

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****CABINET****DATE: 31 JANUARY 2023****REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING****LEAD OFFICER: LIZ MILLS, DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING****SUBJECT: THE SURREY SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN AND A LIFETIME OF LEARNING STRATEGY 2030****ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES****Purpose of the Report:**

Surrey has key strengths in its education sector with 98 of early years providers graded good or better, 92% of schools judged good or better through the education inspection framework, strong adult learning provision and a higher than average number of adults within England qualified to degree level. Most children, young people and adults thrive in education and are able to realise their ambitions. However, a significant proportion of more vulnerable learners or those that are disadvantaged do not achieve well in Surrey and are not supported to reach their potential. This combined with the ambitions set out in the Surrey Skills Plan to ensure that employers are able to benefit from a dynamic, demand-led skills system which hones Surrey's leading edge, recognises the needs of all businesses and maximises inclusion, whilst powering economic growth across the UK, has led to the development of a set of joint educational ambitions for Surrey.

Through the local education partnership and in conjunction with Schools Alliance for Excellence (SAfE), work has commenced to articulate a set of joint ambitions for education and learning to align with the Community Vision for Surrey 2030 and the Surrey Skills Plan. These joint ambitions are key to ensure that the whole education community can align and prioritise activity to realise these ambitions and in particular move toward educational equity for all by levelling up. Whilst the legislative agenda remains unclear for education, we remain committed to the ambitions set out within the White Paper for education. The Cabinet is asked to consider and support the development of a Lifetime of Learning Strategy for Surrey aligned to the Community Vision for Surrey 2030 and endorse the draft joint ambitions for wider consultation with all education providers and key partners.

Sufficiency of high-quality school places is a key statutory duty and underpins a great education for all. The School Organisation Plan is refreshed annually and required to be approved by Full Council periodically. The Cabinet is asked to consider and endorse the School Organisation Plan which sets out the policies and principles underpinning both mainstream and specialist school organisation in Surrey. It highlights the likely demand for school places projected over a 10-year period and sets out any potential changes in school organisation that may be required in order to meet the council's statutory duty to provide sufficient places. The plan includes a detailed appendix setting out the principles to be

adopted in light of the falling birth rate across Surrey and growing vacant school places within maintained and academy sectors. The plan covers academic years from 2022/23 – 2032/33.

### Recommendations:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Agrees the approach to secure the ambitions within the Community Vision for Surrey 2030 and the Surrey Skills Plan through collaborative work with stakeholders;
2. Endorses the School Organisation Plan 2022-2032 which will meet our statutory duties to ensure that there are sufficient high-quality places for pupils in Surrey and refer it to Council for approval (**Annex A**)
3. Agrees the principles to be adopted in the light of falling birth rates across Surrey and growing vacant school places (**Annex A**).

### Reason for Recommendations:

In a changing education landscape, it is imperative to bring all education providers in Surrey together to secure a shared vision based on collaboration that meets the needs of all our learners.

The School Organisation Plan is a key document used by schools and education stakeholders in considering medium and long term plans. It is necessary to review the plan to ensure that the best and most up to date information is published for use in this process to encourage collaborative and collegiate planning.

### Executive Summary:

1. The publication of the White Paper [Opportunity for all - Strong schools with great teachers for your child \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/105222/opportunity-for-all-strong-schools-with-great-teachers-for-your-child) in March 2022 signalled the government's ambitions and reforms for education to 2030.
2. The White Paper has a focus on
  - an ambition that all schools will provide high quality and **inclusive** education and an ambition to secure better outcomes for pupils who have historically achieved less well than their peers
  - a priority to improve attendance across all phases and sectors.

Both of these ambitions accord with our work in Surrey.

3. The Green Paper [SEND and AP green paper: responding to the consultation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/105222/send-and-ap-green-paper-responding-to-the-consultation) also set out an ambition for excellent provision from early years to adulthood for learners with additional needs as well as a reformed national provision for Alternative Provision. The Surrey Alternative Curriculum Pathways and Reintegration Support Strategy 2021 and the work underway to refresh our strategy for inclusion and additional needs, set out what we have already achieved and the changes we want to secure in Surrey for our pupils who have additional needs.
4. Nationally and locally, we have seen falling birth rates since 2013 and this means that there is a surplus of infant, junior and primary school places across Surrey. This is creating sustainability issues for some schools. The School Organisation Plan is a key document for schools and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to inform their strategic discussions and help them to formulate a plan.

5. The implementation of the National Funding Formula has led to the reduction of the lump sum given to each school with more funding, instead, following the pupils. This means that schools with small numbers of pupils and who do not attract additional deprivation funding are particularly challenged. A sustainability strategy and sustainability survey have been drafted to support schools in looking at their individual circumstances and help them to assess their sustainability risks.
6. Surrey has a diverse and vibrant education landscape and has outcomes at each key stage above the national average. 92% of our schools are either good or outstanding. 80% of our early years settings are good and 18% are outstanding.
7. There are however some cohorts of children and young people who have significantly poorer outcomes than their peers. A collaborative approach to establishing a common ambition for all learners in Surrey is essential to the levelling up agenda.
8. In a diverse landscape of early years providers, MATs. Single Academy Trusts (SATs) and maintained schools, post 16 and FE colleges, independent schools, alternative provision, adult learning and higher education, we want to ensure that there is a shared ambition for all and inclusion for all.
9. We need to ensure a new sense of collaboration amongst all education providers which secures excellence for all.
10. This approach to a co-produced lifetime of learning strategy for Surrey is new. The shift in the education landscape with greater autonomy for education settings requires a different collaborative approach to setting out our ambition for learners and will provide the opportunity to highlight the priority of levelling up in terms of outcomes and experiences for learners.

### **Opportunity for All – No one left behind.**

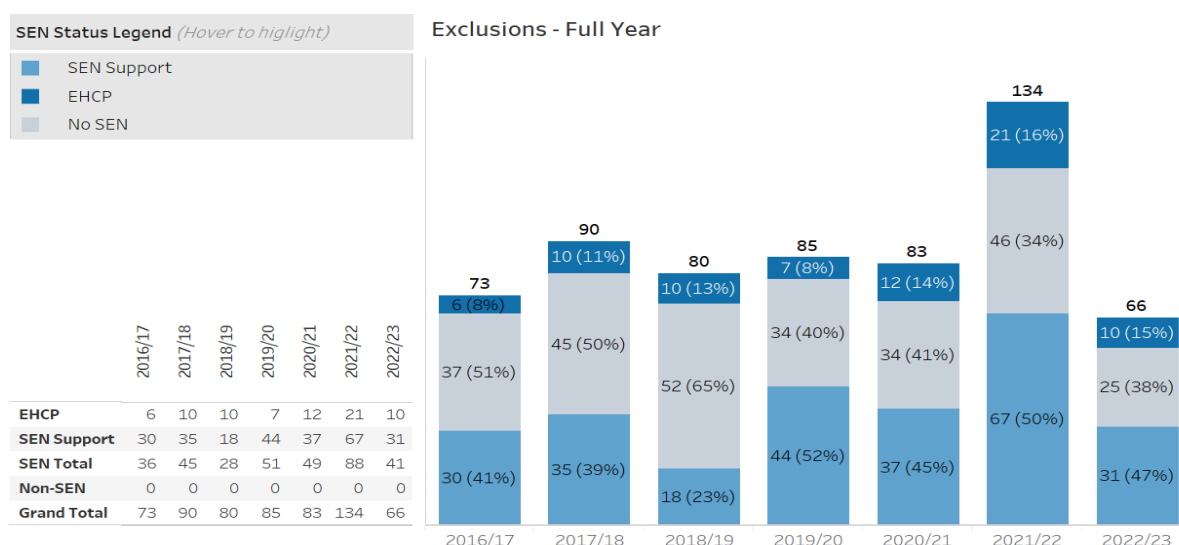
11. Within Surrey, we have a diverse educational landscape. 50% of our schools are academies. We have 39 Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) which vary in size from 34 schools to 2 schools. Some of the MATS have schools in other local authorities. We also have 13 Single Academy Trusts (SATs).
12. 50% or 167 of our infant, junior and primary schools are still maintained while only 18% of our secondary are still to convert to academy status. 63% of our Pupil Referral Units (PRUS) and 48% of our specialist schools also remain maintained schools. Of the 50% of primary phase schools that are not in a MAT, small and rural schools feature, especially in the south of the county. 75 of our maintained primary phase schools are also a school with a faith designation.
13. Partners need to adopt a whole system approach where decisions are made for the benefit of all children, young people and their families. Some schools have the challenge of falling rolls, some share sites or have feeder arrangements in place. It is imperative that we have a joint moral purpose that unites us and we minimise the risk of fragmentation.

14. Surrey has a successful education partnership, Schools Alliance for Excellence (SAfE), which already works with schools across phases and with maintained and academy schools to ensure high quality training is available. SAfE also has a contract to undertake the statutory work of 'Schools Causing Concern.'
15. The White Paper also has an ambition to secure better outcomes for pupils who have historically achieved less well than their peers. This accords with Surrey's 2030 vision of no one left behind. While the Schools Bill has been dropped from the legislative agenda, many of the elements remain without the need for a change in primary legislation and Surrey's own ambition clearly sets out the No-one left behind agenda in its Community Vision 2030 and the ambitions for people.
16. Some groups of children and young people in Surrey have poorer attendance and outcomes than their peers or are more likely to be excluded from school. Nationally there has been an increase in absence from school over the last academic year. This national experience is also reflected in the current absence trends of Surrey schools.

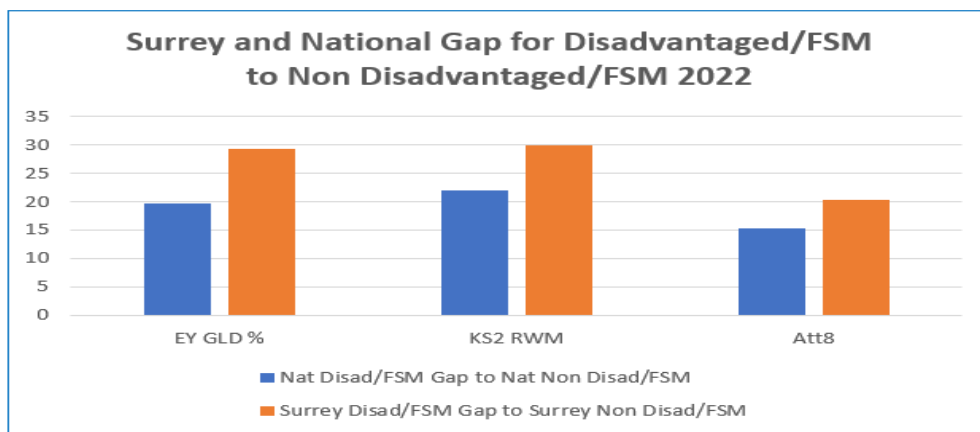
	2020/21	2021/22
<b>All Pupils</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>6.13%</b>
<b>SEND Support without EHCP</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>9.84</b>
<b>SEND with EHCP</b>	<b>12.9%</b>	<b>11.6%</b>
<b>GRT</b>	<b>16.6%</b>	<b>23.4%</b>
<b>Children on CP Plans</b>	<b>17.21%</b>	<b>19.4%</b>
<b>Children formerly on CP Plans</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>14.2%</b>

Note: Attendance data is for all Maintained, Academy and Free Schools. Source of data is live and 2021/22 is yet to be validated and published by DfE.

17. Nationally there has been an increase in permanent exclusion from school over the last academic year. This national experience is also reflected in the permanent exclusion numbers from Surrey schools. Also, in line with the national picture, it is worth noting there has been an increase in Permanent Exclusion in the current academic year. 66 % of all permanent exclusions in academic year 2021/22 were pupils with additional needs and / or disabilities.



- 18. There is a stark picture of educational inequality for disadvantaged children in Surrey which must be addressed to achieve our community vision of No-one left behind. Poor educational outcomes are a key determinate of health inequality. Trend data shows that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils from Early Years through to GCSE are significantly poorer than those of their peers. 25% of Surrey pupils who have SEN provision are eligible for free school meals compared to 10% of Surrey pupils who access no SEN provision. For pupils with an EHCP this rises to 28.7%. In 2022, the gap at Early Years Foundation Stage between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in Surrey was 29.3%. The national figure was 19.7%.
- 19. At key stage two, 68 % of the pupils in Year 6 were working at age related expectations (ARE) in Surrey. For disadvantage pupils only 38% were working at ARE, a gap of 30% and the worst gap we have seen in Surrey. In 2021 at GCSE level Surrey performed worse than nationally for disadvantaged pupils against the key indicators of Ebacc entries, average attainment 8, English and Maths grades 9-4. Children and young people who have been supported in the care system in Surrey also achieve outcomes below those seen nationally. The graph below shows the difference between the gap nationally and the gap in Surrey.



- 20. In terms of wider outcomes, a recent survey of secondary school pupils identified that 64% of those who identify as LGBTQ said they had been discriminated against in their school. 1 in 9 pupils were concerned about their mental health and well-being.

**The School Organisation Plan - ensuring every child has a high quality school place**

**Sufficiency in mainstream**

- 21. The county council has a statutory responsibility to ensure that there is a sufficient number of school places for all pupils who require one. The council must monitor future projected demand and decide and discuss the appropriate changes to school organisation, where necessary, in order to meet this statutory responsibility. We also want to ensure that every child has access to high quality provision.
- 22. The School Organisation Plan (Annex 1) is a strategic document which sets out policies and principles underpinning school organisational decisions in Surrey. It also highlights the likely demand for school places over a 10-year forecast period, and likely strategies or changes that may be required to meet the council’s statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

23. In Surrey the pattern of demand for pupil places has been largely reflective of the birth rate, housing and migration trends. Surrey saw birth rates increase by 22% in the decade to 2012. However, in line with the national picture, there has been a decline in birth rates since 2013. This means that the nursery and primary populations is declining, whilst the secondary aged population is still set to increase before levelling off in 2025. The county council's capital programme to expand mainstream school places is now focussing on managing the demand pressures in secondary schools. The falling birth rates are variable across planning areas with some as high as 27% and the lowest at 7%.
24. The surplus of places is already causing some sustainability issues in our smaller schools. We have 73 infant, junior or primary schools with less than one form of entry and 29 schools with fewer than a hundred pupils. We want to ensure that all education settings are sustainable and resilient and therefore able to deliver a good or outstanding learning experience for all pupils. Schools with small year groups sometimes have to consider mixed age teaching, staff have multiple leadership responsibilities and in the secondary sector are challenged to provide a full suite of options at GCSE.
25. Fixed costs such as staffing and premises and the changes to schools funding through the National Funding Formula mean that many of these smaller schools are using reserves to set a balanced budget and are experiencing difficulty in recruiting to key posts. Some schools have limited capacity to retain strong, resilient curriculum development and continuous professional development for their staff.
26. Significant numbers of vacant places can destabilise schools and smaller pupil numbers have a significant budgetary impact. Council officers are engaged in facilitating conversations with primary school leaders, academy trusts and other stakeholders about school organisational changes that could help to support those primary phase schools when they have vacancies to secure sustainability for schools moving forward, whilst preserving any latent capacity to future-proof for potential demographic changes. A sustainability strategy has been drafted as an Annex to the School Organisation Plan setting out the issues and our response. It also includes guidance for schools on federation. Falling rolls and therefore falling income can potentially lead to the risk of poorer provision.

### **Places for those pupils with additional needs and/or disability**

27. The School Organisation Plan also sets out our position regarding specialist school places and forecasting.
28. The capital programme for pupils with additional needs and /or disability is aligned with Surrey's Community Vision 2030, which seeks to realise the local area's ambition that everyone benefits from education, skills and employment opportunities that help them to succeed in life. It also supports delivery of the Safety Valve agreement in relation to the sustainability of the High Needs Block.
29. The majority of Surrey's existing specialist school provision is graded by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding. This provision enables better long-term outcomes for pupils educated closer to home by local providers, who successfully support local children and young people to live, learn and grow up locally to achieve their potential. Improved

investment in Surrey's specialist education estate will support local schools to continue to deliver high quality inclusive education to some of the county's most vulnerable children and young people.

30. The Council has therefore agreed to an ambitious programme of providing additional places for those pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) within Surrey.
31. As of September 2022, 810 additional specialist school places have already been delivered across Surrey through thirty-five capital projects which our children and young people are benefiting from. A further fourteen projects are on track for delivery 2023/24, and these will deliver 357 places, which will realise around 190 new places for September 2023. This is enabling more pupils with additional needs to be educated within Surrey and closer to home.

### **Establishing a shared ambition – no one left behind and a lifetime of learning**

32. In line with the Community Vision for Surrey by 2030, we want Surrey to be a uniquely special place where all children have a great start to life and everyone receives education to achieve their full potential and become contributors to their communities. Most importantly, we want to strive to make sure that no learner is left behind.
33. We want Surrey to be a dynamic and forward-looking community of education settings, providing the very best learning experiences for all our children and young people enabling them to learn, develop, achieve and transition successfully to adulthood. This means that every single child and young person will thrive and achieve their aspirations and goals.
34. We want to ensure that learners with additional needs and /or disabilities have access to a high quality, local school and close the gap in terms of outcomes, exclusions and attendance for those who have additional needs.
35. All children and young people should benefit from an education that helps them succeed in life and allows them to make the most of their skills and employment opportunities. We want Surrey pupils and young people to live healthy, active, and fulfilling lives, and for our nurseries, schools, and colleges to equip them to make good choices about their life and wellbeing. All children and young people should be able to feel safe and confident in their education.
36. Adults need to be able to access learning opportunities in high quality provision to develop new skills or to secure new qualifications. We know that some areas of Surrey have adults who are less able to secure economic well-being because of skills and qualification gaps. We also need to respond to the emerging skills gaps and ensure that we are meeting the aspirations of the Levelling Up White Paper. The strategy will therefore embrace the opportunities for a Lifetime of Learning.
37. Reflecting on the strengths and challenges in the system and through initial work with an early years, schools and college leaders working group, we have identified **six key objectives**. We want an education vision, strategy and plan that allows us to ensure that:
  - everyone benefits from education, skills and employment opportunities that help them succeed in life
  - we overcome inequalities – ensuring that no one is left behind
  - we reduce and remove barriers to education and participation
  - we ensure the equality, diversity and inclusion sit at the heart of our education system

- equity and excellence are not alternatives and cannot be divided
- we bring together collaborative partners and stakeholders to work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and our adults.

38. Key to this sense of collaboration is a shared accountability for all our learners. The **key principles that will shape how we work together** are that we:

- Bring together all Surrey schools and partners to improve attainment and opportunities for all
- Shared accountability for improving standards and the educational outcomes and life chances of all residents
- Promoting a culture of openness, trust, partnership and collaboration that improves outcomes, shares best practice and contributes to system led improvement.
- Ensuring no education settings are left isolated
- Putting the interests of children and young people first at all times
- Ensuring no child should fail to reach their educational potential because of disadvantage or vulnerability
- Ensuring all our joint actions add value, are evidence based and as far as possible are preventative rather than a response to a crisis.

39. Good initial work has already taken place with a range of stakeholders through the working group which has further co-developed **draft joint ambitions** that will sit at the heart of the Lifetime of Learning Strategy. These are included at **Annex B** and will be tested through consultation and engagement in Spring Term 2023. Following this initial work, we are now seeking agreement from Cabinet to the approach for establishing a shared ambition, invite comments on the objectives, principles and draft joint ambitions identified to date and seek support for the process of consultation in the Spring Term and the resourcing of a strategy lead to facilitate this work. With a strategy lead we anticipate being able to launch this work in the Autumn term of 2023. It is essential that all key partners are able to identify their role and the expectations others will have of them to secure our ambition of no one left behind.

#### Consultation:

40. The School Organisation Plan is not subject to statutory consultation. However, the leads for Surrey's phase councils have been consulted, alongside Schools Alliance for Excellence (SAfE), the Diocese of Guildford and internal colleagues. There are quadrant briefings in January for schools to look at local planning forecasts and the sustainability strategy. Subject to endorsement by Cabinet and agreement by Full Council in February 2023, the plan will be widely distributed to education stakeholder groups and organisations, including schools, Local Planning Authorities and Dioceses. It is considered to be a helpful tool to aid future planning at a school level. The plan will also be published on the Surrey County Council website for public viewing.
41. The CFLLC Select Committee have had a formal update on school organisation planning and an informal briefing on both the School Organisation Plan and our work on securing a Surrey-wide ambition for all learners with a core priority of ensuring that no one is left behind.



42. A stakeholder group involving representatives from all phases and types of education settings, SAfE, teaching schools and Dioceses have met to consider the strengths, issues and challenges for education in Surrey. This planning group will continue to work together to shape the ambitions and priorities before a draft Surrey education strategy is shared more widely through a range of stakeholder engagement activity.
43. Alignment with the Surrey Skills Plan has been a key feature of the work to date, ensuring that the Lifetime of Learning approach supports the delivery of the Surrey Skills Plan.

#### **Risk Management and Implications:**

44. The statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for all applicants within Surrey is held by the county council. An understanding of the school estate and how school organisation changes relate to demographic changes is vital to performing this duty.
45. In a diverse school education landscape, the local authority retains statutory duties which include being a champion for all children in Surrey especially those who are vulnerable. We also retain duties around 'Schools Causing Concern.' An education strategy will ensure that all settings are committed to inclusion and to working in a collaborative way to benefit every child and every community.

#### **Financial and Value for Money Implications:**

46. The School Organisation Plan underpins the school basic need planned capital programme. It also links to the Additional Needs and Disability and Alternative Provision capital plans to ensure consistency and alignment of strategies. It determines the level of additional school places required across the county. The plan is the business driver for the required capital investment which forms part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
47. This latest iteration of the School Organisation Plan is aligned to the current budgets within the Council's MTFS. There is therefore no additional request for capital funding at this time.
48. As per paragraph 22, the plan can also be used for early identification of potential surplus places and the impact that may have on funding allocations for individual schools.

#### **Section 151 Officer Commentary:**

49. Although significant progress has been made to improve the Council's financial position, the financial environment remains challenging. The UK is experiencing the highest levels of inflation for decades, putting significant pressure on the cost of delivering our services. Coupled with continued increasing demand and fixed Government funding this requires an increased focus on financial management to ensure we can continue to deliver services within available funding. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2022/23 remains uncertain. With no clarity on central government funding in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council

to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term.

50. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports the review of the School Organisation Plan and the impact it has on informing medium term planning.

#### **Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer:**

51. Section 26 School Standards & Framework Act 1998 requires every local education authority shall prepare a school organisation plan for their area. A school organisation plan is a statement which sets out—
- (a) how the authority propose to exercise their functions during the prescribed period with a view to securing the provision of primary and secondary education that will meet the needs of the population of their area during that period; and
  - (b) any facilities which the authority expect to be available outside their area for providing such education.
52. A school organisation plan must deal with such matters, and take such form, as may be prescribed. The matters prescribed for the purposes of subsection (3) shall include the provision which the authority propose to make during the period in question for children with special educational needs.
53. A school organisation plan prepared by a local education authority in England requires the approval of the school organisation committee or the adjudicator; and regulations may make provision with regard to the procedure to be followed in connection with the preparation and approval of such plans.
54. The School Organisation Plan is a key document in ensuring that Surrey County Council is able to comply with its duty to ensure that sufficient school places are available in the area. Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on the Council to secure that efficient primary and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the population in its area. In doing so, the Council is required to contribute to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on the Council to secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available in its area. There is a legal duty on the Council therefore to secure the availability of efficient education in its area and sufficient schools to enable this.

#### **Equalities and Diversity:**

55. There are no direct equalities implications arising from the School Organisation Plan. However, the provision of a sufficient number of school places which are open to all applicants will support the Council's commitment to equality and diversity. The EIA screening tool has indicated that a full EIA is not required.
56. Outcomes for some learners in Surrey are significantly below those of their peers. The ambition of the lifetime of learning strategy is to mobilise a collaborative effort to close the gap in outcomes for our most disadvantaged learners.
57. The Surrey Skills Strategy outlines the pockets of deprivation and stark gap in workplace vs residents' earnings which requires intervention to ensure no one is left behind and all residents share in Surrey's success.

### Other Implications:

58. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	Set out below
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	Set out below
Environmental sustainability	No significant implications arising from this report
Compliance against net-zero emissions target and future climate compatibility/resilience	No significant implications arising from this report
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report

### CORPORATE PARENTING/LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IMPLICATIONS

59. This is a key document to ensuring that the appropriate numbers of school places are provided to meet the demand of our residents. All places provided have the highest priority given to children in the care of the local authority.

### SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND ADULTS IMPLICATIONS

60. The council has a duty to promote and improve educational outcomes for all children, particularly those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. The School Organisation Plan is an important piece of evidence used to plan the appropriate number of school places, thereby aiding the council in fulfilling this duty.

### What Happens Next:

61. If endorsed by Cabinet and approved by Full Council, the School Organisation Plan will be published on the Surrey County Council website and distributed widely to all stakeholders including Surrey schools, district and borough councils and local Diocesan boards.
62. The School Organisation Plan is reviewed periodically to allow for the incorporation of new and updated information, usually following an annual timescale.
63. Stakeholder engagement on the Lifetime of Learning Strategy will take place during the Spring Term of 2023 with Lead Cabinet Member consideration of the results of the engagement in the Summer Term. Subject to the outcome of this, the intention is to publish a Lifetime of Learning Strategy for Surrey for the start of the academic year 2023/24.

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**Consulted:**

Phase council leads (Early years, primary, secondary, specialist and FE)

Teaching school representatives

MAT representatives

SAfE

Dioceses representatives

CFLLC Select Committee

Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Council officers responsible for skills and economy

Finance officers

Land and Property officers

District and Borough officers

**Annexes:**

Annex A: School Organisation Plan

Annex B: Draft Joint Ambitions

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