

CABINET – 27 JUNE 2023**PROCEDURAL MATTERS****Public Questions:****Question (1): Astrid Charters**

Why are SEND caseworkers allowed to leave their positions without parents being officially informed that they are leaving and who the replacement staff member will be?

This causes so much upheaval and delays in our CYP'S education. In my case, being left without a finalised EHCP after annual review means that agreed on provision and resources will not be delivered in an appropriate time.

I know that this question had been discussed at a Family Voice Surrey meeting last year with Liz Mills, Director for Education and Learning and Rachael Wardell, Executive Director – Children, Families and Lifelong Learning but looks like no advance has been made. It needs sorting, especially now as so many caseworkers have left Surrey CC in the year alone.

Reply:

The turnover of staff recently has resulted in poorer handovers of information and communication with parents and carers than the SEN Service strives for. We apologise to any family where this has been their experience.

As a result, the SEN service has a new process to alert parents and schools where there is a change in Case Officer. When a Case Officer or Send Senior Case Manager is leaving the service, before they leave, they are required to email their young people, parents/carers, and settings to make them aware that they are leaving and identify who the new worker will be. There are occasions where a case officer leaves their role and a replacement officer has not yet be identified or a staff member is absent or leaves at short notice. In this instance duty systems are now in place to ensure that there is continued support and contact until a new caseworker is in post.

We recognise that this protocol has only been in operation since the Spring Term 2023 and is growing in consistency of application. We monitor this by using a data report and through feedback. We are grateful when parents, carers or other stakeholders including voluntary and community sector partners bring any concerns about the operation of this protocol to our attention and will work quickly to resolve any remaining problems.

Clare Curran
Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
27 June 2023

Question (2): David Pratt

Can Surrey Highways please explain the logic they are following when fixing a pothole in a street that they have deemed serious enough to repair but leave other potholes only inches away from the hole that is being repaired as they deem these other potholes less serious. Surrey Highways will then send workmen back to the same location 6 or 8 weeks later to fix these potholes that were originally deemed not serious but have now become much bigger. As a Council Tax payer, I cannot see how making multiple visits to the same location is cost effective. When your workmen visit a pothole for the first time and have all their tools out to fix it then why are potholes within a certain radius not also fixed?

Reply:

The pattern of unusual weather over the past 12 months (including extreme heat, extreme rainfall, and prolonged sub-zero temperatures) has led to rapid deterioration of some of our road surfaces and caused a significantly higher than average numbers of potholes over recent months. As has been reported widely in the media, this has been the experience across much of the country.

Whilst the number of inspectors and gangs operating on the network day and night has been increased significantly since December, the volume of potholes we have experienced has meant we have not always been able to repair all the defects in the same location at the same time, due to the need to be mindful of residents' safety and operational constraints. Recognising the importance of pothole repairs for residents', various changes have now been introduced to minimise the likelihood of defects being left at the first visit even during peak volumes. This is explained further as follows:

- Potholes are classified into requiring attendance within 5 days or 28 days based on a safety risk assessment. In more 'normal' circumstances, gangs will usually be scheduled to carry out all recorded repairs in the same location however, particularly in times where there are high numbers of defects, gangs are likely to be scheduled to focus on repairing the higher risk priority defects which will be across multiple locations rather than completing all recorded repairs in the same location. We appreciate this can be frustrating for residents however we do need to minimise the safety risks associated with defects being on the network and prioritise repairs accordingly.
- Operationally, the gangs are scheduled to carry out the defect repairs assigned to them which have been assessed and transferred from the Inspection Team. Unfortunately, with the rapid deterioration experienced this winter, we found that potholes were forming after inspections had taken place and so gangs were attending locations to repair scheduled defects and finding others that hadn't been factored into their schedule and that they were not equipped to be able to respond to e.g. not having the right traffic management or enough repair material. Whilst volumes were so high, we did have to concentrate on repairing what we had already scheduled due to risk management purposes previously

described. Recognising that this situation was not optimal, or providing a good customer experience however, we have since introduced changes to our operation and introduced new processes, equipment, and extra resources to improve delivery in this regard. We are now scheduling an increased number of larger patch repairs to remove the likelihood of further defects occurring at the same location in the short term and have also equipped gangs to be able to repair additional potholes in the same location at the first visit. There will always be some potholes that will require a return visit unfortunately, but we are confident that the changes recently introduced will help to minimise these.

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Kevin Deanus
Cabinet Member for Highways and Community Resilience
27 June 2023

Question (3): Sally Blake

Felling trees and burning the wood gives off carbon dioxide which contributes significantly to climate change. It destroys wildlife habitats, and it also gives off PM2.5 and PM10 particulates, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide which are very harmful to human health. There is substantial evidence to support this:

- In 2021, 500 scientists wrote to the EU asking for an end to tree burning for energy as it will warm the climate for decades or centuries to come.
- In 2022, before the COP15 biodiversity summit, 650 scientists wrote to World leaders urging them to stop burning trees for energy because it destroys valuable wildlife habitats.
- In 2019, new research on air pollution found it caused 64,000 deaths in the UK each year, while our Health & Safety Executive says only 5 or 6 people are killed by falling trees with only 3 of those in public spaces.

Despite this, in the year to 31 March 2022, the Council felled between 2,872 and 3,394 trees (figures from an FOI request). Most of the wood will probably have been sent for burning. The Council's reported carbon dioxide emissions in that year were 13,319 tonnes (from an FOI request). However, if we were to assume the Council sent 3,000 felled tree trunks weighing an average of one tonne each for burning, the Council's carbon dioxide emissions from this (using a government conversion rate) would have been another 4,000 tonnes adding 30% to the Council's reported emissions.

The Council's Tree Risk Management Strategy appears to take no account of the massive and adverse impact on climate change, wildlife habitats and human life caused by the felling and burning of trees, only to the infinitely smaller risk that a tree may fall and cause death or injury or inconvenience.

Further, on 7 June 2023, the Surrey Hills AONB Board agreed a Position Statement on ash dieback. It says clear felling areas of woodland is damaging, and the aim should be to remove trees only where they pose a threat to people, such as by roads or busy footpaths, and close or re-route people away from badly affected areas. It lists the

huge benefits to biodiversity of letting wood decay naturally, and says there are almost 1,000 species of wildlife that have an association with ash, with 45 being wholly dependent on the tree. Both Sheepheas and Norbury Park are in the Surrey Hills AONB.

4b Will the Council now change its strategy and adapt to the times, by leaving trees standing as long as possible, including those with ash dieback, unless they present a clear, current and real danger on an officially designated public road, byway, bridleway or footpath and, in the case of ash dieback, end the mass felling regime that is in place at the moment?

Public notices could communicate this strategy, explain the dangers of moving off officially designated routes and explain limits to the Council's liability.

Reply:

Thank you for your interest in the management of woodland and tree felling in Surrey. We have listened to views and are currently in the process of reviewing our approach to tree management and maintenance, tree planting and tree felling ahead of the winter season. We have been working with community groups and experts to ensure we consider all aspects. Protecting wildlife and biodiversity is a key factor in these considerations and we are keen to get the right outcome in regards to this.

We would welcome your ongoing input into this process and will be in touch with details of future opportunities.

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
27 June 2023

Question (4): Andrew Stevens

How many children in Surrey are currently in Surrey CC's system but are not thriving in school? Broken down by EHCP status, tuition status, A2E status, special/alternative school attendance status, EOTAS status. If they are actually in attendance, if so, typically how long in comparison to typical expected school attendance?

If, as I suspect, it's not a small number, what does Surrey CC plan to do about it? I don't mean fines, threat of imprisonment or forceful action on the children. I mean engaging directly with willing parents and Autistic/neurodivergent adults to setup NEW community schools and learning centres that operate VERY differently to mainstream and "special schools" (which often are mainstream in disguise only helping physical disabilities).

Surrey All-Age Autism Strategy needs investment, resources and to bring onboard Autistic Adults, SEN families to directly steer some new programmes, services and make it a reality THIS year. I want to be among them, please let me get directly involved.

Reply:

The vast majority of Surrey children are thriving in Surrey’s schools. Our attainment data year on year confirms that Surrey children outperform their peers nationally. Overall attendance has been rising since the pandemic, although not yet to pre-pandemic levels and those attending our specialist provisions have found it more difficult to return full time.

For those children who are not attending, or regularly attending, school our Inclusion Service works closely with the schools and the families to support children to access education that is suitable for them.

The table below indicates cohorts of children that we routinely monitor their educational access and focus on ensuring they are able to return to full time education as swiftly as possible relative to their needs. The cohorts include children missing education as they are awaiting a school place (including those who may have moved into the County, those young people who are anxious about attending school and have poor attendance or those with a mental health or medical need who are receiving tuition outside of school, either from our Access to Education (A2E) services or other tuition providers.

	Children missing education*	Access to Education Service (A2E)	Other tuition**	Total school population 5-16 years old ***
Number of children	77	200	102	151,623
Number of these with an Education health and care plan (EHCP)	44	160	102	7,175
% of those with an EHCP	57%	67%	100%	4.7%
Number of these on SEN Support	6	N/A	N/A	19,781

*Children Missing Education includes children who are awaiting a placement at a mainstream school without any additional needs.

**Including packages of support for children otherwise than at school agreed with parents and suitable to their needs, and/or receipt of a personal budget to provide suitable education in line with their plan.

***Data taken from January 2023 school census for maintained schools and academies in Surrey – does not include independent or non-maintained schools

The attendance levels of children who have additional needs and/or disabilities when compared with attendance of their peers is of concern; however, year on year, Surrey compares favourably to the national picture.

Attendance		Persistent absence		Severe absence	
Without an EHCP		15.0%		56.9%	
With an EHCP		35.2%		19.5%	
SEN support		28.7%		23.7%	

National and Surrey Severely Absent Comparisons

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22
National	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	1.1%	1.7%
Surrey	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.9%	1.3%

We are supporting these vulnerable young people in a wide range of ways including:

- We are working with our partners MINDWORKs to support young people with mental health needs and have developed information for schools and parents to enable them to support young people with mental health needs.
- All schools have access to a primary mental health worker.
- In relation to emotionally based school non-attendance (EBSNA) – we have an EBSNA working group which has involved Family Voice (parent group) that has produced information for parents and a training webinar which was attended by over 200 professionals and parents.
- The Inclusion Service provides support to parents and schools to reintegrate children back into school and to improve their attendance.
- Attendance for children with an EHCP can sometimes lower if a child has complex medical needs reasons and the young people have complex needs; we are working with the Special Schools Phase Council and health partners to develop strategies to ensure these children can access education.
- To support Autistic and Neurodivergent (ND) young people, we have developed an All Age Autism Strategy. Delivery of the strategy is fully funded by the Better Care Fund, with funding awards made to a range of user-led voluntary sector partners to support its delivery.
- Health commissioners and providers have developed a neurodevelopmental development pathway to support young people and their parents.
- Schools themselves have established an Innovation and Inclusion Working group which has identified the priorities that will provide support for vulnerable

young people and their families, including successful transitions, neuro diverse and inclusive education settings, and strategies for supporting emotional wellbeing and distressed behaviour.

- SCC's £180million SEND Capital programme is creating significant new specialist provision with professionals skilled at meeting the needs of a range of vulnerable young people includes those who are autistic.

In relation to opening new community schools and learning centres, local authorities no longer lead on establishing new schools. New schools can be part of an academy trust or a free school if they are required to provide sufficiency of places in the local area. Parents and members of the local community can work together to present a bid to the DfE to lead and manage a new free school. All schools can work closely with their parents and local community to encourage their participation and engagement in school matters and have a duty to set out their local offer for children attending the school so parents know what their children can access and expect.

There are many opportunities to be involved in the All Age Autism Strategy implementation which has been brought together by autistic children, young people and adults and family carers along with professionals from across the service system. Each workstream has an autistic person and/or a parent co-leading the work with people with lived experience and partners from across the service system. The All Age Autism Partnership Board is also co-chaired with Family Voice and children and young people from Autism ATLAS (Accept, Teach, Listen, Access, Support).

The development and ongoing implementation of the strategy continues to be centred around the involvement of autistic people and family carers and is based on the *Nothing About Us Without Us* approach. Therefore, coproduction is embedded throughout the delivery of the strategy.

Ongoing work to implement the strategy includes:

- **Behind The Mask**- Coproduced event focusing on autistic girls and emotional wellbeing.
- **Autism Suicide Prevention Training**-Bespoke training commissioned focusing on autistic children and young people, adults and parents and carers. This has been coproduced and delivered by people with lived experience and parents and carers of autistic people.
- **Navigating Education/Smooth Transitions**-Coproduced event focusing on robust transition planning based on positive relationships, trust, and a person-centred approach.
- **Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)**-Coproduced work focusing on understanding PDA along with the appropriate support interventions. Three sessions have been held with parents and carers (NAS & Family Voice) of PDA children and young people. PDA Reference Group is being established.
- **Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)/ Sensory differences**- Identified by Autism ATLAS as a priority area. We are in the process of bringing

together relevant partners to launch this coproduced work in academic year 2023/2024.

- **LGBTQ+** Autism ATLAS have identified this as a priority area. We are in the process of bringing together relevant partners to launch this coproduced work in academic year 2023/2024.
- **Inclusive Apprenticeship**- An autistic young person is employed by the AAA Strategy. The apprentice is coproducing a project focusing on the journey of the education system as experienced by children and young people and parents and carers. The outcomes will be used to improve inclusivity.

Clare Curran
Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
27 June 2023

Question (5): Anna Sutherland

I know several local families who have children with EHCPs, that are still waiting to be told which special school or college Surrey intend to transfer their child or young person to in September. Particularly for children with SEND, a good transition plan is extremely important, to minimise the stress and anxiety that often occurs when a huge change in routine occurs.

However, with the end of the Summer term pre phase transfer fast approaching, the likelihood of a good transition (which often involves the staff from the new placement visiting the child at their current school, and also should involve the child having a visit to their new school or college so can only happen during term time) for our children, is diminishing rapidly. Of course this does not even begin to address the stress for the family which is caused when an unsuitable school or college is named at a very late stage.

My question today is:

Do the SEND leadership team and the Directors responsible for the service, and the Councillor, have to spend any length of time with SEND families and their children as part of their role? Specifically, what about spending time with those families who are unfortunate enough not to get 'the right support at the right time' for their children. I know you have meetings with the mandatory parent carer forum, of course, but what about experiencing what life is actually like for children with disabilities and their families, particularly when they have the additional burden of fighting to get their child the special educational provision which they are entitled to? When their child is out of school, for example.

Reply:

We aim to make decisions about changes of placement at Key Stage Transfer within statutory timescales, working in partnership with families who are invited to let us know their placement preference. In 2023, 100% of Key Stage Transfer decisions were

made within statutory timescales. Some of those children will have had a ‘type’ of educational setting named on their EHCP, whilst an appropriate education placement is sought. Staff have continued to work with families to seek suitable education placements. Currently (as of 15th June) 211 or 8.8% of children in the Key Stage Transfer cohort are awaiting confirmation of a school place. 54 of these children had an EHCP at the statutory date of confirmation (15 February 2023) and the remainder have more recently been issued an EHCP and we are consulting with appropriate settings.

We always take into consideration the placement preference which has been expressed by the family. Placements are agreed in line with parental preference wherever possible. This ensures that transition work can begin as early as possible.

There are various opportunities for leaders and senior managers within the Council to spend time with the parents and carers of children and young people with additional needs. These include regular locality service showcases, publicised via the local offer website <https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/news/additional-needs-service-showcases>, which have been positively received by the families who have attended. Leaders and managers also attend themed engagement sessions organised by Surrey Family Voice, the parent carer forum, and senior managers also meet regularly with ATLAS, user voice and participation group for young people with additional needs and disabilities. The Additional Needs and Disabilities Partnership is also working to introduce a Parent Parliament to ensure families are involved in directly helping us to shape the information, support and services for children and young people. Regular visits to schools and settings also helps to inform an understanding for leaders relating to the lived experiences of children and young people.

Clare Curran
Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
27 June 2023

Question (6): Julia Dickinson

How and when will Surrey CC be able to reflect the discovery of its new Chalk Rivers and their winterbourne headwaters (the areas in which there are temporary flowing streams) in Great and Little Bookham, and in Leatherhead by making updates to the following:

1. Surrey’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)?
2. Surrey’s Priority Habitat policies?
3. Surrey’s Groundwater flooding and SUDS policies?
4. Surrey’s Landscape Recovery projects?

As you may be aware, and subsequent to your response to:

1. Natural England proposes to make 2 additions to the UK’s Chalk River data set (i.e. permanent chalk streams) in Great and Little Bookham,

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2. Following the submission of video &/or photographic evidence into their survey, the South East Rivers Trust conducted an initial site survey in December 2022. This initial survey:
 - a. confirmed the proposed Chalk River additions
 - b. identified some winterbourne headwaters in the areas to the south of the new Chalk Rivers including:
 - i. one of the ancient chalk pits in Great Bookham, which fill directly from the aquifer when the water table is high
 - ii. a few of the locations in which chalk springs have repeatedly emerged
 - c. confirmed the need for further surveys along Mole Valley's spring line to identify the full extent of this Priority Habitat and trace the route of each chalk stream tributary through Bookham Common's SSSI into the River Mole.
 3. The River Mole has been identified as a Chalk River from the point (near Thorncroft bridge) at which springs start to emerge. Last summer, the River Mole's riverbed completely dried up near Mickleham yet the River Mole flowed strongly through Leatherhead, demonstrating its flow was 100% aquifer-fed.

Reply:

Surrey County Council are imminently awaiting appointment from Defra that the Council will be the responsible authority to deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Surrey. The LNRS will be a locally led, collaborative process, with engagement from a multitude of different parties. The LNRS will map Surrey's existing areas for nature, agree priorities for nature recovery and map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature across the county.

To accompany the LNRS map, a statement of biodiversity priorities for the county will be produced, covering priority habitats within the county (to include chalk rivers). The Environment Agency are a key stakeholder for the LNRS and as such, they will be consulted on chalk river habitat. In addition, we have a dedicated Senior Advisor at Natural England to help support us with delivery of LNRS in Surrey, and they will be able to help facilitate sharing of data from Natural England on the chalk river data set.

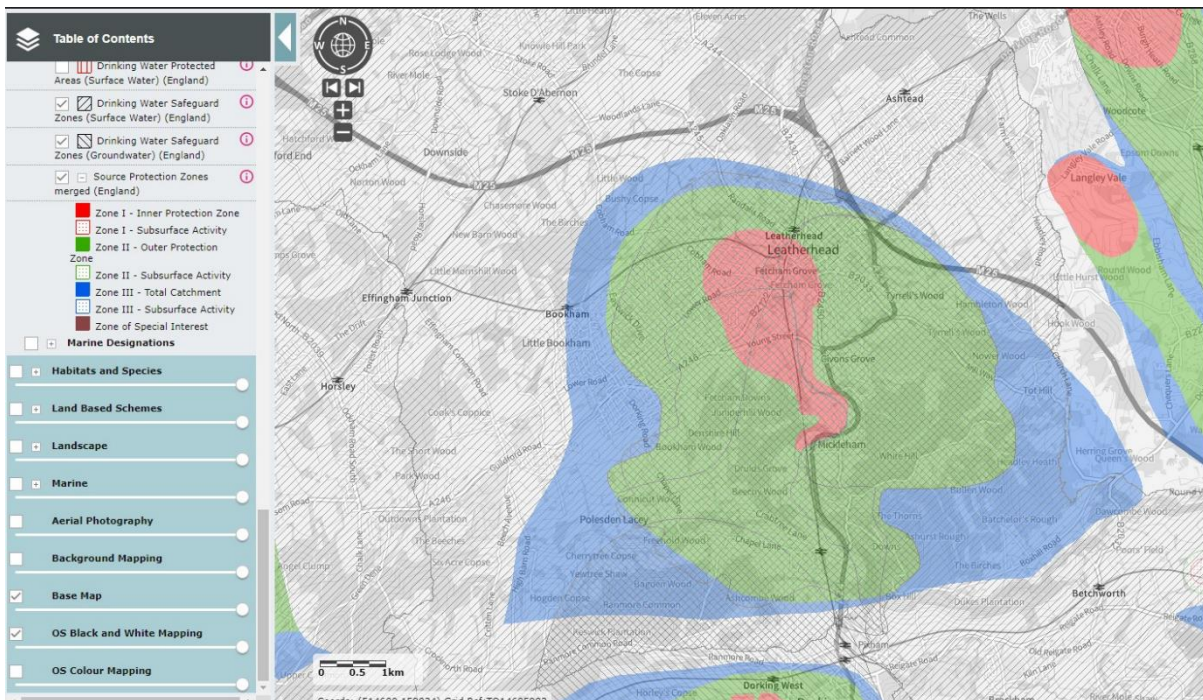
The LNRS will be used to inform and drive Nature Recovery investment across Surrey and across Surrey County Council land.

Whilst nature recovery is the main objective of the LNRS, delivery of additional, wider environmental benefits is also an aspect. For example, Natural Flood Management (creation of wetlands) is just one example of a co-benefit for nature as well as people. The LNRS will therefore help to inform the Council's Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) and Flood Management plans and strategy.

Groundwater Quality is already protected under regulation using Source Protection and Drinking Water Safeguarding Zones; and these newly identified chalk stream areas are covered by the existing designations – see map below. Discharges to groundwater in these areas are monitored and regulated by the Environment Agency.

In our role as statutory consultee for surface water in major planning applications we promote SuDS, and controlled infiltration to groundwater is the primary choice for water disposal across Surrey in both national and local policy and guidance. This promotes recharge of our aquifers and feeds our rivers, especially chalk streams. Any developments which propose infiltration or discharge to watercourse as surface water disposal options have to evidence that adequate pollution prevention is in place; these protect the valuable resources of both groundwater and our watercourses.

Preparation of the LNRS will begin in summer 2023, with a draft LNRS issued for public consultation by end of 2024. Should you have any queries about the LNRS, please contact nature@surreycc.gov.uk



Source Protection and Drinking Water Safeguarding Zones

Marisa Heath
Cabinet Member for Environment
27 June 2023

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