

County Council Meeting – 22 March 2022

REPORT OF THE CABINET

The Cabinet met on 22 February 2022 and 07 March 2022.

In accordance with the Constitution, Members can ask questions of the appropriate Cabinet Member, seek clarification or make a statement on any of these issues without giving notice.

The minutes containing the individual decisions for the meetings above have been included within the original agenda at Item 11. Any Cabinet responses to Committee reports are included in or appended to the minutes. If any Member wishes to raise a question or make a statement on any of the matters in the minutes, notice must be given to Democratic Services by 12 noon on the last working day before the County Council meeting (Monday 21 March 2022).

For members of the public all non-confidential reports are available on the web site (www.surreycc.gov.uk) or on request from Democratic Services.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

There were no reports with recommendations for Council.

REPORTS FOR INFORMATION / DISCUSSION

At its meeting on 22 February 2022 Cabinet considered:

A. WORKING WITH THE BIG FOSTERING PARTNERSHIP

Cabinet were asked to endorse Surrey County Council joining the Big Fostering Partnership from 1 April 2022, to work in collaboration with other Local Authorities to enable more children who are looked after to move from living in residential children's homes to living with foster families for the period from 1 April 2022 through to September 2024.

Cabinet AGREED:

1. That Cabinet endorses Surrey County Council joining the Big Fostering Partnership from 1 April 2022, to work in collaboration with other Local Authorities to enable more looked after children who are living in residential children's homes to move to living with foster families.
2. That Cabinet authorises spend of up to £4 million via this partnership for the period from 1 April 2022 through to September 2024. This is a repurposing of budgeted funds within the existing Children's Services Placement budget envelope for placements.

Reasons for decisions:

These recommendations will: enable better outcomes for looked after children; support more looked after children to live in or closer to Surrey; and improve

value for money. Firstly, evidence shows that when looked after children live in families rather than children's homes this leads to better long-term outcomes, where this is done at an appropriate point in their care journey. Secondly, foster placements are more likely to be made in or closer to Surrey than residential placements, supporting Surrey County Council's ambitious Sufficiency Strategy and statutory duties as corporate parents. Thirdly, successful step-down placements offer improved value for money to Surrey residents - for comparison, Surrey's average weekly cost of children's residential provision is more than 3 times the price of a supportive and high-quality step-down foster placement. Our modelling suggests that this approach could reduce the spend from our Children's Services placement budget by some £5 million between 2022/23 and 2025/26.

B. LOCAL AND JOINT COMMITTEE HIGHWAY FUNCTIONS

Cabinet was asked to approve a change in the way that executive highway functions were taken, transferring them from Local and Joint Committees to enable officers to take such decisions in more direct consultation with the relevant members.

Cabinet AGREED:

1. That Cabinet agree to the transfer of all executive highway functions from Local and Joint Committees with effect from the 1st of April 2022.
2. That Cabinet agree that all executive functions previously delegated to Local and Joint Committees relating to highways are delegated to Officers in consultation with the relevant Divisional Member with effect from the 1st of April 2022.
3. That Cabinet agree the proposed changes to the Integrated Transport Scheme (ITS) within the Local Highway Schemes budget and the Individual Member Highways Allocations (Capital and Revenue budgets) from April 2022 as set out in this report.
4. That Cabinet note the proposed involvement of the Communities, Environment & Highways Select Committee in the development of the criteria that will be used to assess projects coming forward for funding from the countywide ITS budget, ahead of the Cabinet Member agreeing such criteria.
5. That Cabinet agree to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Environment, Transport and Infrastructure and the Director for Highways and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure to make all necessary changes to existing highway budgets, criteria, and relevant policies to support the effective transition to these new arrangements.

6. That Cabinet agree that the Director of Legal and Governance works in conjunction with democratic service officers from Guildford, Runnymede, Woking, and Spelthorne Borough Councils to update their respective Joint Committee constitutions which are in place with the County Council.
7. That Cabinet agree the Director of Legal and Governance in consultation with the Leader of the Council makes the relevant changes to the Council's Executive and Officer Scheme of delegation as set out within this report.

Reasons for decisions:

The recommendations within this report will support more efficient local decision making, whilst ensuring that there is transparency and proper scrutiny. These proposals will enable more people to be heard and participate in decision making, leading to better outcomes for our residents.

This is a joint initiative coming from Communities and ETI Directorates consistent with residents' expressed desires to be more involved in what the Council is doing but through events and conversations and not through boards and meetings. This proposal directly supports the commitment the Council made in 2020 to Empowering Communities:

'Reinvigorate our relationship with residents, empowering communities to tackle local issues and support one another, whilst making it easier for everyone to play an active role in the decisions that will shape Surrey's future.'

Research in the past year has shown that far more residents have been able to communicate with the Council through a wider range of mechanisms than has been the case historically using traditional local and joint committee processes. For instance, in 2021/22, 11 online engagement sessions reached over 50,000 members of the public, whilst in comparison only 650 residents attended LC/JCs between 2019 and 2021 which included councillors from Parish, Districts and Boroughs if they attended to hear proceedings.

C. ACCELERATING THE INTRODUCTION OF ULTRA-LOW AND ZERO EMISSION VEHICLES - APPROVAL TO PROCURE 34 HYDROGEN FUEL CELL BUSES

Cabinet was asked to approve the procurement of 34 Hydrogen Fuel Cell Buses.

Cabinet AGREED:

1. That Cabinet grants Approval to Procure 34 hydrogen fuel cell buses as the next step in accelerating the introduction of ultra-low and zero emission vehicles into Surrey;
2. That Cabinet supports the drafting of an agreement to be entered into by the Council and bus operator Metrobus that confirms the ownership, leasing arrangements, use and maintenance of the 34 hydrogen fuel cell buses;

3. That decision(s) to procure any additional zero or ultra-low emission buses through new partnership schemes with the bus industry be delegated to the Executive Director for Environment, Transport & Infrastructure and the Executive Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure, once approved by the Capital Programme Panel.

Reasons for decisions:

Procuring the 34 hydrogen fuel cell buses enables the Council to accelerate the introduction of ultra-low and zero emission buses into Surrey, whilst retaining ownership of the capital asset, i.e. the buses. This will help create more carbon neutral transport options and assist in achieving climate change targets by providing residents with greener and more sustainable travel choices.

At its reconvened meeting on 07 March 2022 Cabinet considered:

D. DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION SAFETY VALVE AGREEMENT

Cabinet AGREED:

1. That Cabinet approve the proposed Safety Valve Agreement, including the proposed contribution of [See Exempt Minute E-07-22] from the General Fund reserve provided for in the Council's budget and [See Exempt Minute E-07-22] of Dedicated Schools Grant balances, through a combination of applying surplus balances and year on year block transfers.
2. That Cabinet delegate final agreement and the signing of the Safety Valve Agreement to the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer and the Executive Director for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

Reasons for decisions:

The Department for Education (DfE) has invited Surrey County Council to participate in its Safety Valve intervention programme, which seeks to develop proposals with targeted local authorities to address historic deficits within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block (HNB) and reach an in-year balance to ensure ongoing sustainability.

A recommendation has been made for Cabinet to approve the proposed Safety Valve Agreement because the assessment (based on net present value) is that the proposals are deliverable and the financial analysis indicates that over both the MTF5 and 20-year timelines, the financial benefits of the Safety Valve proposed financial contributions is greater than not securing the proposed Safety Valve agreement.

A recommendation has been made for Cabinet to delegate authority for final approval and to sign the proposed Safety Valve Agreement to the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer and the Executive Director for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning in consultation with the leader of the Council so that this can be done within the timescales set out by DfE.

E. QUARTERLY REPORT ON DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER SPECIAL URGENCY ARRANGEMENTS: 01 February 2022 – 14 March 2022

The Cabinet is required under the Constitution to report to Council on a quarterly basis the details of decisions taken by the Cabinet and Cabinet Members under the special urgency arrangements set out in Standing Order 57 of the Constitution. This occurs where a decision is required on a matter that is not contained within the Leader's Forward Plan (Notice of Decisions), nor available 5 clear days before the meeting. Where a decision on such matters could not reasonably be delayed, the agreement of the Chairman of the appropriate Select Committee, or in his/her absence the Chairman of the Council, must be sought to enable the decision to be made.

At its meeting on 22 February 2022 Cabinet considered:

a) FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND TERMS TO A POTENTIAL SAFETY VALVE AGREEMENT

This report was dealt with under the General Exception rule as it had not had the required 28 days' notice on the Forward Plan. Cabinet was asked to decide whether to endorse a Safety Valve proposal to the Department for Education and to consider financial contributions and terms. A decision was required to comply with the Department for Education's timetable.

Cabinet AGREED:

1. That Cabinet adjourn the meeting and reconvene the meeting on 7 March 2022 to decide whether to enter a Safety Valve agreement when the value of any financial contributions (from the Department for Education, the Dedicated Schools Grant and Surrey County Council General Fund) and terms of agreement are known.

Reasons for decisions:

The Department for Education (DfE) has invited Surrey County Council to participate in its Safety Valve intervention programme, which seeks to develop proposals with targeted local authorities to address historic deficits within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block (HNB) and reach an in-year balance to ensure ongoing sustainability.

The Cabinet RECOMMENDS that the County Council notes that there has been ONE urgent decision in the last month.

**Tim Oliver, Leader of the Council
14 March 2022**