, unable to give £1 to its local Citizens Advice.
- Highlighted that there were thousands of people in extreme debt that the amendment sought to support.

The amendment was put to the vote with 22 Members voting For, 34 voting Against and 5 Abstentions.

Therefore the amendment was lost.

Returning to the debate on the substantive motion, no Members made any comments.

The Chair asked Mark Nuti, as proposer of the motion to conclude the debate, he made no further comments.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

Therefore, it was **RESOLVED** that:

**This Council notes:**

- Council's commitment in its Organisation Strategy and through the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy to reducing health inequalities, particularly in key neighbourhoods and amongst vulnerable groups.
- The significant impact of the cost of living on health inequalities in Surrey; 8.3% of households are in fuel poverty and 8.5% of children aged 0-19 years live in households experiencing relative poverty.
- The Government's pre-election commitment to adopting Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 in England that will require all public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in socio-economic status.

- Good Company (Surrey) - a charity with a mission to see communities 'free of poverty, where everyone can afford life's essentials'; they co-ordinate local food banks, the Poverty Truth Commission and currently work with pupils on free school meals to understand their needs.
- The signing of Good Company's End Poverty Pledge by the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board in July 2024, also adopted by Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership at a first combined meeting in September 2024 and Board/Partnership's commitment to enacting the pledge, including support for Board/Partnership members' organisations to also sign in their own right.

**This Council believes that:**

- Socio-economic disadvantage and financial hardship are barriers to reducing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing in Surrey.
- In the delivery of all our services, we need to consider those in or at risk of poverty.
- Working with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, such as Good Company, that work with those with lived experience of financial hardship is important in ensuring service responses are led by our communities.
- Signing the Good Company's End Poverty Pledge demonstrates that this Council leads from the front in the Surrey system to reduce health inequalities so no-one is left behind.

**This Council resolves to:**

- I. Request the Leader of the Council sign Good Company's End Poverty Pledge on behalf of the Council.
- II. Request that the Leader of the Council subsequently instructs officers to develop an SCC poverty action plan (to include proposed actions such as the adoption of section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 which builds in addressing the inequalities that result from differences in socio-economic status and becoming an anchor institution) for mitigating and preventing poverty amongst Surrey residents.

**75/24 FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE ON A REFERRED MOTION: 'PLANT BASED MEALS' [Item 14]**

The proposer of the original motion and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee introduced the report on the outcome of the referred motion. He noted that 'Meat-Free Mondays' encouraged people to skip meat one day a week as it had benefits to: health, the environment, animal welfare, global food security and the economy. He noted his motivation for tabling the original motion in July 2023 was that Woking High School discussed how to get more student engagement on climate issues and came up with the idea for 'Meat-Free Mondays'. He noted that the motion was referred to the select committee and discussed in April 2024, the response from officers was underwhelming but progress had been made with support from the Cabinet Member for Environment. He noted the motion resolution around schools having a plant-based menu one day a week; and the Service recommendations about schools defining 'Meat-Free Mondays', supporting schools to develop School Nutrition Action Groups and 'peer champions'.

**RESOLVED:**

1. Noted the key points from the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee's discussion of the Motion as described in this report and the work underway to address the issues raised in the motion through finalisation and implementation of A Surrey Whole System Food Strategy.
2. Noted that the strategy supports the Surrey Healthy Schools approach and has a focus on three key strands: addressing food insecurity, reducing climate impact of the local food system and supporting the local population to keep a healthy weight by enhancing the accessibility and affordability of nutritious food.

#### **76/24 REPORT OF THE CABINET [Item 15]**

The Leader thanked the outgoing Executive Director - Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships, Helen Coombes for all her hard work in getting the Council prepared for the Care Quality Commission inspection.

The Leader presented the report of the Cabinet meetings held on 23 July 2024 and 24 September 2024.

#### **Recommendations on Policy Framework Documents:**

There were no reports with recommendations for Council.

#### **Reports for Information/Discussion:**

##### **23 July 2024:**

- A. Customer Transformation
- B. A New Draft Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy and 20 Mph Speed Limit Policy
- C. Consort House, Redhill
- D. Quarterly Report on Decisions Taken Under Special Urgency Arrangements: 3 July 2024 - 30 September 2024

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. Noted that there had been no urgent decisions since the last Cabinet report to Council.
2. Adopted the report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 23 July 2024 and 24 September 2024.

#### **77/24 MINUTES OF CABINET MEETINGS [Item 16]**

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: 13.34 pm]

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**Chair**

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## **Leader's Statement – County Council, 8 October 2024**

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Mr Chairman, Members, here we are back together again for the first time since early July with the intervening months having seen some fundamental changes within this organisation, with our new Chief Executive settling in and getting familiar with the people, the place, and the idiosyncrasies of Surrey...

Welcome to your first Full Council meeting Terence. We're delighted to have you with us, and I can already sense the positive impact you are having even after just seven weeks in the role.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to welcome our new Executive Director for Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships, Claire Edgar who started work yesterday – I'm sure you've wasted no time and are already fully up to speed!

And another important development in the leadership of this council came last week in the announcement that Andy Brown will be joining us next week as our new Executive Director for Finance and Corporate Services, as our S151 Officer and our Deputy Chief Executive – a vital role in challenging times, and I'm delighted we've managed to attract Andy to Surrey.

These changes – the appointment of really experienced officers with excellent track records of delivery - demonstrates Surrey's pull, as a place and as an organisation.

We are a serious, large council, with high ambitions and a strong reputation.

Terence, Claire and Andy – along with our talented wider Leadership Team – will drive this organisation even further forward at pace, help us to continually improve, and ensure that we are delivering the vital services the people of Surrey rightly deserve.

Mr Chairman, there may be change at the top, but there will be continuity in terms of our ambition and our mission as an organisation.

As I've said many times before at this meeting, we are a council that does not shirk a challenge.

We stand up to be counted, we identify where we need to improve, and we roll up our sleeves and get on with it.

We are ambitious, we're focused, innovative, and determined.

It is that attitude that has got this organisation through some huge challenges over the past few years, and it is that attitude that is going to see us through the challenges we currently face – as a council, and as a wider local government sector.

The burning issue we currently face – like every other public sector body – is a financial one.

Local government is facing financial pressures like never before – demand is accelerating and the cost of delivering everything from care packages to pothole repairs is higher than ever, and still rising.

The County Council Network's analysis released last week shows that councils in the UK face a cumulative funding gap of a massive £54 billion pounds over the next five years.

That is a fundamental problem for society in this country, that councils like this one are going to be tasked with solving.

Central government's finances are stretched, and their priorities seem to lie elsewhere, however acute the need is in frontline service delivery.

It is our responsibility to do everything we possibly can to balance our budget and balance the needs of our residents.

We must – and do – scrutinise every penny of public money that we spend, to ensure that it is delivering the best possible outcomes for the people of Surrey.

We are not a council that does things 'because we've always done things that way' – if we need to change, we do.

If there are better ways to deliver services, we'll do it.

If new challenges appear, we adapt to overcome them.

If outside forces change the climate in which we work, we will recognise that and deal with it.

Mr Chairman, we are having to do that right now.

The financial pressures are real, and there is no magic wand or government top-up on its way to close the budget gaps councils are facing up and down the country.

We must stand up and face the reality head on – as we always do.

I have every confidence in the people of this organisation, and our new leadership, to adapt, innovate, be decisive, and be bold.

We are in a stronger position financially than many councils, thanks to our transformation and financial management over the last five or six years.

But we are not immune.

We must go again. Be bold in our transformation programmes, and strict with our spending.

But we must not lose sight of what has enabled us to improve as an organisation to this point – ambition, and focus on our guiding principles, supporting those who need us most and ensuring that no one is left behind.

That means that difficult choices will no doubt have to be made across services, things will have to be done differently, or in some cases not done at all, where they are not a priority.

Government will have to support councils in a programme of reform, ultimately providing the investment and incentivisation to drive preventative activity and provide the resources to deliver early support and intervention. No council can do this on their own but if we don't innovate, we will simply be councils reduced to delivering basic statutory services.

Our residents deserve more.

So we will continue to lobby government for flexibility, for greater devolution, for statutory reform across the system and push for fiscal devolution. More of that in a minute.

For our own part we'll embrace technology, we'll drive out inefficiency, we'll operate as one council with collective responsibility for our budget, and our objectives.

The public trust us with their money. We must be extremely careful with it and ensure every penny is spent appropriately.



We have a responsibility to be sustainable, and ultimately still be here delivering services long into the future.

I know that we can do this while still improving as an organisation, and still improving outcomes for residents.

We've done it before, and we'll do it again.

Because we have good people with bright minds and the right attitude, officers and Members dedicated to public service and a belief in Surrey.

That bold thinking and ambition must not be confined to this organisation however.

We must encourage others to be bold, and to look outwardly for opportunities to be more effective and efficient, together.

A great example of that approach came just last month with the signing of our Civic Agreement with the county's three leading universities – The University of Surrey, Royal Holloway University of London, and the University of the Creative Arts.

By pooling resources and expertise, and working together towards shared goals and a collective vision for Surrey, we can better address local needs, drive innovation, and create a more resilient county fit for the future.

Mr Chairman, this is place leadership.

This is drawing on all the local expertise, knowledge, passion, and resources to collectively drive better outcomes for our residents, and indeed our businesses here in Surrey.

We can and must do more.

We've now had an indication from the current government that our County Deal agreement will be endorsed and delivered, cementing Surrey's geography and recognising our prominent role in driving growth and opportunity here.

This is good news, but I sincerely hope there is more to come in terms of devolution from central government.

I have had very constructive discussions with our District and Borough partners, and with government officials through both Surrey and the County Councils Network, and I'm encouraged that there is a collective will to deliver more powers and opportunities through further devolution measures.

I will of course remain totally engaged and committed to that agenda on behalf of this council, and the people of Surrey working with our District and Borough colleagues.

I now want to say something about SEND and those children with additional needs.

I know that there are families that believe this council has let them down. We have and for that I apologise, as I have done on a number of occasions in this public forum.

I do not and will not defend the indefensible.

But it is only fair that there is also recognition of the progress we have made on our improvement journey. The independent joint area review found many examples of good practise but that there was inconsistency in the way we were delivering some of those services and experiences to families and children.

However, the Department for Education and OFSTED endorsed our recovery plan, the plan that we are currently working through and against which we report progress to the DfE and to our Select Committee.

I'm not going to run through all of those improvements, but the starting point was to clear the backlog of assessments and by investing some millions of pounds to do that, we are now averaging 67% completion on time against a national benchmark of 50%.

Of course, we will keep working to hit 100% but there needs to be recognition that there other partners who also need to step up to deliver an education, health and care plan.

We are also investing £240 million in our SEND capital programme, creating nearly 6,000 specialist school places across the county. This is in addition to the DfE's commitment to build four new specialist free schools.

Around 260 specialist school places were made available by this authority last month at the start of the new academic year.

Creating hundreds more places in specialist units in mainstream schools and a capital programme of hundreds of millions to build specialist schools is well underway but whilst we have to relentlessly drive improvements in local delivery, we know that the rising costs of specialist placements and home to school transport is an issue facing every single upper tier authority in this country.

That is why there is cross party support through the LGA and County Councils Network for reform of the system, reform that will be challenging but essential if we are to improve outcomes for children, something the current system often fails to do.

So yes, we absolutely need to improve our communications with parents and families, yes, we absolutely need to get this right first time, every time and yes, we must

absolutely focus on giving all children the very best start in life and whatever support is appropriate to meet their needs.

And that requires all of us, Members, officers, MPs, Government Ministers to work collectively, to work with each other to deliver the best service we can deliver and that is my ask.

There isn't any single person that speaks in this space that doesn't want the very best for our children and galvanising that energy and knowledge to look at what we as a whole society need to do, should be, and must be what drives the conversations.

Let's focus on solutions, solutions that reflect a very different country from that post-war - when much of the legislation back dates to, very different from 2014 when the last set of major reforms were enacted, and very different post COVID.

Here at Surrey, we will continue to do all that we can as an administration and as a council to get this right, whilst engaging in the national conversations as nothing could be more important than the health, the well-being and the happiness of our children as they progress into adulthood.

Another area that is showing continued progress, and we are focusing much of our transformation efforts on, is Adult Social Care.

This is our biggest area of spend as a council, and a statutory responsibility we take extremely seriously.

We have recently been visited by the Care Quality Commission for more external scrutiny. That inspection process went well – again we welcome that challenge – and we look forward to receiving their report very soon.

Whatever the outcome of that inspection, we will not stop improving.

But Mr Chairman, I wanted to end on a positive note.

Four years ago next month, this administration embarked on a mission to deliver ambitious, meaningful improvements in communities right across Surrey.

Investing in improvements that were rooted in community action – things that local people wanted and needed, things that would deliver benefits to the whole community, and that would leave a legacy in Surrey's towns and villages.

Through Your Fund Surrey, we asked communities to think big. To join up and join in and working together we will Make it Happen.

And Make it Happen we have -

- Swimming pools.
- Tree planting.
- Community cafes, shops and gardens.
- Football, cricket, rugby, gymnastics, and other sports facilities.
- New village halls.
- Inclusive playgrounds.
- Scout huts.
- Wildlife centres.
- Creative arts facilities.

Your Fund Surrey HAS delivered.

We've given local communities over £20m across 45 different projects. All having a demonstrable and long-term impact on people's health and wellbeing, and quality of life.

Surrey's communities are thriving and that is something we should be incredibly proud of.

Mr Chairman, this council is delivering for the people of Surrey.

We should be proud of how far we've come, and we must use that as motivation to go further, and at pace.

There is more to do and more to improve, we know that.

There are big challenges to overcome, and tough decisions to make.

There is a new government with a new agenda.

There are world events outside of our control but nevertheless impact on our residents.

But those are not new challenges.

These are challenges that this council, this county and local government takes in its stride.

And we will.

Nothing should distract us from delivering our ambition that no one in this county will be left behind.

Thank you.