

**CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG  
LEARNING AND CULTURE  
SELECT COMMITTEE**



**TUESDAY 28 JULY 2020**

**TITLE: PREPARATIONS FOR THE REOPENING  
OF SCHOOLS**

**Purpose of report:** To provide an overview of the work undertaken and planned to support schools' preparations for the full reopening in September.

**Introduction**

1. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, education settings closed on 20 March 2020. Places have been offered throughout the subsequent period to vulnerable learners, children of critical workers and those with Education, Health and Care plans.

In accordance with the Government's Recovery Strategy, published in May, schools began to welcome back children from select years on 1 June, which was expanded on 15 June.

All pupils will return to school at the start of the Autumn Term.

**Home-to-school transport and support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)**

1. Councillor Kay Hammond (Horley West, Salfords & Sidlow) posed a question to the Cabinet meeting on 23 June 2020 in relation to effect of the pandemic on the Home-to-School Transport budget and the challenges in supporting SEND pupils during the lockdown period.
2. In her response, Councillor Julie Iles (Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning) welcomed the opportunity to address some of the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our home-to-school transport service, as well as the specific challenges it brought in supporting our children and young

people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families.

3. From the outset of the pandemic, significant work has gone into securing the sustainability of our school transport sector.
4. We have funded our taxi firms at 50% of the usual route costs where journeys are not required and diverted their capacity to carry out deliveries of essential items such as PPE, food and medicine to vulnerable families.
5. Though there have been some one-off cost reductions on home-to-school transport in this financial year, it is uncertain at this stage how significant that will be, given the cost implications of social distancing measures that may be required as more children return to school.
6. Changes in daily routines and more restricted access to the community resources on which children and young people with SEND rely on have caused greater stress and anxiety for these children and their families.
7. Details of work to support SEND pupils were shared with the Cabinet meeting of 26 May 2020, including accessible and clear information on the Local Offer, online mental health support for parents, therapies delivered to children virtually, and multi-agency virtual 'team around the family' meetings.
8. In the first two weeks of lockdown, our SEND teams identified and risk assessed 10,000 of our SEND pupils.
9. For those children who could stay at home, safety plans were developed with the families, and for those who needed to remain in specialist settings contingency plans were put in place should the settings need to close.
10. The use of innovation and technology has been maximised, to reach out to very many children with SEND and their families.
11. With the support of the Council, more and more children with SEND have returned to school, based on individual assessments of each child's needs.
12. All educational settings have been supported with guidance and advice on how to maintain social distance and control infection, and where needed to acquire protective equipment.

### **Provision of additional classroom space and summer activities**

1. At the Council meeting of 7 July 2020, Councillor Jonathan Essex (Redhill East Division) requested an update on how the Council was planning to support schools requiring additional classroom space so that they can open for all pupils in September and asked about activities planned for the summer holiday period.
2. In her response, Councillor Julie Iles (Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning) extended her thanks to our school leaders, teaching staff, support workers and school governors for the tremendous work they have done, and continue to do, throughout this period.

### **Full opening of schools from September 2020 for all pupils**

3. The Council's Land and Property team has been exploring a number of options for temporary classrooms or leveraging the use of suitable empty buildings in appropriate locations.
4. Discussions with school leaders revealed that their risk assessments determined that it was better to maintain all children on their existing school site, rather than expand over multiple sites.
5. The comprehensive guidance on the full opening of mainstream and special schools, early years settings and colleges from September 2020 for all pupils was published on 2 July.
6. The guidance, based on Public Health England advice, is that schools should use their existing resources to make arrangements to welcome all children back. They should not need to deliver any of their education on other sites because class sizes can return to normal and spaces used by more than one class or group can be cleaned between use.
7. Some schools' risk assessments may identify requirements for small adaptations to their sites, such as additional wash basins or hand sanitiser stations. Our Land and Property team are providing advice and support to schools to make these adjustments.

### **Childcare and holiday play schemes**

8. The Council's Commissioning teams are working together with Local Borough Councils, voluntary organisations and

private providers to ensure that childcare and activity clubs are available across Surrey to support children and families over the summer holiday.

9. Under current guidance such schemes can only operate from school sites. We have invited providers and partners to express an interest in delivering services and will be brokering partnerships with schools who have identified demand.
10. We will be providing support and guidance for schools around bringing in third-party providers to deliver services to their children.
11. We are also enlisting Early Years providers and childminders who are registered to care for children up to the age of 8 for families who need more flexibility than is afforded by holiday play schemes; working closely with Ofsted, who have committed to expediting registrations when prioritised by Surrey County Council.
12. The County Council will also be running a range of activities and programmes, including:
  - The Summer Reading programme.
  - Fun, Fit and Fed camps for children on free school meals.
  - Hot meals delivered to schools and settings as well as local coordination of the national Free School Meals voucher scheme.
  - 100 sessions of learning taster sessions delivered by Adult learning for a small fee.
  - A range of summer holiday outdoor learning opportunities for young people, families and adults through Surrey Outdoor Learning & Development (SOLD).
  - Early Years schemes funded for 150 vulnerable children for six weeks (which can be allocated flexibly).
  - School-age funding for 250 vulnerable children for three weeks (which can be allocated flexibly).
  - The commissioned Short Breaks programme for families with children with disabilities.
13. Other private providers and Multi-Academy Trusts are also running their own summer programmes.
14. We will be monitoring the availability of holiday provision to ensure it is enough to meet demand. For most families, we expect them to be able to access summer holiday activities in the way they always have done.

15. The County Council will be running a campaign to publicise the programme and encourage take up via advertising and marketing in communities and through schools and settings.
16. We have developed a strong communication plan for the programme for the Summer Holiday Offer 2020, including a brochure which will be distributed widely.

### **SCC Education Recovery Plan**

1. An update on our Education Recovery Plan was given to Informal Cabinet on 20 July 2020 and is included in **Annex 1** of this report.
2. The update highlighted several key concerns resulting from the period of school closure, including the widening learning gap, increased safeguarding risks and the emotional and mental health impact on both pupils and school leaders and their staff.
3. The presentation describes the work of the Education Cell, which led the response to the pandemic, and the four recovery sub-groups which have focused upon key issues for planned reopening.
4. Recovery Plans and Roadmaps for each strand are included.
5. Funding streams are also identified. Opportunities to lobby central government will be highlighted.

### **Conclusions**

1. Working closely with the Regional Schools' Commissioner, the Department for Education and sector partners, and through the Schools Alliance for Excellence (SAfE), the Council has developed and is implementing a clear and robust recovery strategy.
2. The planned activity will ensure that the needs of our disadvantaged children and young people and those with additional needs are met and mitigate against any disproportionate impact on these groups.

## Recommendations

1. The Select Committee is asked to note the response to the pandemic in the context of the impact on the education sector and to note the arrangements for recovery planning to support the full reopening of education settings in September.

## Next steps:

1. It is proposed that an update outlining the effectiveness of the Recovery Plan in supporting the reopening of settings is presented to Select Committee at its next meeting on 21 September 2020.

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**Report contact:** Liz Mills, Director Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture

**Contact details:** Tel: 020 8541 7608, Mob: 07968 834579, Email: [liz.mills@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:liz.mills@surreycc.gov.uk)

### **Sources/background papers:**

Cabinet Member Question 23 June 2020

Cabinet Member Question for Council 7 July 2020

**Annex 1: SCC Education Recovery Plan – Update to Cabinet Informal 20 July 2020**