

MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL**TUESDAY 10 OCTOBER 2023****QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED UNDER THE PROVISIONS
OF STANDING ORDER 10.1****KEVIN DEANUS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE****1. KEITH WITHAM (WORPLESDON) TO ASK:**

- a) How many miles of roads and pavements/footpaths are Surrey County Council (SCC) Highways responsible for?
- b) Since SCC agreed the establishment of the Highways Project Horizon in 2013, how many miles of highway have been resurfaced, whether full reconstruction; surface dressing or large patching to date?
- c) When was the Project Horizon (pavements/footpath) programme started, how many miles of pavements/footpaths been resurfaced to date?
- d) Please would the Cabinet Member send a list of all the roads and pavements and dates that have been resurfaced to all Members for their Divisions from 2013 to date.

RESPONSE:

- a) Surrey County Council are responsible for 3,000 miles of roads and 3,500 miles of pavements/footpaths. Please note that this figure excludes public rights of way.
- b) Since 2013, 1,009 miles of road has been treated under the Horizon programme. Please note that this figure excludes resurfacing carried out under other programmes such as Member funded schemes and the capital safety defect programme.
- c) Pavement Horizon began in 2016. Since 2016, 331 miles of pavement have been treated under this programme.
- d) A list of all roads and pavements completed under the Horizon programme has been created. The list includes the date works were completed and which division the scheme was in. Where part of the scheme covers a second division, this is also shown on the list. The list will be shared with Members by the Stakeholder Engagement Team during Highway Briefings.

SINEAD MOONEY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

2. JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK:

Please can you confirm how many children are in Surrey County Council's care under Section 20, and for these please confirm a breakdown of how they are housed.

How many of these children are not in appropriately registered housing, and what is being done to address this?

RESPONSE:

As at 4 October 2023 we had 328 children in care under Section 20. A table showing the numbers of each placement type is below:

Placement Type	No. of children
Adopters, with consent (Not Current Foster Carers)	1
Children's Homes (With Regulations)	53
Independent living with Visiting Support	60
Other Fostering – Short/Long Term Fostering	83
Parent and Baby Assessment Unit	2
Relative/Friend Fostering	43
Res Care Home (Res Homes Act 1984)	1
Residential Schools	19
Semi-independent living not subject to children's homes	53
Supported Lodgings	6
Z1 Other	7
Grand Total	328

Seven of the children subject to Section 20 are currently in unregistered placements. We have confirmed offers for two of these children and they will move in the next few weeks. For the remaining five we are robustly trying to identify appropriate placements. The Gateway to Resources Service is aware they are a priority and therefore is following up all possible options for them as a matter of urgency.

DAVID LEWIS (COBHAM), CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES

3. CATHERINE BAART (EARLSWOOD AND REIGATE SOUTH) TO ASK:

Recently we were asked to promote a survey to residents in which they can prioritise issues for the Council's budget next year. However, there is no option for the issue of Climate Change. Most people who want more funds to support Climate Change

delivery actions will tick the Environment box. But the Environment is not the same as Climate Change.

Was Climate Change considered as a possible option and discarded, or was it never considered in the first place?

RESPONSE:

The options that we asked residents to respond to in this survey were developed based on the aspirations in the Community Vision for Surrey in 2030 and the outcomes we set in the Organisation Strategy 2023 to 2028. These were then refined into outcome statements framed in ways that would be straightforward for all residents to understand.

In hindsight, I accept that residents wanted a more explicit way to express their thoughts on this issue and there should have been a more specific option on climate change.

I remind Members that tackling the causes of climate change is a central focus of this organisation. Enabling a greener future is one of our priority objectives in the Organisation Strategy, and we remain committed to the goal of Surrey's Climate Change Strategy of net zero by 2050 and Surrey County Council by 2030. We are also committing significant funding to support these ambitions for example one difference residents will see is from the £16 million we are investing this financial year in more ultra-low emission buses.

I appreciate there are strong feelings on this topic, and it was not the intention of this survey to play down the importance of tackling climate change. The results are currently being analysed, but emerging data from the survey shows that a significant number of residents responding saw climate change as a top priority for us to address as a Council. This will be considered when the Cabinet meets to discuss the draft budget in November.

DAVID LEWIS (COBHAM), CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES

4. ERNEST MALLETT MBE (WEST MOLESEY) TO ASK:

You will be aware that that OpenAI is one of three companies known to be spending billions on producing Artificial Intelligence (AI) products.

OpenAI has this year released its ChatGPT-4 system for free use or with additional benefits for a small monthly fee.

This system will generate texts, provide information and answer questions with very little prompt information.

The Chief Executive Officer of OpenAI has said that training this AI Chatbot cost \$100 million.

In view of this situation, by which AI systems developed by huge numbers of staff and huge costs are becoming available for both free and rented use, is it really a wise move for Surrey County Council to attempt to produce its own bespoke AI systems?

RESPONSE:

A comprehensive Artificial Intelligence (AI) strategy for the Council is being developed and will be finalised during 2023/24. It will seek to balance driving opportunities and managing risks, with a foundational focus on:

1. Building trust: Engaging with our residents and staff defined with an inclusive roadmap embedded in the strategy.
2. Policy framework: Establishing guidelines for using Generative AI platforms, such as ChatGPT, in support of both internal processes and resident-facing activities.

While there is no intention to replicate the capabilities of commercially available Generative AI platforms, there is a requirement to put in place mechanisms that protect council and residents' data, especially when interfacing with these platforms. That involves fine tuning models with our data to enhance their relevance within the council's context.

In addition, our collaboration with the University of Surrey will continue to address ethical aspects of AI and to deepen our understanding of the opportunities and constraints and we will remain committed to a strategy that is resident-centric and ethically grounded.

MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH

5. FIONA DAVIDSON (GUILDFORD SOUTH-EAST) TO ASK:

Farnborough Airport is proposing to apply for planning permission to double the number of private jets using the airport at weekends and bank holidays. These private jets will not only create significant noise pollution over a wide residential area from as early as 7.00 am, but – more importantly – they produce between five and fourteen times more greenhouse gas carbon dioxide than commercial planes per passenger.

In 2022 there were 11,825 private flights from Farnborough Airport. Staggeringly, in 2022, the route between Farnborough and London was the ninth most used in Europe, with 1,343 private jet flights. This is a distance of 31 miles. These flights emitted a total of 2,692 tonnes of CO2.

Surrey County Council's Climate Change Strategy (2020) identified a 60% emission reduction in the Transport sector by 2035 against Business as Usual as a minimum target.

As a statutory consultee, will Surrey County Council be opposing Farnborough's plans on the basis of the unacceptable addition to CO2 emissions, which directly

undermine the Council's Climate Change Delivery Plans, and will cancel out some of the efforts of residents and SCC to reduce the county's carbon emissions?

RESPONSE:

Farnborough Airport are currently undertaking a public consultation on their proposed expansion, with the submission of a planning application to Rushmoor Borough Council expected in November. As an adjoining authority, Surrey County Council will be a statutory consultee and will be formally consulted on that planning application in due course.

As the planning application has not yet been submitted, it would be premature for the County Council to indicate how it intends to respond to the formal consultation. The application documentation will be scrutinised by officers and the proposal will be considered with reference to the Council's stated position on airport expansion. The Council's response to the consultation will be drafted on this basis.

DAVID LEWIS (COBHAM), CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES

6. ROBERT EVANS OBE (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK:

How much of Surrey's money did the Council spend on the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) challenge?

RESPONSE:

To date the Council has paid £96,407.60 (including VAT). This includes the Council's costs and a contribution of £56,000 to Transport for London's (TfL) costs. TfL have asked for a further contribution of £56,000 which is currently subject to negotiation.

CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING

7. MARK SUGDEN (HINCHLEY WOOD, CLAYGATE AND OXSHOTT) TO ASK:

If a Government were to impose VAT on private school fees could the Cabinet Member confirm if the school places planning team is assessing and modelling the impact and implications of potential increased demand for non-private school places across Surrey?

RESPONSE:

The Education Place Planning team continuously monitor the need for school places so that the council can respond to any changes that may impact the number of pupils needing a school place in Surrey. If the landscape changes and the need for school places increases, officers will respond appropriately to ensure the Council continues to meet the statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

An increase of intake for the normal admission round, i.e. for Reception, Year 3, and Year 7, is easier to respond to as there is more notice through the application process. This may be through additional bulges classes where needed.

Admissions mid-phase or in-year are more difficult to predict and also to accommodate, especially where schools are normally oversubscribed. Officers work with schools in their planning area to develop a working margin of available places to accommodate increases in places be that through: migration into an area, new homes, refugees, or pupils leaving the independent sector.

The impact of the number of pupils leaving the independent sector, should the costs increase if a government were to impose VAT, is difficult to assess at present. The need for sufficient pupils in the independent sector is also important to their own sustainability. Many schools will have bursaries to support lower income families to help families and maintain the numbers on roll in schools. There was some evidence of this additional support during the pandemic, where a number of independent schools offered support to families whose income was reduced.

The Education Place Planning team will continue to ensure that there are sufficient places for those that need them should there be an impact through government legislation.

DENISE TURNER-STEWART, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

8. JAN MASON (WEST EWELL) TO ASK:

The Inspection Report by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services on Surrey Fire and Rescue Service is both disappointing and concerning. Under this Conservative administration key judgements relating to keeping our residents safe: preventing fire and risk, public safety through fire regulation, responding to fires and emergencies, and responding to major incidents, all require improvement.

The Inspector reported that "We were disappointed to find that the service hadn't made the progress we expected since our 2021 inspection".

What reassurances can you give Surrey residents that, unlike in the past, the Conservatives' policy making and management of the Fire Service will see a rapid and vastly improved performance in all the areas where they are currently judged less than adequate and below?

RESPONSE:

Policy and management is the responsibility of the fire and rescue service and is not the role of the Fire and Rescue Authority. The Fire and Rescue Authority will work closely with the service to ensure the delivery of the improvements needed.

The service is producing a comprehensive Improvement Plan in response to the inspection outcomes and is dealing with the Cause of Concern that sits within

Protection as a priority. The Plan will be presented at the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee on 4 December 2023.

The service has demonstrated continuous improvement, Roy Wilsher, HM Inspector of Constabulary and HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services stated during his interview on BBC Radio Surrey on 13 September, following the publication of the inspection report: *“I am very pleased to say this is the third time we have inspected Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and they have improved each time. There is still more to do, there are still 7 areas or grades that require improvement, but they’re moving in the right direction”*.

The challenges the service had faced within the year were recognised by HMICFRS, reflecting on the significant change in SFRS’s service leadership team and 20% of the operational workforce transferring to London Fire Brigade. This was also reflected at the July 2023 Select Committee.

Against this backdrop and considering the national context of the Fire and Rescue sector, which has shown that culture must improve, it is positive that the Inspectorate has acknowledged the improvement in SFRSs culture. This has taken a significant amount of commitment and time to move forward.

The Inspectorate also stated that the Making Surrey Safer Plan remains effective, and as HM Inspector Roy Wilsher reiterated during his BBC Radio Surrey interview *“the service has a good method of emergency response”*.

DAVID LEWIS (COBHAM), CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES

9. ASHLEY TILLING (WALTON SOUTH & OATLANDS) TO ASK:

Regarding the Council’s new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system:

- a) In what areas of operation is there still a significant backlog of queries and what is being done to address these?
- b) What extra resources have been allocated or will be needed in the future to address these problems and what impact will that have on the budget for the project?

RESPONSE:

- a) The areas where we still have backlogs are the IT & Digital Helpdesk (e.g. knowledge issues of users, systems/technical changes, access and reporting) and the HR Helpdesk (including Employee Services, examples include corporate and Schools payroll and HR issues such as annual leave, sick leave and expenses). The IT & Digital backlog has been reduced significantly as there are action plans to close them by the end of the month, with no high priority issues. The HR Helpdesk backlog is being tackled by adopting a 3-level prioritisation approach with the team focusing on resolving Priority 1 and Priority 2 issues.

- b) For IT & Digital, the Digital Business & Insights programme and Vision 2030 resources have been refocussed on closing down the issues. For the HR Helpdesk the team are focused on resolving Priority 1 and 2 issues within existing budgets, and a review is underway to identify underlying recurring issues and where these can be resolved within services, or via strengthened employee self-service. Knowledge and familiarisation issues will also reduce as staff grow confident with using MySurrey.

CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING

10. HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK:

Regarding the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) capital programme:

- a) What type of temporary accommodation and how many places are being planned for to mitigate for the delays in the SEND capital programme as set out in the finance report for September's Cabinet?
- b) How will these delays potentially impact on the education safety valve agreement?

RESPONSE:

- a) Temporary accommodation solutions for 410 places have been delivered or are planned to be delivered either through utilising existing capacity on school sites or modular units. The solutions are planned to facilitate necessary school decant of pupils and teaching accommodation to meet safeguarding and health and safety requirements. This is so the planned project phasing for building works can continue to be carried out throughout the academic year while schools are in operation.
- b) Temporary accommodation and school decant solutions enable individual school's growth plans to commence to meet immediate specialist school place sufficiency demand prior to permanent project delivery and handover. This will ensure that the places delivered are in line with the Safety Valve targets and therefore there is no impact to the Safety Valve agreement.

DENISE TURNER-STEWART, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

11. WILL FORSTER (WOKING SOUTH) TO ASK:

Regarding the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS):

- a) Does the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member agree that the overall judgement in the latest SFRS report that out of eleven areas, just three were rated 'adequate' and seven as 'require improvement' is not good enough?
- b) When can we expect to see a comprehensive policy on high rise buildings?

- c) When will an appropriate action plan covering the shortcomings in other areas of operation be implemented and what will improve for residents, businesses, and service partners and when?
- d) How will SFRS evidence that it is value for money?

RESPONSE:

- a) The Fire and Rescue Authority recognises that the service needs to improve in some areas. The Inspection Improvement Plan will set out how and by when the service will address the Areas for Improvement.

The HMICFRS Inspector highlighted during his BBC Radio Surrey interview that the service has continued to improve and is moving in the right direction. As reported to the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee in July 2023, due to the addition of an 'adequate' grading, it is not possible to make a direct comparison between this report and previous ones. A reduction in grade does not necessarily mean a reduction in performance.

- b) The service will be publishing its revised policy for tall buildings by January 2024. This is part of the joint working in adopting National Operational Guidance. Since the inspection took place (March-April 2023), the service has reviewed its existing policies and procedures.

SFRS exercises and trains regularly to deal with incidents in tall buildings. This is carried out within Surrey and includes cross-border training with our neighbouring fire and rescue services (FRSs).

- c) There is a requirement to produce an Action Plan to address the Cause of Concern in Protection within 28 days. This will be provided to HMICFRS on 11 October 2023. The service then has six months to resolve the Cause of Concern.

The Inspection Improvement Plan (IIP) in response to the HMICFRS recommendations, along with the Action Plan for responding to the Cause of Concern, will be submitted to the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee for scrutiny on 4 December 2023. Directed by the Service Leadership Team the plan will set out the appropriate actions and necessary timeline for delivery.

HMICFRS will arrange a visit to formally review the actions taken by the service to resolve the Cause of Concern and will report on the improvements achieved and the impact on our communities.

- d) The report highlights that "*the service is well funded and has a sustainable financial position*". The main opportunities for SFRS to increase value for money are around efficiency, particularly in terms of staff productivity and utilisation. This work is progressing and some of the productivity gains will be achieved through better technology. SFRS is also developing its approach to benchmarking so it can more easily compare its costs against those of other fire and rescue services.

KEVIN DEANUS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

12. STEPHEN COOKSEY (DORKING SOUTH AND THE HOLMWOODS) TO ASK:

Regarding the slippage in capital budget:

- a) What are the reasons behind the slippage of almost £5m in the delivery of local highway schemes (£2.8m) and road safety schemes (£2.1m)?
- b) What is being done to accelerate work on the delayed projects?

RESPONSE:

Despite the best efforts of officers, our contractors and the relevant divisional Members there are a number of reasons for delays in delivering the local highway schemes and road safety schemes. These include:

- Change of scope to the scheme following general public consultation or engagement with schools.
- Design team resources – changes to scope can have a significant impact on the design process and resources are currently working at full capacity. The team is supplemented by consultant staff, but there is always a challenge to recruit designers with the right skills.
- Changes in scope may impact on costs and there is sometimes the need to secure additional funding.
- Resources in our Traffic Regulation Teams and Road Safety audit teams were not initially sufficient to avoid the impacts of increased peaks in workload. These teams have both now been increased to deal with the demand, however the recruitment was challenging to be able to achieve this in a short length of time.
- Supply chain availability. Efforts have been successful to increase the number of subcontractors we are able to use, however we do need to make sure the right one is available for specific work types.
- The lead in time for specialist plant, traffic signals and materials can be longer than desired.
- Network access. There is a huge demand for access Surrey's network from our maintenance teams, utility companies and others, and all these different works need to be coordinated to avoid creating congestion. Often, due to the location of the improvement schemes these need to happen during school holidays which increases the pressure on the above as these windows are in high demand and limited. For some schemes delivery has been delayed after discussion with the divisional Member to better manage any local impact for residents.

Much good work has already been done to try and remove or minimise delays. This includes internal scrutiny and challenge of programmes, and early liaison with supply chain, specialist suppliers and streetworks. Officer resources have increased to manage demand, but this is an area which requires continued careful management and to be supplemented by our term consultant when needed.

In the Cabinet Member for Highways and Community Resilience decision meeting in September 2023, the Officer report made it clear that while the intention is to construct schemes within one financial year, some will slip to the following year to minimise disruption to traffic. It is established practice that the capital budget may need to roll forward in some circumstances in reflection of the challenges around operational delivery.

If there is a specific scheme you are concerned about, please contact the Stakeholder Engagement team who will be pleased to provide further details.

CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING

13. CATHERINE POWELL (FARNHAM NORTH) TO ASK:

Regarding Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND):

At the October 2022 Council meeting I raised questions around the increasingly confrontational situation between Surrey County Council (SCC), schools and parents / guardians regarding needs assessments, EHCPs and provision of support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Many of the issues are now being addressed and the Local Area SEND Inspection report will provide independent insight into where we are now when it is issued in a few months' time.

Family Voice Surrey were asked to represent parents / carers of children with SEND in Surrey in a one hour meeting with the Inspector, so they produced a slide deck which is available on their website: ([Local Area SEND Inspection update 21st September - Family Voice Surrey](#)).

The input from parents / carers was split into seven key areas:

1. EBSNA (Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance) and Alternative Provision
2. EHCP processes and communication with the SEND team
3. ND (Neurodiverse) Pathways
4. Short Breaks
5. SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) transport
6. Inclusion
7. Social Care and PFA (Psychological First Aid)

Some of the concerns will be addressed by the ongoing work around EHCPs and the additional funding released for additional Educational Psychologists, but others will not.

Please can the Cabinet Member:

- a) Confirm that they have reviewed the Family Voice Surrey slides presented to the Local Area SEND Inspection team with the relevant Officers in the Children's team.
- b) Advise what additional actions / follow-ups she believes are appropriate.
- c) Advise whether or not the serious concerns and impacts identified in the slide deck presented to the Inspection team, and also in the separate short breaks report ([Family Voice Surrey Short Breaks Survey Results - Family Voice Surrey](#)), will lead to a reinstatement of the services that were shut down in April and confirm that actions will be taken to reduce waiting lists for these schemes so that all children with SEND who need to access specialist holiday schemes and regular stay and play / youth provision will be able to do so. Without this it seems inevitable that more families will break down, resulting in worse outcomes for parents / carers and children as well as escalating costs to this council.

RESPONSE:

- a) The slides provided to inspectors were shared by Family Voice Surrey (our parent carer forum partner) after the event and have since been reviewed by leaders across education, social care and health. There is no requirement for the parent carer forum to share this information in advance of sharing with inspectors.
- b) The common themes outlined in the parental feedback are already incorporated in the partnership self-evaluation and the Inclusion and Additional Needs Strategy 2023 – 2026 (both are published on www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/). Much work across the partnership is already underway or planned to improve these areas, as set out in the partnership strategy action plans, under the 7 priority areas: Coproduction, early intervention and support, inclusion, preparing for adulthood, joint commissioning, systems and practice and leadership and governance.

Actions beyond this are:

- Further strengthening of the relationship with Family Voice Surrey as one of the partners in the Additional Needs and Disabilities Partnership.
 - Continued development of feedback mechanisms, including the annual parent/carer survey, action cards, locality-based parent-care drop-in sessions etc.
 - Once the final inspection report has been received, we will incorporate the recommendations into the existing Inclusion and Additional Needs partnership strategy and action plans and monitor via the Key Performance Indicators reported regularly to the Additional Needs and Disabilities partnership board.
- c) Surrey County Council values and recognises the importance of our ongoing partnership with Family Voice Surrey. The essential contribution they make in powerfully communicating the lived experience of families, children and young people with additional needs and disabilities in the county. We worked closely with Family Voice in developing their Short Breaks survey, we understand the

important voice they have and the great value in the work they do as was demonstrated by their lead role in the recent Local Area SEND inspection.

We are maximising the resources available for short breaks services for children with disabilities in the county and appreciate the importance of these service for local children and families. For 2023/24, we have maintained the £2.5 million budget for Short Breaks at a time when all budgets are under considerable pressure and secured a further £900,000 of Short Breaks funding from the Department for Education (DfE) Short Breaks Innovation Fund to enable the delivery of additional short breaks provision, focussed on children and families with the most complex needs. In total this represents an increase in funding of 36% for 2023/24 when compared to 2022/23. We are engaging in a co-production piece of work with Family Voice and our providers over the autumn term to ensure that we have a system that ensures that those families with highest needs are prioritised in terms of access to the Short Breaks offer.

With regards to future investment in short breaks, this is being reviewed as part the 2024/25 budget setting process within Children, Families and Lifelong Learning during the autumn, mindful of the other statutory pressures in this area. In parallel, we have also submitted a further bid to the Department of Education for an extension of Short Break's funding into 2024/25, to support the Short Breaks' offer in Surrey. We are also working closely with the newly formed Department for Education Short Breaks policy unit to highlight the importance of Short Breaks. The outcome of the 2023/24 financial year budget setting process should be confirmed by early November.

DAVID LEWIS (COBHAM), CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES

14. NICK DARBY (THE DITTONS) TO ASK:

- a) It has come to my attention that there are significant delays in the timely processing of claims for pothole damage to vehicles owned by Surrey residents. Can you please confirm:
 - i) What is the current backlog of pothole claims?
 - ii) How many claims have been received per month since the start of the year?
 - iii) How many officers are tasked with processing these claims?
 - iv) Do the officers involved have appropriate legal training?
- b) When claims for pothole damage have been received:
 - i) What is the percentage of claims being admitted and refused?
 - ii) In how many cases have the applicants issued proceedings following a rejected claim?
- c) Is the Council satisfied that the amount of information required to proceed with a claim is reasonable?

RESPONSE:

a)

- i) There is a total of 471 outstanding pothole claims.

Of these, there are currently 344 open claims being dealt with by the Council's claims team. 224 of these claims remain outstanding beyond the 90 day response target.

The remaining 127 claims have been referred to the Council's highways contractor who has responsibility for claims which are the result of a failure by the contractor to fix potholes in the agreed timescale, or when a repair has been substandard.

A process is currently underway to tackle the remaining backlog held in the claims team before the 2023/2024 winter months. All outstanding pothole claims received up to 30 September will receive an initial response by Mid-October. In cases where liability is denied by the Council and this is challenged, there is a target to resolve these cases by the end October.

- ii) SCC has received the following total Highway related claims, per month:

January 2023 - 875

February 2023 - 454

March 2023 - 493

April 2023 - 613

May 2023 - 449

June 2023 - 267

July 2023 - 144

August 2023 - 121

September 2023 - 71

- iii) There are 7.8 FTE officers working on the claims.
- iv) 7 Officers hold either undergraduate, or both undergraduate and postgraduate legal qualifications.

1 Officer holds Insurance qualifications.

All Officers undertake annual Continued Professional Development in insurance law, claims and litigation.

b)

i) Of the 3,016 claims which have been dealt with since 1 January 2023:

83.32% of claims have been refused and no compensation paid.

16.67% have been settled by the Council or referred to the contractor to consider settlement. The majority of claims referred to the contractor are settled.

ii) The total figure of proceedings issued on closed files is unfortunately not automatically reported on the claims system.

There are currently 6 claims where proceedings have been issued relating to pothole damage on the 344 open claims held by the claims team.

c) All information requested is in line with industry standards. This ensures that all claims can be accurately investigated based on the precise circumstances of each incident and where an offer of settlement is to be made, public funds are protected, and compensation is not overpaid.

KEVIN DEANUS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

15. KEITH WITHAM (WORPLESDON) TO ASK: (2nd Question)

One department of Surrey County Council, Your Fund Surrey, awarded £580,000 of council funding to enable the building of the new Normandy Community Shop and Café, now open. But another department, Highways, has refused permission for this valuable new community facility to have either a 'brown' sign or any other roadside signage to help guide people from the wider area where it is located.

Can the Cabinet Member explore options, and arrange for a sign to 'Community Shop and Café' in Glaziers Lane, Normandy, at the junction with Manor Fruit Farm?

RESPONSE:

A request for new signs to highlight the entrance to the Manor Fruit Farm Community Shop and Café on Glaziers Lane, Normandy had been previously received from Normandy Parish Council and had been investigated.

It has been explained that we are unable to install a brown Tourist Information sign as the regulations around these signs is now very restricted to those major tourist destinations registered with Visit England and so, unfortunately, this is not possible under national guidance for facilities such as the Normandy Community Shop and Café.

The Normandy Parish Council were advised that we have to balance the wish to promote this community facility more widely against our responsibilities for road safety, traffic management and the environment, so we take care not to overload the roads with unnecessary signs.

Locations for a 'black and white' direction sign opposite the entrance to Manor Fruit Farm or, adding to existing signs to the medical facility, were considered however a good location was unfortunately not identified for a new sign. This was due to the proximity of a mature tree and two access points to residents' homes opposite the entrance to Manor Fruit Farm. Any signposts installed in this area are likely to be quickly overgrown with vegetation and also the base of the sign could damage the roots of the tree.

It had been suggested that new signs could be installed by Normandy Parish Council on the private land behind the pavement. The public highway extends to the back of the pavement next to the entrance to Manor Fruit Farm. Since then, the Parish Council have installed a wooden 'Manor Fruit Farm' name sign on the private land and planted daffodil bulbs surrounding the sign. It could be possible for the Parish Council, or alternatively funding from a successful application to the Your Councillor Community Fund (YCCF), to fund enhancing this new sign with a direction sign or to provide an additional new sign. Details of the criteria for the YCCF can be found on our website here: [Your Councillor Community Fund - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](http://surreycc.gov.uk).

CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING

16. JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK: (2nd Question)

Please provide a breakdown of the High Needs Block spending for each of the last three years and the current year in Surrey, setting out:

- a) How much is spent on support of children in mainstream schools;
- b) How much is spent on support of children in state-provided specialist schools;
- c) How much is support on support of children in non-maintained special schools; and
- d) How much is spent on support of children in permanently excluded or in pupil referral units?

For each of the above please set out:

- i) the total number of children supported;
- ii) the total cost from the High Needs Block; and
- iii) the total cost in terms of Home to School Transport provision. In addition, please provide a breakdown of Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment's currently in process by the above types of setting (mainstream, special state provision, non-maintained, excluded/pupil referral units) to provide an indication of how this might affect pressure to the High Needs Block funding.

RESPONSE:

Year		Mainstream schools	State-provided specialist schools	Non-maintained special schools	Pupil referral units
2020/21	No. of children.	3688	3118	1642	225
	HNB Spend £m	21.2	53.6	70.3	61.5
2021/22	No. of children.	3645	3339	1835	224
	HNB Spend £m	22.2	58.9	76.6	52.8
2022/23	No. of children.	3996	3547	1905	241
	HNB Spend £m	22.9	64.9	84.1	46.4
2023/24 forecast	No. of children.	3979	3779	1958	291
	HNB Spend £m	24.3	73.2	96.9	48

Note: Pupil Referral units funding is not based on a per pupil rate.

	H2ST			2023/24 £m	2022/23 £m	2021/22 £m	2020/21 £m
a) iii	mainstream schools	HTST cost		8.900	7.921	7.297	5.725
b) iii	state specialist schools	HTST cost	*	45.930	42.312	35.569	26.776
c) iii	non-maintained special schools	HTST cost	*				
d) iii	pupil referral units	HTST cost		1.500	1.448	1.267	0.919

Note for part iii)

*We are not able to split the cost of special schools between state-funded and non-maintained independent schools from the financial system. The figure for H2STA in b) iii and c) iii is the combined cost for both types of schools.

There are currently around 1,900 children under assessment. It is not possible to break that down by cohort type because until they have been assessed the type of provision is unknown.

KEVIN DEANUS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE / MARISA HEATH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

**17. CATHERINE BAART (EARLSWOOD AND REIGATE SOUTH) TO ASK:
(2nd Question)**

Please confirm how much Surrey County Council has paid out in compensation for flood damage in each of the last three years, where the flooding has been caused by a Highways problem, such as inadequate or poorly maintained drainage.

RESPONSE:

Between 01 October 2020 and 30 September 2023, the following total compensation payments have been made by SCC relating to property damage caused by flooding linked to the highway:

October 2020 – September 2021: £0
October 2021 – September 2022: £2,000
October 2022 – September 2023: £110,090

It should be noted that payment dates are not indicative of the date the incident/s occurred.

CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING

**18. FIONA DAVIDSON (GUILDFORD SOUTH-EAST) TO ASK:
(2nd Question)**

A recent report in the Guildford Dragon Online news service stated that there were plans to redevelop the Sydenham Road Adult Learning Centre – with the suggestion that it might become a Children’s Services office. This has raised a great deal of concern amongst residents who value the adult learning courses provided at this site.

If there is a decision to use the Adult Education Centre as a Children’s Services office – or an office for any Surrey County Council directorate - will the adult learning classes continue there?

Will the Harvey Gallery (part of the same complex) continue to operate as it does now?

RESPONSE:

The Council has been considering options to move staff out of the St Francis building, which included consideration of and plans for the Sydenham Road Adult Learning Centre (ALC). The review quickly discounted this option and there are no immediate plans to change the current use of the Sydenham Road ALC. The Harvey Gallery will continue to operate as it does now.

NATALIE BRAMHALL, CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY AND WASTE

19. ROBERT EVANS OBE (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK: (2nd Question)

Does the Council have plans for more electric car charging points at Woodhatch Place and other Council properties?

RESPONSE:

Please find below details on the electric vehicle (EV) charging points and proposed plans across the Council's estate. The EV charging infrastructure will be procured through the Connected Kerb framework.

Woodhatch Place

Plans are underway for additional charging capacity at Woodhatch. This will comprise of 28 new EV charging bays, and an upgrade to the existing eight chargers (on site) with the capacity to increase by to an additional ten bays in the future. The planned installation will be Q1 2024.

- Twenty EV charging bays will be located within the newly installed Solar Carport.
- Four EV charging bays are to be installed within the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) car park which will be allocated to SFRS solely.
- Two Accessible EV charging bays will be included within the SFRS car park.
- Two Accessible bays within the newly allocated accessible parking by the Council Chamber office.
- The existing eight chargers are yet to be allocated.

Policy, management, and process around the usage of these charging facilities are still to be finalised. The proposals have been reviewed by the Council's Accessibility Forum.

Dakota

EV charging capacity is current under review as part of work to increase utilisation of the office space.

Surrey Fire & Rescue

A project has been initiated to install EV chargers across SFRS locations. Surveys have been conducted and cross-referenced with Land & Property and Greener Futures based on their redevelopment plans and building decarbonisation activity. Once completed this will provide capacity for more than 100 EV charging bays. Wray Park EV requirements are part of the redevelopment plans.

Merrow

Merrow is currently undergoing an electrical substation upgrade to increase electrical capacity on site. This will initially provide fourteen EV charging bays with the capacity to expand the number of chargers. The number of chargers will evolve based on the redevelopment plans for the site.

Godstone

EV charging is to be included as part of the overall redevelopment of the site.

KEVIN DEANUS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

20. ASHLEY TILLING (WALTON SOUTH & OATLANDS) TO ASK: (2nd Question)

Regarding cycling accident statistics:

Surrey has topped the list of local authorities with the highest number of KSIs (Killed or Seriously Injured) in 2022 according to figures published recently by the Department for Transport (DfT), with 139 people either killed or seriously injured while riding their bikes.

What is the County Council doing now to ensure this number is reduced in future years?

RESPONSE:

The comparatively large number of cycling casualties taking place in Surrey compared to other local authorities is linked to the volume of cycling taking place in the county, the comparatively large length of highway, and the density of motorised traffic on Surrey's roads. This results in a greater total exposure to risk.

The County Council is working with Surrey Police (including the Police and Crime Commissioners Office), Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and National Highways on a new Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy (currently being drafted). We recognise that improving the safety of cyclists will be an important part of our strategy. Improvements to infrastructure (including slower speeds and segregated cycle lanes) are likely to make the greatest difference to improving safety for cyclists. Therefore, the emerging strategy includes:

- A continuing program of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans being completed to form the basis for bids to Active Travel England for new cycling infrastructure.
- A new approach to 20 mph speed limits.
- A continuing program of lower speed limits on rural roads throughout the south of Surrey, replacing the existing 60 mph speed limits that are inappropriate for these narrow country lanes.
- A continuing programme of 'Road Safety Outside Schools' highway improvement schemes to make walking and cycling safer and easier near schools.

As well as improvements to infrastructure we are also developing proposals to expand cycle training and enhance enforcement to improve the behaviour of motorised road users in the vicinity of cyclists:

- Surrey County Council is already one of the biggest providers of Bikeability cycle training in the country. Last year we provided Level 2 training to 6,200 children which is about 46 per cent of the target age group across Surrey. We are developing proposals to expand this to 80 per cent of the target age group (about 10,600 pupils).
- Increasing numbers of road users are using vehicle-mounted or body worn cameras. This offers a fantastic opportunity to improve the safety of all road users, especially cyclists and equestrians if motorists become aware that close passes or aggressive driving in the vicinity of such vulnerable road users could be filmed and submitted as evidence in prosecutions. Surrey Police provide a process for road users to submit video footage of examples of alleged driving offences so, if necessary, the evidence can be used to pursue prosecutions. Surrey Police will provide additional advice and guidance on how to submit quality footage to aid prosecutions.

The new Vision Zero Strategy will be presented to the select committee and Cabinet later this autumn with a view to proceeding with public consultation in the new calendar year.

KEVIN DEANUS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

21. CATHERINE POWELL (FARNHAM NORTH) TO ASK: (2nd Question)

Regarding the Highway Task and Finish Group Report and path forward:

During the 23 May Council AGM the Leader of the Council announced that two highways Task and Finish Groups had been established to review the issues and challenges being faced by the service and that all Members should share input with the groups.

The Residents' Association and Independents Group provided consolidated input on 29 May, based on the areas of work identified in the email shared with all Councillors on 24 May 2023.

Given the levels of concern raised by Councillors and residents from across the County, it is disappointing that although the Task and Finish groups have finished their work, there has not been a written report issued showing how the issues raised are to be addressed. Instead the output has become an entirely budget lead exercise.

- a) Please can the Cabinet Member advise whether or not a full report will be issued capturing all of the issues raised and the proposed path forward, which will be shared with all Councillors and made available to residents?
- b) In terms of some of the specific issues raised in the submission from The Residents' Association and Independents Group, please can the Cabinet Member respond to the following:

- i) Does the Cabinet Member accept that wildflowers do not like nutrient rich soil and leaving the arisings/cuttings will increase the nutrient level, reducing wildflowers?
- ii) Does the Cabinet Member accept that the timing of cutting and the collection of cuttings will have a direct impact on the potential for biodiversity net gain?
- iii) Does the Cabinet Member intend to change either the timing of cutting or the collection of arisings to maximise the potential for biodiversity net gain?
- iv) Will the revised strategies and policies coming out of the Task and Finish groups lead to improved maintenance of our footpaths and cycle paths to promote active travel, as the current poor maintenance is discouraging their use?
- v) When will information on the status of highways issues raised by Councillors be available online in order to prevent the painful exchange of emails and to allow new information to be easily shared / added?
- vi) Can the Cabinet Member advise what progress has been made on the Utilities Motion and on lobbying Government for changes to the statutory requirements around utility works?
- vii) What steps are proposed to ensure that the impacts of surface water runoff on the highway from developments are fully addressed by the planning process and the costs borne by the developer instead of by SCC and tax payers?

RESPONSE:

- a) There will not be a public report on the Cabinet Task and Finish Groups, though a member update highlighting implemented and planned improvements will be provided later this year. Many of the recommendations will require additional investment from 2024/25 onwards, and as such need to go through the broader budget setting process to ensure funding can be made available.
- b)
 - i) Some wildflowers do not thrive in nutrient rich soil, however, there needs to be a balance between the additional costs and carbon used in the cutting and collecting arisings against the benefits wildflowers can contribute to the local environment.
 - ii) It is accepted that the timing of cuts and any collection can have an impact on biodiversity net gain. This needs to be judged against resources and road safety issues. This year, conservation verges have not been cut and the blue heart sites will be cut (and the arisings collected) at the end of this season. There are 84 conservation verges identified in the county of varying ecological significance and approximately 140 blue heart sites. Many of the conservation verges were identified many years ago and the

intent is to undertake surveys of these verges next year to assess their status, benefits and how to best manage them.

- iii) This year we have reduced the number of urban cuts to four, to help minimise the environmental costs of managing this service. For this year, we will collect the arisings from blue heart sites, and we may review how we manage conservation verges following the future surveys. We are hoping that the blue heart initiative expands and that residents take on responsibility for clearing arisings where it is safe for them to do so.
- iv) There is work underway to improve the maintenance of footways and cycleways through the alignment of maintenance strategies with the revised Surrey Transport Plan which will support any increase in active travel. The Task and Finish Group were supportive of this work continuing and no further policies or strategies were determined as necessary by the Group in this regard. All of the highway network benefits from routine safety inspections and maintenance. If you are aware of specific issues or concerns, please report them via our website and they will be assessed.
- v) An initiative has been established to improve the online reporting information available for residents and members. Detailed solution design and procurement is currently underway with the aim of delivering a full solution in autumn 2024.
- vi) The work on lobbying the Government for changes to legislation around utilities is ongoing. Initial discussions have taken place with several members of parliament and officers are continuing to work with the Cabinet Member on the detail of the scope to be pursued.
- vii) Surrey County Council has two relevant statutory consultee roles relating to drainage within the Planning Process: as Highways Authority and as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The first role is covered by the Transport Development Planning (TDP) Team who ensure that all development proposals meet our highway standards including provision for adequate highways drainage. The Flood Risk Planning and Consenting (FRP&C) team fulfils the second role as LLFA statutory consultee for major applications and make sure surface water across the whole development is suitably managed. Following additional resources being approved by the Task and Finish Groups in summer 2023 the FRP&C Team are now starting to provide advice on the highest risk non-major developments too. Developers must mitigate the surface water impacts of their own developments (on highways or other land) at their own expense within their proposals. Where impacts on the highway from development are identified during construction, these are investigated, and changes enforced to ensure no adverse effects on the network.

Both TDP and FRP&C also push opportunities for developments to reduce existing flood risk within their proposals and this helps to reduce existing surface water risk, for example near Highway Wetspots or in Priority Flood Risk Areas. This process can also be used to make good any known defects on the SCC highway drainage system if these are affected by or adjacent to the development. Many developers do include these additional benefits even though it is not a requirement.

KEVIN DEANUS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

**22. MARK SUGDEN (HINCHLEY WOOD, CLAYGATE AND OXSHOTT) TO ASK:
(2nd Question)**

I am pleased to hear that Highways now have a dedicated resource for countywide lining maintenance and parking review/refresh works. I recognise that such works are batched. After multiple promises over very many months, which have not materialised, could I ask the Cabinet Member if he could ensure that:

- the white line refresh of the zebra crossing on Manor Road North, Hinchley Wood; and
- the markings for the new disabled bay outside Clay Salon and the refresh of the disabled bay markings outside Munch & Wiggles both on Oxshott High Street are undertaken, as promised, as soon as possible.

RESPONSE:

I can confirm that there is now a dedicated resource in place for lining maintenance and parking review/refresh works. This resource is being managed by our main contractor, Ringway, which will help ensure the efficient and cost effective use of this resource as they will issue both lining maintenance and parking works area to the gang to undertake at the same time when they are in any given area.

Work is programmed to start next week on the latest batch of ad-hoc lining maintenance, which includes the zebra crossing on Manor Road North. I can assure the member that the zebra crossing has been identified by officers as a priority job. The latest information available from the contractor is that the zebra crossing will be one of the first jobs to be completed from this batch.

With regard to the disabled bay markings in Oxshott High Street, these are part of the Elmbridge parking review works order, the installation of which is ongoing. We have identified this location as a priority and are looking to have it completed in the week commencing 16 October.

It should be noted that all road marking work is weather dependent.

DENISE TURNER-STEWART, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

**23. JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK:
(3rd Question)**

Please confirm how many complaints were referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, and Housing Ombudsman Service regarding Surrey County Council in the last three years and provide a breakdown by subject area in each of Surrey's directorates (e.g. Home to School Transport, Education, Health and Care Plan delays) and for each subject area the breakdown as to whether or not the complaints were upheld.

RESPONSE:

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is the final stage for complaints about councils and some other organisations providing local public services. The council is legally required to advise complainants of their right to escalate their complaint to the Ombudsman, if they are unhappy with the response that they receive from the Council. This applies even if the complaint has been upheld under the council's complaints procedure and a remedy offered. The majority of complaints that we receive are resolved and responded to by the Council.

We take any complaints made about our services very seriously; especially those that have reached the Ombudsman for independent investigation because this means we have been unable to resolve the complaint and/or a significant concern has been raised about how we are delivering a service. As a result, we have robust oversight mechanisms in place for Ombudsman complaints, which includes regular reporting to the Audit & Governance Committee.

Each year in July, the LGSCO publishes an Annual Letter to all councils in England providing data on the complaints they have investigated about that council during the previous financial year, along with the outcome of their investigations. The Annual Letter is a published data source. This is publicly available on the LGSCO website: [Councils' performance - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#).

In the interests of openness and transparency, full details of all complaints about Surrey County Council investigated by the Ombudsman, including specific details of the nature of the complaint, subject area and outcome e.g., whether a complaint was upheld or not upheld, are also publicly available and can be found in the 'Decisions' section of the [LGSCO website](#). The SCC website also directly links to the LGSCO website.

In the three-year period 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2023, the LGSCO received a total of **503** complaints and enquiries about Surrey County Council, of which **181** (36%) progressed to investigation. The Ombudsman reviews all complaints it receives to look at whether it is about something they are allowed to investigate and if it is serious enough to justify an investigation.

Of the 482 complaints where the Ombudsman issued a decision (including a decision not to investigate):

94 were about Adult Social Care
292 were about Children's Social Care and Education
54 were about Highways & Transport
42 were about Corporate & Other Services

(Please Note: number of complaints received will not tally exactly with number of decisions issued, due to some complaints not being in jurisdiction)

This is broken down each year as below:

2022/2023

Complaints and enquiries received: 215

Complaints investigated: 81

Complaints upheld: 68

Of the 68 complaints we have recorded as upheld by the LGSCO:

41 related to services within Children, Families & Lifelong Learning
25 related to Adult Social Care
2 related to other council services.

The report providing full details of the LGSCO Annual Letter is due to be presented at Audit and Governance Committee in November 2023.

2021/2022

Complaints and enquiries received: 163

Complaints investigated: 62

Complaints upheld: 52

Of the 52 complaints we have recorded as upheld by the LGSCO:

37 related to services within Children, Families & Lifelong Learning
9 related to Adult Social Care
2 Highways & Transport
2 Corporate & Other Services
1 Public Protection
1 Planning & Development

For more details, please see the [Audit & Governance Annual Complaints Report](#) dated November 2022.

2020/2021

Complaints and enquiries received: 125

Complaints investigated: 38

Complaints upheld: 34

Of the 34 complaints we have recorded as upheld by the LGSCO:

- 21 related to services within Children, Families & Lifelong Learning
- 12 related to Adult Social Care
- 1 related to Highways service

For more details, please see the [Audit & Governance Annual Complaints Report](#) dated September 2021

(Please Note: figures in 2020/21 were impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic)

We do not have any complaints relating to the Housing Ombudsman as this is exclusively for landlord and housing complaints and Surrey County Council is not a registered social housing provider.

MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH

24. CATHERINE BAART (EARLSWOOD AND REIGATE SOUTH) TO ASK: (3rd Question)

As part of implementing Local Transport Plan 4, please explain how Highways proactively works with hospitals in Surrey to understand what Surrey County Council can do to help remove barriers to active travel and use of public transport by hospital staff and visitors?

RESPONSE:

The County Council works proactively on highways and transport issues with individual hospitals and through our partnership with Public Health, which brings together National Health Service providers across Surrey. This approach provides an understanding of hospital needs at a local and more strategic level.

The County Council is developing an evidence base for active travel across Surrey through our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs). An essential part of these plans is to identify where active travel infrastructure should be improved. The prioritised cycle and walking routes developed take account of key trip generators, which includes hospitals and other key public services. Priority routes from the LCWIP plans are being taken forward through feasibility design and that will include public consultation, coupled with direct engagement with key trip generating sites. This again will include hospitals where there are links to the active travel routes being developed. This work will support future bids for funding to deliver

the improvements being developed. Further details on our active travel plans are available on the County Council's website via this link:

[Plans to improve walking and cycling - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/plans-to-improve-walking-and-cycling)

Bus service improvements are also being developed through our approved Enhanced Partnership with bus operators, with more detail available in our approved Bus Service Improvements Plan (BSIP). The BSIP includes a range of initiatives to improve bus services, encourage greater usage and to help meet our carbon reduction targets. Measures to enable bus services to operate more reliably, providing more on-street real time passenger information displays and offering lower fares for passengers are being developed and introduced.

Bus services to hospitals are primarily provided commercially by Surrey bus operators, reflecting the high patronage on these bus routes as they are a key trip attractor. Bus operators work directly with individual hospitals to agree measures, such as reduced fares, to encourage greater use of bus services. In support of this, the County Council continues to install and maintain real time passenger information displays at hospitals, with previous financial investment from the County Council delivering improve the passenger waiting facilities.

DAVID LEWIS (COBHAM), CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES

25. ASHLEY TILLING (WALTON SOUTH & OATLANDS) TO ASK: (3rd Question)

Regarding the public consultation on budget priorities:

Tackling climate change is a strategic priority for the County Council. It is also a concern of more than 80% of residents. Measures to reduce emissions improve health, address energy security, reduce energy costs and grow the economy through investing in sustainable technologies.

Select Committee papers and the response to a Motion on 21 March, indicate that the Council has been working on a Speed Limit Policy, based on the principles of the Vision Zero approach since the beginning of the year, to improve road safety and reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries.

Please can it be explained how the ten priorities in the residents' survey were determined and how two of the most vitally important issues for the Council were omitted from the list?

RESPONSE:

The options in the survey were developed based on the aspirations in the Community Vision for Surrey in 2030 and the Organisation Strategy 2023 to 2028, and wording was adapted to make it easy for all residents to respond. As I mentioned in my response to the Member for Earlswood and Reigate South, I accept that climate change should have been a specific option. The data is currently being analysed, but where residents have selected options around making local

communities safer, the free-text comments in responses indicate some were thinking of road safety when they gave their answer.

The exercise is intended to gather views on resident priorities. Residents were given an opportunity through the survey to express their views on other areas that mattered to them outside of the list. The exercise helps us also to understand the relative importance of these priorities for residents to inform how this council's limited financial resources should be prioritised. Members will be sighted on the results of this work as we engage you on the budget throughout the autumn, and reported as part of the draft budget papers the Cabinet will consider in November.

CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING

26. CATHERINE POWELL (FARNHAM NORTH) TO ASK: (3rd Question)

Regarding severe absence from schools:

In the school year 2022 to 2023 1.7% of the school population in Surrey, 2,446 children, missed 50% or more of their education. This is versus 1.3% in 2021 / 2022. The numbers for those attending specialist schools are even more worrying, reaching more than 7% in the summer term of 2023.

The Cabinet Member has advised that there is a multi-professional network that has been established, including partners from education, early help, health and the voluntary sector to develop a partnership offer to support children to **return** to school.

- a) Please can the Cabinet Member advise what steps she proposes to take to prevent severe absences occurring in the first place, given that the numbers are rising rapidly and schools are struggling already with the delays in the Education, Health and Care Plans?
- b) Please can the Cabinet Member advise what specific steps are being taken to address the significant increase in anxiety related severe absence?
- c) Please can the Cabinet Member advise what specific steps are being taken to address the increasing number of girls with suspected Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who, due to masking for prolonged periods at school, are suffering from anxiety and consequently increasingly absent from school?

RESPONSE:

- a) The numbers have increased from 0.9% (2021/22) to 1.3% (2022/23) which is a small increase when compared with national data which indicate a national increase of 0.6% and a performance that is better than national (1.7%).

The Encouraging School Attendance Partnership Forum is a multi-agency group that looks to consider and begin to address the challenges around school attendance post-pandemic. The group is chaired by an Assistant Director from Social Care and is attended by representatives from Education, Health, Police, Schools and FE Colleges. It has issued a communication that stresses the

importance of attendance for young people in relation to participation and engagement and attainment levels.

The group has

- Developed a multi-agency Attendance Strategy
- Raised awareness to frontline services regarding the importance of good school attendance.

Our Inclusion Service works with schools to monitor, support and intervene when a child's attendance becomes a concern.

The Service

- Regularly communicates with parents about the importance of attendance
- Is preparing to support schools regarding the roll out of the implementation of the new statutory guidance regarding attendance.
- Completes ongoing register checks with our schools – highlighting those children who are severely absent and intervening where necessary.
- Is responsible for delivering on the Council's statutory responsibilities regarding school attendance.

- b) To support children returning to school following the pandemic and to provide ongoing practice development around Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) – a multi-professional group was formed to enhance practice, develop support materials, deliver training and whole school approaches to tackling children missing school because of anxiety.

The group has:

- Brought together a range of agencies including MINDWORKS, Autism Strategy Lead, Parents via Family voice, and third sector partners
- Working with other areas to share knowledge and to better understand the links between EBSNA, the medical policy and alternative provision
- Set out roles and responsibilities
- Provided advice and guidance to parents to support them in managing their child's anxiety
- Worked with schools to support them in developing flexi-teaching mechanisms
- Worked across the SE to make the case to central government about the need to review how attendance is coded for those with anxiety
- Ensure that everyone recognises that anxiety is a part of life and what the levels of anxiety are that we need to address
- Worked to clarify the roles and responsibilities of schools, parents, health partners and this council
- Gather local data to better understand what is happening for these young people and their families

c) At the end of the AY 2022/23, 3% of the girls who were severely absent had an ASD diagnosis. There has been an increase in the numbers of girls who are not masking since the pandemic – this is good for the young person and challenging for some of our schools who now need to review their arrangements as the presentation of need is different. To help with this:

- We are implementing our All-Age Autism Strategy
- We have commissioned training for our schools and staff – “beyond the mask” to raise awareness and support our professionals in being able to meet the needs of autistic girls
- We are linking with the voluntary group called ASPIRE in Redhill who help with the access to a supportive social group for girls and women 18 – 25
- We are working with the national autism society to provide a social group for those children and young people aged in Godalming Surrey (we will use information from this social group to determine what other children and young people might benefit from and to grow that with our third sector partners including voluntary and community groups.

MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH

27. MARK SUGDEN (HINCHLEY WOOD, CLAYGATE AND OXSHOTT) TO ASK: (3rd Question)

The pedestrian footbridge linking the two platforms at Claygate Station was recently closed for safety reasons. A temporary footbridge has been erected. It is uncertain when the original footbridge will be repaired and reopened.

Given the work that will need to be undertaken, could Surrey County Council consider working with the relevant Train Operating Company (TCO) to ascertain if the latter would consider including Claygate Station in a future ‘Access for All’ scheme bid?

RESPONSE:

The Access for All (AfA) programme provides funding to improve passenger accessibility at railway stations, removing barriers to travel for disabled passengers and for passengers with mobility difficulties. Bids for the current AfA programme for Control Period 7 (2024 – 2029) were submitted to Network Rail by the Train Operating Companies (TOC) during Spring 2023.

Surrey County Council will work with South Western Railway, the current TOC, to develop a bid for the next available AfA funding opportunity. Those discussions will include the potential for AfA improvements at Claygate and other stations in Surrey.

Bids that have been successful previously have been those which have included a higher level of third-party match funding, generally 10-15% of the scheme cost, which is approximately £500,000. This match funding will need to be identified for any scheme that progresses to submission.

CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING

28. JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK: (4th Question)

Please can you provide an update as to:

- a) the latest reported numbers of those waiting and average waiting times there are for different service areas within the Mindworks contract (and how this compares to the situation one year ago);
- b) what plans and funding (by the health service and the council) are in place to address this going forward; and
- c) what advice is being given to schools, parents and GPs who are seeking to refer new children to Mindworks now.

RESPONSE:

- a) In the last 12 months, the trend for the average waiting time for children and young people seen (referral to assessment) within the EMWH pathways (in working days) has decreased from 42 (i.e. 2 months) in Sep 22 to 20 (i.e. 1 month) in July 23.

In the last 12 months, the trend for the average waiting time for children and young people seen (assessment to treatment) within the EWMH pathways (in working days) has decreased from 24 (i.e. just over a month) in Aug 22 to 14 (i.e. 3 weeks) in July 23.

- b) Across health services and Surrey County Council efficiencies are required. Locally providers have been asked to contribute to these efficiencies and reduce overspending in the NHS. This is a significant issue for SABP (the prime contract holder for Mindworks') and commissioners and providers have started a programme of financial recovery to understand how improvements can be achieved and what risks there may be to moving nearer to a balanced budget. This work will involve changes to staffing and a move away from agency which can be more costly, system support for children who may require help for neurodevelopmental needs (linked to action as part of the All Age Autism Strategy) and it will also mean trying to safeguard spend and delivery that focuses on reaching children and young people early through the voluntary sector partners.

Funding including the joint Mental Health Investment Fund and NHS Service Development Funding will help to ensure that programmes such as the Mental Health Support Teams for Schools and additional crisis and eating disorder support will further develop.

- c) EWMH Schools roles and offer:

Training is available to support EWMH lead in schools to adopts a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing. A whole-school approach involves all

parts of the school working together and needs partnership working between senior leaders, teachers and all school staff, as well as parents, carers and the wider community. Schools promote children and young people's (CYP) social and emotional skills and mental health and wellbeing through the curriculum, RSHE and wider cross-curricular activity. For CYP who are beginning to struggle or are exposed to mounting risks that may challenge and undermine their mental health, accessible and effective in-school help is provided through pastoral support, one to one support, small group work or counselling and support to steer pupils and their families to more specialist mental health support in the local community. Teams within schools have key functions attached to EWMH, i.e. SENCO / specialist teachers / inclusion teams.

Each of the eleven district / boroughs have a cluster of staff that includes a named practitioner as a point of contact who will offer consultation, support and advice. There are between 27 and 46 schools per cluster and each cluster has a multi-disciplinary cluster allocation process (includes Third Sector offers). Cluster Teams consist of: The Primary Mental Health Teams, the Early Intervention Co-ordinators, the Mental Health Support Teams and the Community Wellbeing Practitioners, using levels of need approach to delivery and work closely with Specialist Mindworks teams, The 'Reaching Out' Service, Emotional Wellbeing School Nurses, Child and Family Health Surrey, the Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, OTs and Social Care

These teams provide:

- Prevention support to CYP when they begin to feel emotionally or mentally unwell by helping them to build resilience.
- Early intervention support for CYP, parents, carers, teachers and other professionals identifies and prevents mental ill-health issues like depression and anxiety and helps CYP access the right support at the right time.
- Risk support is available to clusters from specialist teams to enable CYP to be supported by the adults they have the best relationship with.
- Provide links with the ND New Hub and spoke model which is being developed to move away from diagnosis and focus on addressing need.
- Help schools navigate crisis support and connect with Acutes to ensure a joined approach to safeguarding and wellbeing for CYP

Support and advice to children and young people who are waiting

Across varying pathways children who are waiting are risk assessed and triaged according to need. A safety plan is discussed and information of the support available should concerns escalate clearly provided (including the crisis line, Haven's support etc). Children and families are also sign posted to wider resources and support information available through the website and providers part of the alliance. Some pathways will ensure the CYP is contacted regularly while they wait, there are no waits for crisis support.

CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING

29. CATHERINE POWELL (FARNHAM NORTH) TO ASK: (4th Question)

Regarding school exclusions:

The Cabinet Member was kind enough to share with me a link to several reports on the causes of school exclusions which are also on the rise in Surrey. These reports included this presentation: [Exclusion-Complex-problem-collaborative-solution-Ron-Searle-210701-1.pdf \(highsheriffofsurrey.com\)](#). Worryingly, this report states:

- Estimated cost per student who is excluded from school is £370,000
- The barriers to inclusion are:
 - Socialisation difficulties resulting from growing up in care, overcrowding
 - Adverse Childhood Experiences
 - Attachment disorder
 - Speech and Language, numeracy and literacy problems
 - Poor nutrition
 - Failure to identify SEND early

Of the strategies identified to address these issues, what specific actions is the Cabinet Member taking to address each of these barriers to ensure that No One is Left Behind?

RESPONSE:

Following the report and presentation cited in the question, the Royal Holloway University was commissioned by the High Sheriff and SCC to conduct research into exclusion from school in Surrey.

The findings and recommendations were presented in a series of “Exclusion Summits” to the wider partnership and an oversight group (SALP Central Board) was formed to oversee the recommendations made by the exclusion report. The SALP Central Board is independently chaired and is made up of Secondary Head Teacher (HT), Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), Local Authority (LA) and Early Help representatives.

The additional function of the Board is to monitor the work in each of the operational quadrants of Surrey that is taking place to reduce exclusion from school. Specifically, how the SALP Area Boards (HTs and LA representatives) work together in commissioning activity and support for children at risk of exclusion from school

As a result of the research:

- A SALP Central Board was established
- MCR (a specialist external provider) has been commissioned to deliver mentoring support to children at risk of exclusion from school in seven Surrey maintained schools

- Greater collaboration between schools, short stay schools and the local authority within the quadrants to coordinate activity aimed to reduce exclusion from school
- Risk of exclusion reporting being developed for schools to identify those children who are potentially at risk of exclusion from school to be able to build interventions around that child at the earliest opportunity.

MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH

**30. JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK:
(5th Question)**

Please confirm the level of match funding support for roll-out of Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) across Surrey that the County Council receives from Surrey's boroughs and districts and how future roll-out will link to current borough and district provision of community transport.

RESPONSE:

I thank the Councillor for highlighting the success of the On Demand Service that this Council has delivered. I am delighted that this Council introduced five new Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) schemes on 4 September 2023, offering greatly enhanced transport options to residents. These new additions to the Surrey Connect DDRT network add to the existing Mole Valley DDRT scheme introduced in 2021. And we are working on more DDRT services to start in 2024.

In terms of funding, the Council secured Rural Mobility Funding from the Department for Transport to help us launch the Mole Valley DDRT scheme.

The Council does not receive any funding from Surrey's boroughs and districts toward any of our DDRT network.

For many years this Council has provided grant funding to support community transport services across Surrey, including financial support for Dial-a-Ride and voluntary car schemes. Our grant funding has been provided to borough and district council in-house services, alongside voluntary and not-for-profit organisations also delivering community transport services to our residents.

Where DDRT services have been introduced, some residents have been able to transfer from borough or district led Dial-a-Ride services to use the new DDRT services. This has significantly enhanced travel opportunities for residents, as DDRT offers greatly enhanced times of travel and a far greater choice of destinations. We are currently looking at the opportunity to pilot some borough and district Dial-a-Ride services on our DDRT timetabling and scheduling platform. This could lead to a more integrated approach to service delivery with potential for efficiencies.

MARISA HEATH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

31. CATHERINE POWELL (FARNHAM NORTH) TO ASK: (5th Question)

Regarding trees in residential areas and busy pedestrian routes:

The Cabinet Member has advised that the SCC tree inspection programme uses qualified arborists to assess the safety of trees growing on the highway and Surrey's land, and that inspections are undertaken in line with guidance prepared by the Forestry Commission and the National Tree Safety Group.

In reviewing this guidance ([FCMS024.pdf \(ntsgroup.org.uk\)](#)), which was issued in 2011, I have noticed that there is no mention of the impact of climate change on trees, only their importance in helping to mitigate the harmful effect of climate change.

Of course, a lot has changed since 2011, including this Council declaring a Climate Emergency.

Climate change will bring warmer summers and more frequent extreme conditions such as drought periods and heavy rainfall events.

Can the Cabinet Member please advise:

- a) What, if any, changes to strategy have been adopted to address the impacts of climate change on trees on Surrey land, particularly in urban areas? For example, trees such as beech, birch and sycamore are more sensitive to drought than native oak species.
- b) Where can details be found on the SCC website regarding:
 - i) How residents can report concerns about SCC trees?
 - ii) How they can apply to do work on an SCC Tree when the resident has concerns about the safety of the tree but SCC tree officers have advised that the condition of the trees does not warrant any action?

RESPONSE:

Earlier this year SCC agreed a new [Tree Risk Management Policy](#). It forms part of the Council's Tree and Woodland Management and Enhancement Framework [Tree Woodland Management and Enhancement Framework](#) that is designed to improve the quality, biodiversity and spread of the tree coverage in Surrey, in line with the climate and ecological emergencies. This also reflects the Council's lead role in Surrey's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Details of the framework are set out in the next section.

We are already taking climate change into consideration when we plant new trees, since, as you rightly state some of our native trees are showing signs of struggling from extreme weather events. As set out below, a new Tree Planting and Woodland Enhancement Policy and Plan will replace the Council's current Tree Strategy, taking into account the emerging challenges we are facing. This is in its early stages of its

development and we would welcome input from the Greener Futures Member Reference Group.

TREE AND WOODLAND MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

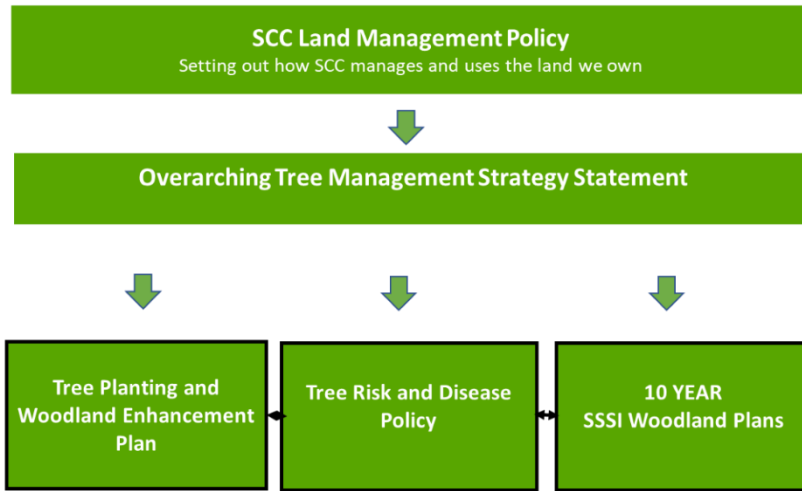
The Tree and Woodland Management Framework (diagram below) provides the strategic context for how we proactively manage our trees and wooded areas for nature and people, enhancing biodiversity and supporting residents to experience the wealth of health and wellbeing benefits.

The Tree Planting and Woodland Enhancement Policy and Plan will update our existing Tree Strategy and will have a dual purpose of tree planting and woodland management. The policy will have a greater focus on nature recovery and increasing biodiversity. The policy will also have a stronger emphasis on natural tree and woodland establishment to compliment large scale planting of new your trees (whips). The policy will also encourage more **community orchards** and **Miyawaki Forests** and form a key strand of the emerging SCC Land Management Policy (*link to more information*). The policy will have a much greater emphasis on the importance of **urban and street trees** and SCC will work more closely with local Tree Wardens to reverse the decline in urban trees.

The SSSI Woodlands Restoration Policy and Plan will strengthen SCCs approach to managing protected woodlands with the aim of bringing their condition up to favourable. The existing ten year woodland management are being updated in 2023/24 to reflect current challenging situations in relation to new diseases and climate change as well as the developing Nature Recovery Strategy.

The Tree Risk Policy and Plan defines Surrey County Council's proactive approach to managing trees and the associated benefits and risks. It applies to trees under The Council's ownership and management. It also refers to those trees which are not in council ownership or management but could pose a safety risk to people or property in locations that are owned or managed by the Council. Biodiversity, nature recovery and resident wellbeing as well as health and safety to people and property will be taken into consideration when managing Surrey's trees. Where possible trees will not be felled where other access can feasibly be reduced or restricted to reduce risk and allow felling to occur naturally.

SCC Overarching Strategy & Policy Approach



Details for residents to report issues with trees

Residents can report concerns about trees on Surrey County Council land via:

- The Highways network website: [Maintaining our Trees](#) has a link for residents to report any dead dying or dangerous trees. There is no application process for new trees on highways, but residents can submit their requests to highways@surreycc.gov.uk . All requests are reviewed by the Highways Arboriculturist for suitability.
- The Rights of Way Network [Right of Way Issue Reporting](#) page has a link for residents to report any issues with trees on footpaths, bridleways or byways.
- For any concerns about trees on the Council's Countryside Sites such as Newlands Corner, Chobham Common or Norbury Park please contact countrysideestate@surreycc.gov.uk
- Please do encourage residents to sign up to the Council's Volunteer tree planting programme [here](#).