

CABINET – 18 JULY 2017

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Public Questions

Question (1) Emma Samuels-Lee:

Is there the possibility of selling off other unused sites in order to buy Beeches? This was discussed in our last meeting with you. The media has announced SCC are already over by £12m for children's disabilities so surely this is a better answer, to sell off unused sites!!

Please consider this as a suitable possibility. The families and children need Beeches to stay open. What they do for us is astounding. As a young family, the respite care is above and beyond, it is our second family.

There is nothing for this side of Surrey. Horley, Caterham, Reigate, Redhill....please understand with larger numbers being diagnosed year on year that we need to find a way for short breaks to reach this side. Surely Beeches would be the best option as the site is already available?? It saves money with majority of children being walked over from Brooklands school. Again helping with the funding for the council. There is no way I can drive further away to Cherry Trees, meltdowns in cars with our daughter have already caused accidents for us.

Our children need consistency, they are used to a smaller environment than the others on offer. The staff know them all so well, nursing is available but as already discussed it was not 24/7. We are already having to say goodbye to Challengers. There is a building already used for our wonderful children, please do not take it away from them.

Reply:

Thank you for taking the time to raise your questions with me and the suggestion you have set out in relation to Beeches. I recall that you shared this with us when Councillor Curran and I met with you and other families using Beeches on 9 June. Since then Council officers have been working to explore some of the options that families raised and the headlines from this work are summarised in the Cabinet report.

Whilst I cannot know what your family's individual experience has been like, we do appreciate that changes to any services can be unsettling for families and know how vital short breaks are. With that in mind, we are confident that we are commissioning sufficient overnight short breaks provision across the county to meet the current needs of children and young people, but we also know that we need to keep this under review, and I say more about this in response to the question I have received from Family Voice Surrey. We do know that the decision of Surrey and Borders NHS Foundation Trust (SABP) not to seek ongoing funding for short breaks at Beeches will be difficult for families. In particular, we know that some families will need to travel further to access alternative provision and that this change will have an impact on families, as recognised in our Equalities Impact Assessment. We are taking forward plans to increase the staffing capacity at Applewood in Tadworth (Reigate and Banstead) in response to this decision, to provide an option for a number of families, where this is appropriate to their needs. For others, there will be the possibility of accessing another commissioned or in-house provision or, in particular cases where these provisions cannot meet needs, then a specific spot-purchase of an alternative placement.

We know that families have particularly valued the Beeches, the consistent relationships between staff and children, young people and parents, and the level of confidence they have that the health needs of children and young people will be met. Whilst the proposals do inevitably mean that there will be change, we highlight in the Cabinet report that there may be potential for some current staff employed by SABP to transfer into SCC. Please note that this will be subject to the final decisions made by families about the future provision and the decisions made by affected staff themselves. In addition, as set out in the Service Development Action Plan attached to the Cabinet paper, we are developing proposals for a potential joint funded nurse trainer role to strengthen current provision and build parental confidence in the offer, in response to parental feedback. We hope this will particularly give greater confidence to families who are transitioning from Beeches to another residential setting about how their children's individual health needs will be met.

Surrey County Council currently has no identified capital budget to invest in purchasing additional buildings to provide short breaks services. The Council routinely reviews the portfolio of property that it has and is keen to make good use of this. I have asked Officers to continue to explore the possibilities for development of future short breaks respite provision, should future changes in need lead to demand for future provision as part of the ongoing work to monitor need for overnight short breaks, as set out in the Service Development Action Plan.

Mrs Mary Lewis
Cabinet Member for Education
18 July 2017

Question (2) Angela Kelly:

Where is the equality impact assessment that should have been carried out to ensure that services that may be commissioned will provide a like for like service? I would like a copy of this please

What guarantees can the council provide re provision of spaces and 121 spaces for vulnerable children.

What guarantees can be provided that no child will suffer or miss out on short breaks as a result of the potential changes.

What policy will be in place to ensure that no child will be turned away due to challenging behaviour that staff feel unable to deal with (this is something that is already in place and working)

How will these points be guaranteed and how will they be enforced because three years before a recommission is a lot of failed vulnerable children and their families.

Reply:

I really appreciate you taking the time to raise these questions about our short breaks services and we know how much families value the provision, so I hope that you find my responses helpful. Firstly, I can confirm that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and this has been published as an Annex to the main Cabinet paper. This was informed by a six-week period of formal engagement with families between 8 May 2017 and 17 June 2017.

In terms of provision of spaces, I am pleased that our new proposals include a 4.5% increase in the hours of play and leisure short breaks that will be available to families in Surrey. The new service specification requires providers to deliver at least 40% of these hours as 1-to-1 spaces for children and young people, which is the same as within previous contracts (although particular providers may choose to offer more than 40%). Within our play and leisure services, we have particularly commissioned an increased number of hours of provision specifically for children and young people with complex health needs, rising from 1,700 to 2,533, which will all be 1-to-1 hours. Finally we are also commissioning ASD specific services, with a minimum of 40% 1-to-1 hours. For overnight residential short breaks, we are confident that we will continue to have sufficient capacity in provision to meet need in Surrey, but we do acknowledge in our EIA that there may be reduced choice in when provision can be accessed for some families.

Surrey County Council is committed to providing short breaks that meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families. In doing so, every three to five years the Council is legally required to re-issue contracts for services provided by external organisations. Whenever this happens there is the possibility that services change, as all organisations have an equal chance to bid for the available funding. Our latest proposals do include a range of changes, as set out in the Cabinet report, and we do appreciate that this will be unsettling for some families. Taking account of this we have sought to co-design our new proposals with families throughout the re-commissioning project, focussing on the things that they have told us are most important. I have included some more detail on this process at the end of this response, but in headline terms this has meant involving families in analysing need and reviewing current services; agreeing the outcomes that we want to commission; developing options and ideas for future services; evaluating proposals from organisations who want to provide short breaks in the future; and engaging families to understand the impact of our final proposals. We are confident that, through this joint approach, we have delivered an offer that will meet the needs of families, as part of the wider system of support, but do acknowledge that the change will have an impact on families.

During our recent 6-week engagement period, we did hear from families who were concerned about the ability of different providers to meet the needs of their children, in particular those with complex health needs and behaviour that challenges. We are very clear that providers need to offer support to children and young people with a wide range of needs, whilst obviously ensuring that appropriate safeguarding and health and safety checks are in place. We will be talking to providers about this as they are setting up their new services and working with them to ensure that the training they have in place is adequate to meet the range of needs identified in the service specification. We will also want to see that children with challenging behaviour are not turned away from services and that providers offer a range of activities and outings, including small groups and individual, person-centred approaches.

We have clearly set out what our providers need to deliver in our new, co-designed service specifications, and we will work with them to ensure these are delivered. We will work with providers collaboratively, but will take a robust approach to setting up new services for 1 December 2017 and monitoring contracts on an ongoing basis to ensure these requirements are met. In response to feedback from families we are working in partnership with Family Voice Surrey to develop a new oversight group that will enable families and other partners to have a greater ongoing role in contract management.

Whilst there are many things that we will do, working with our partners, to manage the impact of the changes caused by our proposals, I cannot honestly give a guarantee that no families will be adversely impacted by the changes, as we know that each family's situation will be unique to them. A couple of examples of negative impacts that we have identified

through our Equality Impact Assessment include that some families will have to travel further to access provision and that there will be reduced flexibility about when short breaks can be taken for others. Whilst we acknowledge that we will not be able to fully mitigate these impacts, we are seeking to reduce any detrimental impact and are discussing concerns with families who are particularly affected on an individual basis. Looking overall, however, we are confident that our new proposals will provide a comprehensive offer of short breaks to families and represent good value for money for our residents, and we hope the mitigation we have set out will support families to make the most of the new offer.

Summary of co-design and engagement work undertaken with families

1) Understanding need and reviewing the current offer (January to May 2016)

- An online survey, which was completed by over 200 families.
- Drop-in events around the county, which were attended by over 90 families and professionals.
- Meetings with the Community Nursing teams in Surrey and Children with Disabilities Social Care teams and a range of other key stakeholders.
- Reviewing previous surveys and consultations relating to short breaks in Surrey.

2) Service design (June – mid November 2016)

- 8 x drop-in sessions for families and professionals at a number of special schools across Surrey including Clifton Hill, The Ridgeway, Pond Meadow & Brooklands – sharing the results of the review and focusing on the outcomes that families and children and young people want from short breaks
- 2 x workshops with providers, practitioners and parent carers across Surrey - co-designing the outcomes that short breaks should enable families to achieve and exploring where we should focus the design of our new commissions
- 7 x drop-in sessions for families and professionals at Play & Leisure provision across the summer holidays in August 2016 – reviewing and validating the co-designed outcomes, further information about where our design focus should be (using a mini questionnaire format)
- 3 x coffee mornings/focus groups with parent carers at White Lodge, The Beeches and Cherry Trees
- 5 x design workshops during September 2016 with parents, carers, providers and practitioners to review what people had told us our areas of focus and outcomes should be and co-designing the response
- Sense checking and validating the outcomes and options (6th Oct, 20th Oct, 25th Oct - with the service and Family Voice Surrey)
- Feedback from families of children and young people with complex health needs was sought by an additional survey, working with Family Voice Surrey that included specific health related questions. This was run with the Physical & Sensory Support Service
- Checking with children and young people what they would like to see from the Short Break's offer, including:

- Gypsy Roma Traveller community engagement - site visit to meet with 2 families with disabled children and young people (19 September 2016)
- Feedback from specialist residential settings – creative sessions at Beeches (30 October 2016) and Cherry Trees (3 November 2016)
- Sibling focus group in specialist residential setting (10 November 2016)
- Questionnaire sent to Young Carers for inclusion in their autumn newsletter. Questionnaire also sent to Woking High School Young Carers Group and through visits to Egham Youth Club & Woking Young Carers Groups (July & October 2016)

Since July 2016:

- 95 parent carers and 40 providers and professionals shared their views at the drop-in sessions.
- 28 providers and 16 parent carers attended the September design workshops.
- 196 families completed an on-line survey
- 62 children & young people have told us their views about short breaks

3) Tender for the service and evaluation of bids – January – March 2017

Involving children and young people

- A number of different creative approaches were used including 24 children and young people with different needs engaged to give feedback on some elements of the bids from providers. This contributed to bid scoring. Sessions held included:
 - 2 x sessions in a community venue with children and young people from a youth group for feedback on overnight and play and leisure bids
 - 2 x sessions in a specialist residential setting for feedback on overnight submissions
 - 1 x session in a voluntary youth club (shorter session so only video clips were shown)

Involving parent carers

- Parent carers who currently use short breaks were invited to participate in the evaluation via specialist residential setting routes and the Family Voice Surrey (FVS) network. Family Voice convened a panel of family evaluators to contribute to bid scoring and families had a specific question as part of the process that they were exclusively responsible for scoring.

As well as meetings that happened as part of this overall engagement process, specific meetings have been held with families who currently access Beeches, following Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SABP) confirming they were not going to bid to continue to provide overnight residential short breaks, including:

- 14 March 2017 – Joint meeting SABP, SCC and Family Voice Surrey with Beeches parents;
- 2 May 2017 – Meeting of senior SCC Officers and Family Voice Surrey with Beeches parents; and

- 9 June 2017 – Councillor Clare Curran and I met with Beeches families, to hear their concerns and views first hand.

Mrs Mary Lewis
Cabinet Member for Education
18 July 2017

Question (3) Karin Barritt:

The council states that '*Spot purchasing of individual places from alternative providers remains an option for children and young people whose needs cannot be met through these different services.*' (ie Applewood, Cherry trees etc) If this is the case how come no one senior, including Julie Castles-Greene and Clare Curran, knows what provision is available for spot purchasing? Also, how come no one is helping our family to identify what provision is available for spot purchasing for my son who cannot access existing/proposed short breaks when Beeches close?

A sum of approximately £ 150 000 has been allocated to pay for spot purchasing provision and to pay for increased transport costs etc. Perhaps the council realises this will not be sufficient if children and young people like my son need spot purchased provision. In the latest Beeches meeting there were at least three families who would rely on unidentified spot purchased provision as an alternative after 30th November. Could this money be better used put towards the recommendation made by Family Voice that the Council leases Beeches for six months to give them time to properly consider the service's and site's potential and possibilities?

As things stand I have been given a link of potential short breaks providers in Sussex to investigate myself, this is far off the council's promise to provide an alternative for all children and young people when Beeches closes.

The most important thing to consider is that the proposed closure of Beeches is not only going to have a devastating effect on the 22 children and young people accessing it but also directly on all of their families which brings the total of people affected to over 100. Indirectly the proposed closure may also impact on their educational setting as the children and young people will be going through a long period of being unsettled, stressed and anxious.

Please remember that the families in questions are vulnerable and closing down a setting that is a lifeline for them and their sons and daughters can trigger them going into crises. Someone pointed out in one of the Beeches meeting that it only takes two families not to be able to look after their disabled child, and the cost of full time residential care would be far more per year than the cost of running Beeches.

Reply:

Thank you for raising your concerns with me and sharing openly your personal experience of working with us so far. Whilst there are a range of possible options for spot purchasing of short breaks in Surrey and in neighbouring areas, the decision about where to seek a placement outside of the core block contracts and in-house services that we have is an individual one, in response to a family's particular needs and circumstances. Social workers

and their managers should be aware of the range of possible providers of short breaks options for spot purchasing of provision and should be using this knowledge to support the families affected by the closure of Beeches to explore the options that will best meet their needs.

I am sorry that you feel that the support offered to your family at this time has not been good enough in this regard. I understand the Children with Disabilities Team have been in contact with you about the changes, but I have asked them to ensure that they make contact with you again to work with you to find the best solution for your family and to ensure they bring with them knowledge of all the available options to explore. We have had a period of uncertainty, with proposals put forward for the future short breaks offer, but these still being subject to final decision by the Cabinet. Cabinet is now being asked to make a clear decision about a final set of short breaks proposals, which should give greater certainty when planning future options to families and social workers alike.

As set out in the Cabinet report and EIA, we do appreciate that Beeches is a valued service and that the provision has made a big difference to the lives of whole families, as well as simply the specific children and young people who access the services. Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SABP) has made the decision not to bid for ongoing funding from SCC to provide overnight short breaks and this means that the Council has not been able to consider the ongoing provision of the service they have been offering, as part of the legally required open and transparent procurement process. Whilst this is the case, Surrey County Council has explored alongside this a range of ideas from families, partners and SCC staff, as set out in the Cabinet report, for Cabinet to consider.

Surrey County has retained £147,000 within the budget identified for the package of short breaks services that have been considered as part of this process, to develop different flexible options for children and young people, which could include spot purchasing, improved training or additional staffing for particular in-house settings. This is in addition to funding already held within the Children with Disabilities Team for care packages.

Based on the cost modelling that has been done and as set out in the Cabinet report, the estimated cost of leasing and continuing to provide the current Beeches offer is likely to be around £0.6 million per annum, so this funding (assuming the necessary agreements could be secured) would only be sufficient for three months of provision. It would also mean that funding would need to be taken from some of the other play and leisure and grant funded services outlined in this Cabinet report, which are used by over 2,000 families each year. The Council has sought confirmation from SABP about their plans for Beeches and, so far, no indication has been given of imminent plans to dispose of Beeches, which could potentially mean future uses of the premises could continue to be explored.

We know that of the 22 families currently accessing Beeches, five will be moving to Adult Social Care due to their age and 17 will require ongoing Children's Services provision, so it will be a period of change for all families and they will be facing some difficult decisions. We are committed to working alongside them during this period of change to provide the support that they need to enable them to manage the many pressures they do face and help them to provide sustainable care to their children. We hope that this will prevent children and young people from requiring full-time care, as a result of the changes to provision that are proposed.

Mrs Mary Lewis
Cabinet Member for Education
18 July 2017

Question (4) Andrea Collings:

Will cabinet commit to publishing in detail the final costs of whichever actions they choose to recommend in mitigation of the impact of a reduced specialist residential short breaks service, as well as monitoring the impact on the quality of the support offered and capacity to meet growing demand for services?

As you know, Family Voice Surrey anticipate that the actual costs of spot purchasing provision to meet the needs of families currently using Beeches in addition to increased staffing costs for in-house services at Applewood, and the additional transport costs, are likely to be higher than those estimated in the options outlined in the cabinet report. We believe that any reduction in expenditure is more likely to come from developing a new offer, which could draw on external sources of funding, while retaining the advantages available at Beeches currently, with its staffing expertise in managing complex health conditions and its situation next to a school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

We also believe that there is sufficient evidence to support building rather than reducing capacity:

- demand for specialist services will continue to grow with numbers of children with complex health conditions forecast to increase
- additional pressures from other parts of the local short breaks offer, such as the long-standing difficulty in recruiting and retaining paid carers to offer personal support in the home
- indicators that the current assessment process makes it unduly difficult for families to have their needs identified in a timely manner
- uncertainty about the match between the hours of assessed need and the hours of support commissioned

Reply:

I would like to begin by thanking Family Voice Surrey for their committed approach to working with us throughout the whole re-commissioning project. We have particularly valued their support to help us to engage with families and also the collaborative way in which they have challenged us to continue to improve the short breaks offer for families throughout the project.

In response to your first point, Surrey County Council is happy to share the final costs of alternative provision for families currently accessing the Beeches through the Short Breaks Steering Group, of which Family Voice Surrey are key members. We will not, however, know these costs until families have made final decisions about their future provision, in discussion with their social workers in the period leading up to 30 November 2017, following Cabinet's decision about the final offer. Our proposal is therefore that the Steering Group considers an assessment of the full costs, as part of the planned review of the short breaks re-commissioning project that will be undertaken between January and March 2018. This review will consider both the immediate short-term costs and likely longer-term costs.

Whilst we acknowledge the concerns about capacity for overnight short breaks raised by Family Voice Surrey, we have undertaken a robust, countywide needs analysis as part of this process to ensure that we have sufficient provision to meet current need. We also know, however, that this is an ongoing process and things can change, and therefore, as part of the Service Development Action Plan that accompanies this Cabinet report, we have committed to develop, by April 2018, a robust approach to routinely monitor need for short breaks services, against the capacity of commissioned in-house and contracted services.

We will need to work with Family Voice to plan our approach and this will form part of an ongoing service improvement project focussed on short breaks, resourced by County Council officers.

As part of this service improvement work, we have also set out how we will work in partnership with Family Voice Surrey to develop a more robust future role for families in the oversight of both when services are being set-up and ongoing contract management of the short breaks offer, including the quality of services provided, and that this will be in place by 31 October 2017. Again, we want to work with families to develop this approach in a way that works for them.

To summarise, the key next steps we will be taking that respond to this question are:

- Social workers to work with families affected by changes to Beeches to finalise and implement plans for alternative provision from 1 December 2017;
- Surrey County Council to work with Family Voice Surrey to develop and implement an approach to give parents an ongoing role in monitoring of short breaks services by 31 October 2017;
- Surrey County Council to work with Family Voice Surrey to undertake a review of the re-commissioning process, including an assessment of the actual costs of alternative provision for families who are currently accessing Beeches, to be completed by 31 March 2017; and
- Surrey County Council to work with Family Voice Surrey to develop and implement an approach to routinely monitor and assess changes in need for short breaks and capacity of services to meet this need by 30 April 2018, which we will maintain during the next 3 to 5 years of the proposed contracts.

Finally, I welcome Family Voice's ongoing feedback about the proposals and invite them to work with us on an ongoing basis, as we continue to develop the short breaks offer in response to families' feedback. Whilst we have made progress during this re-commissioning project, we know that there is still more to do to improve short breaks, which is why we have identified clear actions for further work in our Service Development Action Plan, and our wider offer to families with SEND, through the SEND Development Plan.

Mrs Mary Lewis
Cabinet Member for Education
18 July 2017

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