

## CFLLC Select Committee Short Breaks questions, September 2024

### Question from Fiona Davidson:

*The Select Committee unanimously agreed that we would request Cabinet to allocate funding in FY 24/25 to restore the like-for-like provision of open access “All Additional Needs and Disabilities” play in 2022/23. The additional cost, which was estimated at £370,000, was agreed by Cabinet. However, we subsequently discovered – as the result of a follow-up question – that the estimate was not sufficient to restore like-for-like provision, and had underestimated the cost by an astonishing 70%.*

*Can the Cabinet Member please advise why the initial estimate provided was so unrealistic? Can the Cabinet Member also advise if Cabinet will allocate the additional £260,000 for FY24/25 – to provide total funding of £630,000 in FY24/25 - as I requested when I spoke to Cabinet in July 2024?*

### Response:

This question from Councillor Davidson makes clear that the Select Committee’s intention was to request reinstatement of funding for like-for-like “All Additional Needs and Disabilities” provision in 2024/25. This is one of the specific types of community-based play and youth provision commissioned by Surrey County Council. This is, however, different to the wording of the recommendation put to Cabinet following the June 2023 meeting of the Select Committee, which referenced “community-based play and youth schemes”. Surrey County Council commissions several different types of similar community-based play and leisure short breaks that are differentiated to better support children with particular needs. Officers modelled the figure of £370k on the basis of the restoring capacity to “community-based play and youth schemes” overall, which was then added to the budget for 2024/25, rather than exclusively the specific “All Additional Needs and Disabilities” provision type referenced in Councillor Davidson’s most recent question.

For clarity, the original recommendation made by the Select Committee was as follows:

*“The Cabinet Member for Children and Families prioritises the restoration of funding for community-based play and youth schemes for children with disabilities to enable the FY 2022/23 capacity to be restored in FY 2024/25, given the widespread feedback that this change has been detrimental to the mental health of parents, carers, children and young people, as well as adversely impacting the Council’s prevention strategy.”*

As a result of this additional funding being allocated and better than anticipated unit cost proposals returned by providers, there are now 97,778 hours of community-based play and youth short breaks provision being commissioned for children with disabilities in 2024/25. This is 5.7% more than the 92,484 hours of capacity that were available in 2022/23, exceeding the Select Committee’s original recommendation.

The difference highlighted by Councillor Davidson relates to the fact that 18,328 hours of community-based play and leisure provision are currently being funded through £430k secured via the Department for Education’s (DfE) Short Breaks Innovation Fund. This provides additional 1-to-1 spaces in community-based play and leisure provision for children with more complex needs. It is currently uncertain whether central government will continue funding this scheme after 31 March 2025, something that we would strongly advocate for.

Should the DfE-funded provision come to an end in March 2025 and SCC were to specifically fund an additional 13,034 hours of “All Additional Needs and Disabilities” short breaks provision (thereby matching the 2022/23 total capacity of 92,484 hours of “community-based play and youth schemes”) this would have an estimated cost of £263k. In considering this figure, it is important to keep in mind that this is calculated using the current unit cost to SCC of this provision and multiple different factors can mean this cost changes over time.

Given that the service is now commissioning more hours of community-based play and youth capacity than in 2022/23, exceeding the previous recommendation made by the Select Committee, there are no current plans to allocate a further additional £260k to play and leisure in the 2024/25 financial year – with plans for 2025/26 remaining under-review. This will be informed by engagement with key partners, such as Family Voice Surrey.