

CABINET – 21 DECEMBER 2021

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Members Questions**Question (1) Will Forster (Woking South):****County Deal**

Would the Leader please update Members on the outcome of its expression of interest to secure a County Deal?

Reply:

The government is engaging with a number of County Councils on pilot County Deals. While we don't anticipate Surrey being a pilot, we are continuing to engage with government prior to the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper to promote Surrey's interests, needs, and offer to government.

Tim Oliver
Leader of the Council
21 December 2021

Question (2) Angela Goodwin (Guildford South-West):**Wifi funding for Care Leavers**

With the widespread increase in remote working and studying, Care Leavers are again at risk of being left behind by having to find the extra resources to pay for an adequate wifi/broadband service to meet their needs. In addition to the financial help already provided, would the Council consider following the example of Islington Council in paying for or subsidising wifi costs for one year to help Care Leavers get started on their next steps?

Reply:

For those living independently, Surrey currently offers funding for care leavers to purchase their first TV licence and we provide an allowance (up to £20 per month) to contribute towards Internet Access for a 6-month period.

In response to feedback from young people and building on the minimum expectations set in the Commissioning Alliance Specification, we expect supported accommodation/properties to afford young people with free; and consistent access to WiFi throughout the accommodation, with a level of speed and bandwidth that enables all young people to make use of this concurrently.

Surrey is in the process of signing the DfE funded Care Leaver Covenant and through this process we plan to work with local Internet providers to negotiate discounts and concessions for Surrey care leavers.

Clare Curran
Cabinet Member for Children and Families
21 December 2021

Question (3) Lance Spencer (Goldsworth East and Horsell Village):

Use of HVO biofuel

SCCs current fleet of 144 vehicles travel an estimated 1,677,399 miles and emits 521 tonnes of carbon per year.

A number of Local Authorities are moving to ensure that diesel engines will run on low carbon fuel, switching all of their diesel lorries, vans and cars to hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel, as they transition to net zero carbon emissions. The move can lower can authority's vehicle carbon emissions by 90%, as well as also cutting air pollution.

HVO is seen as a transitional fuel, which aims to switch its vehicles over to electric and other zero carbon equivalents by 2030. It is a biofuel that works in diesel engines and is considered to be a more sustainable alternative to fossil fuels, with it being created by hydro processing waste vegetable oils and fats. As well as being low carbon, the fuel produces up to 25% less NOx emissions and up to 42% less particulate matter, meaning a reduction in harmful air pollution.

Can the Cabinet Member for Environment ensure that his approach is being considered by Surrey County Council, as part of the Greener Futures Delivery Plan?

Reply:

The Council recognises the importance of reducing emissions from our fleet in order to meet our 2030 net zero carbon target for the Council. We recently recruited a Green Fleet Manager who will lead on this work and will develop a Green Fleet Strategy for the organisation. This Strategy will also be shared with District and Borough partners to help them decarbonise their fleet and business travel. The Strategy will set out the most effective approaches to decarbonising our fleet and will consider transition fuels such as HVO.

In addition, we are embedding green fleet and travel requirements into our provider services. This was embedded into the recent Highways Maintenance Services contract, with the successful provider, Ringway, committing to trial HVO as part of a package of measures to achieve a net zero carbon fleet under the contract by 2030.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
21 December 2021

Question (4) Lance Spencer (Goldsworth East and Horsell Village):

SEN transport appeals

Transport Case Review Panel Appeals for SEN children are held in person at the Woodhatch Place offices in Reigate. Whilst it is understood that the Panel Chairman, Members of the Panel and the relevant Officers should attend in person. However, there seems no good reason why the parents who are appealing against the decision of the Council have to attend in person. Anecdotal evidence is that there are less parents attending since the move from Kingston and it is clear from a recent Appeals Panel that this is the case.

Can the Cabinet Member for Children and Families review whether a hybrid arrangement could be implemented, to allow parents the option to represent their appeal cases, remotely in addition to the current arrangement where they can attend in person?

Reply:

It is a legal requirement that members of the council on the appeals panel attend in person, however other attendees such as the school, any advisors and parents can attend either remotely as a hybrid meeting or in person depending on their preference. The home to school transport service and democratic services are happy to accommodate this on a trial basis initially up until Easter, when the process will be reviewed to see whether any issues have been identified. Some minor procedural changes may be required for more complex cases and to ensure there is parity for all parties participating, but these issues will be worked through and families will be notified and given the option to attend remotely where possible.

Denise Turner-Stewart
Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
21 December 2021

Question (5) Lance Spencer (Goldsworth East and Horsell Village):

Letter to government on climate change funding

At the Cabinet meeting on 26th October 2021, it was agreed:

That the Cabinet Member for Environment write to the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, the new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and Alok Sharma, President of COP26 to urge sufficient funding and policy change to allow local government to make urgent progress in meeting its challenges meaningfully in the financial year 2022/23.

Can the Cabinet Member for the Environment confirm that the action took place, and whether any response was received from any of the recipients of the communications?

Reply:

A letter has been sent to the individuals listed above to press for sufficient funding and policy changes that will enable local government to make urgent progress in meeting its challenges meaningfully in the financial year 2022/23. The letter also highlighted the work that SCC is already doing and the Climate Change Delivery Plan, launched last month, which outlines the actions we will be taking to meet our target of being a net zero council by 2030 and county by 2050. We are still awaiting a response from the relevant departments and will update cabinet at the next available opportunity.

In addition to this, in September Carolyn McKenzie, SCC's Director for Environment, appeared before the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee on local government's role in achieving our net zero ambitions. She talked about the need to be able to long term plan and work with partners to avoid unnecessary friction, which would enable us to embed net zero ambitions at a much earlier stage to deliver more for the money and link up benefits more effectively across economic development, health, education, etc.

SCC is also signed up to the Blueprint Coalition, an initiative linking a number of organisations together including the LGA and ADEPT to lobby for such change. The Director for Environment

sits on the ADEPT Environment Board and has fed into the development of this document. SCC also submitted an Expression of interest to UK100 to develop a green finance based project which will allow greater political engagement and have been shortlisted.

Finally, in his role as chair of the County Councils Network, SCC Leader Cllr Oliver has regular one-to-one meetings with the levelling up secretary, Michael Gove and other ministers. During these calls, which are informal in nature, updates are provided on the latest work being undertaken by local and national government, including on the important topic of climate change. These will continue to provide an important opportunity to highlight SCC's work, as well as the wider efforts of local government to meet our net zero ambitions.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
21 December 2021

Question (6) Lance Spencer (Goldsworth East and Horsell Village):

Greener Futures communications plan

At the Cabinet meeting on 26th October 2021, it was agreed:

That the Cabinet Member for Environment review and update the existing communications and engagement plan, before the next meeting of the Council, to set out how we will engage with the 1.2 million residents, eighty-one Members and businesses across Surrey so they fully understand the transformation needed for Surrey to meet its carbon reduction targets.

Can the Cabinet member for the Environment provide an update on progress on updating the communications and engagement plan?

Reply:

In October Cabinet endorsed the Greener Futures Climate Change Delivery Plan, along with the Greener Futures Communications and Engagement Strategy, which sets out at a high level how the Council will conduct targeted communications and engagement activity with residents, communities and stakeholders to achieve the targets set out in the Delivery Plan. Cabinet agreed that the priorities in the Engagement Plan would be updated on a six monthly basis.

Since the Plans were endorsed officers have been further developing the communications and engagement approach. This includes a detailed schedule of engagement activity over the next six months, along with a suggested ten key engagement priorities. This document will be shared with the Greener Futures Member Reference group for input prior to the next meeting in January.

In order to advise Member's on engagement activity to enable them to participate in promotion and awareness raising amongst their constituents, a monthly Greener Futures Member briefing will be produced.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
21 December 2021

Question (7) Lance Spencer (Goldsworth East and Horsell Village):

Mental Health (ND pathway) waitlist update

In response to a question raised at the October County Council Meeting by Carla Morson with respect to wait times for Neurodevelopmental assessment the answer was:

“The average waiting time from receipt of referral to completing the assessment is around 216 days (July 2021) which has reduced from 236 working days.

In building these systems a data quality issue has been identified and is being resolved to be confident to report the average waiting time from receipt of referral to the start of the assessment process. This is anticipated to be resolved by November 2021.”

Would the Cabinet Member for Children and Families update Members on the average waiting time for Neurodevelopment assessment, whether the backlog is now completely cleared, and whether the data issues have been resolved so that the waiting time from receipt of referral to the start of the assessment can now be measured, and if so, how long that wait time is currently.

Reply:

The waiting times for children and young people from referral to the start of the assessment, at month end in October, is on average 147 working days, a reduction from 189 working days the previous month. In December 2020 there were 1512 CYP identified on the Autism Spectrum Disorder backlog, assessments have now been started or completed for all these CYP. However, demand is higher than planned for and as a response Mindworks Surrey is increasing operating capacity and extending contracts with external partners in order to reduce the time families have to wait.

As previously reported issues relating to the quality of the data being captured by Mindworks have been identified. A plan of action to resolve them was put in to place. Progress is being made to locate and fix the data discrepancies between the old and new reporting system via a regular working group with representatives from SABP and the integrated SCC/Surrey Heartlands ICS Commissioning Team. The work is progressing and Mindworks have recruited additional data expertise to ensure data reporting is timely and accurate. In January 2022 a final list of matters still requiring resolution to satisfy requirements will come to Commissioners to review.

Clare Curran
Cabinet Member for Children and Families
21 December 2021

Question (8) John Robini (Haslemere):

The recently published Surrey Carers’ Strategy 2021-2024 from the Surrey Heartlands and Care Partnership, of which Surrey County Council is a major partner reportedly reaffirms “the commitment and determination to help carers continue caring if they are willing and able, and to support their health and wellbeing by achieving outcomes they have identified that matter most to them” (SCC website).

As the Voluntary, Charity and Faith sector are crucial to the delivery of services to 115k adult carers and 14k young carers under 18 in Surrey, can the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health provide reassurance that the current level of funding for grants and contracts to VCFS

organisations is at least being maintained in 22/23 budget, given the essential role carers play in supporting a social care sector under increasing pressure?

Reply:

The Council is committed to supporting Surrey carers in Surrey and the vital role that they play in supporting the health and social care system. The funding for carers services remains at the same budgeted level currently allocated within the 2021/22 Better Care Fund (BCF). Early intervention and Prevention Carers services are funded entirely from the BCF. New contracting arrangements for Carers services are expected to commence in April 2022 which includes provision to be able to respond to changes in demand and make additional funding available if needed.

Sinead Mooney
Cabinet Member for Adults and Health
21 December 2021

Question (9) Catherine Baart (Earlswood and Reigate South):

Woodhatch Travel Plan

At the Surrey Cabinet meeting this February it was confirmed that a travel plan for Woodhatch Place had been commissioned, was being finalised and should be completed in early March 2021. It was noted that this included exploring the potential to extend the local bus service to include collection from Reigate and Redhill train stations. At that point the Leader confirmed that active conversations were taking place with bus operators and improvements to the bus service would not be in place until September 2021. Is it possible to confirm what has caused the delay in the publication of this travel plan, when it will be shared with councillors and published, and provide an update on the council's discussions to improve bus services between Woodhatch Place and these railway stations.

Reply:

The travel plan was completed and provided an overview of recommendations to improve the accessibility of Woodhatch Place.

Discussions were had with bus operators and it was concluded that to extend a service to Woodhatch Place, the cost would be circa £90K per annum.

Footfall to Woodhatch has been limited this year, predominantly as a result of the pandemic. Also, resident facing services are yet to move into Woodhatch as per the Estate Strategy, so resident visits to Woodhatch are minimal. This means that we have yet to reach a settled point on transport requirements, and have therefore focused on evolving our approach in line with demand.

Prior to the latest COVID advice to work from home where possible, a subsidy was offered to any staff who needed to get a taxi from Redhill or Reigate Station to Woodhatch Place and the return journey. This was put in place to support accessibility and to monitor the demand and frequency of journeys between Woodhatch Place and the local train stations. This scheme has been in place since October and has only seen very small numbers of claims.

Once current restrictions are lifted, we intend to initiate the next phase of our plan, which will use a community transport provider to put in place a daily shuttle bus service in the new year.

The cost of the bus is competitive, and we would be able to pause and unpause the service as required. We will decide when it is the right time to provide this service as COVID restrictions ease.

As part of our planning for an ongoing and sustainable solution, we are also looking at developing proposals for an on-demand bus service, similar to the one currently operating in Mole Valley.

Tim Oliver
Leader of the Council
21 December 2021

Question (10) Jonathan Essex (Redhill East):

Strengthening Climate Action Post-COP

The UK government's independent Committee on Climate Change recently produced a report on the key actions for the UK to strengthen climate change delivery up to 2030, as the UK government has committed to cut emissions across the UK by 45% by 2030 from 2018 levels (see <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/cop26-key-outcomes-and-next-steps-for-the-uk/>).] The true scale of the challenge is also set out in the report Minus 45 published by a Cambridge University-led team in early December (<https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/329709>). In light of this, can you set out how the delivery plans for Surrey-wide emission reductions in the two key areas, transport and home energy improvement, are being coordinated with districts and boroughs so that the scale of action in this decade exceeds these UK government, alongside our existing Surrey Climate Strategy commitments:

i). Please can you set out how Surrey County Council is collaborating with boroughs and district councils to develop place-based Zero Carbon Transport Plans across the county that set out the ambition in terms of modal shift to active and public transport and level of electric vehicle charging infrastructure needed in different parts of Surrey and the level of funding and actual on-the-ground measures needed to deliver this.

ii). After transport, the second largest part of Surrey's carbon footprint, as identified in Surrey County Council's Climate Change Strategy is Surrey's homes. Alongside securing available government finance, such as to continue our work targeting improvements to some of Surrey's low-income households, how is Surrey County Council working with the districts and boroughs, to produce an overall plan (or plans) to ensure that we can tackle the true scale of this challenge across Surrey in the timescale required, ensuring that the different housing types and age, combined with different ownership and income of these properties (social housing, private rented, owner occupied) is set out, so that we have an overall plan to inform financing and lobbying of government, alongside targeting current government funding opportunities.

Reply:

Surrey's 2050 Place Ambition presents a long-term ambition and priorities for Surrey local authorities and their strategic partners to facilitate "good growth". It builds on existing aspirations and actions that partners are working towards and sets out a clear set of strategic

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priorities to be delivered. A refresh of the Place Ambition spatial framework is currently underway alongside the preparation of a supporting implementation framework and a consultation exercise to engage Surrey residents, businesses, developers and partners has commenced.

A detailed implementation plan for 2021-22 for the Greener Futures 2021-25 Climate Change Delivery Plan is in development. Each of the key activities in the Delivery Plan will be evidence based and have their own implementation plans where needed which will indeed include domestic sector retrofit, but also the role out of Electric Vehicle charging for instance.

As these activities span Surrey and need to be linked to existing district and borough plans and activity, we are proposing developing Place Based Greener Futures high level plans for each district to maximise opportunities, make links, galvanise funding, identify activity being undertaken and enable monitoring and evaluation. These plans will be developed in partnership with district and borough colleagues by the Greener Futures Team and the new Place Team together with all relevant SCC departments. It will be key to ensure all Members are involved in this process.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
21 December 2021