

CABINET – 26 NOVEMBER 2024

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Public Questions:**Question (1): Peter Lawrence****Lack of suitable provision for the severely autistic young people in Surrey**

Surrey's 3 new sites in Horley, Byfleet and Cobham are excellent for those more able, but please can Surrey include a 'severely autistic layer' into your future strategies and initiatives. There is a need for space within the buildings (often with 2:1 care), space outside for onsite activities, space for parking and space generally to let off steam and frustrations.

With regards to finance, housing developers anxious to get planning permission can be persuaded to put up these relatively simple buildings at no or little cost. Colin Galletly will understand this initiative. Cllrs Catherine Baart, Richard Tear, Jeremy Webster, Joanne Sexton, Hazel Watson, Fiona Davidson, Chris Farr, Kevin Deanus, Chris Townsend, Frank Kelly and Jeremy Hunt MP have all expressed support or great interest in this project.

Your Cabinet meeting of 21st June 2016 clearly sets out 'the growing demand for and shortage of....' this layer of autism. 'Live near their families in specialist accommodation with appropriate space and access to activities aligns with the Council's strategic goal of well being ... supports the national direction of travel set in the Transforming Care Programme'.

Reply:

This question raises a real and recognised requirement for more specialist housing and support for autistic people with more complex needs in Surrey. This group of people need more than average indoor and outdoor space, and we know this issue presents a challenge for Surrey's service system.

Most buildings where people with disabilities receive support are not developed or owned by the Council. Where support providers - charities or private sector organisations - see that the costs stack up, they work with developers and housing organisations to develop independently. This is the route that most accommodation with support that we commission comes through.

It is not the Council's experience that property developers will contribute buildings to this process in return for favourable consideration of planning permission. Support providers frequently work with housing developers to build or acquire new schemes. These buildings, whether arranged through the commercial sector or the Council, are generally neither straightforward nor cheap. If it was possible to access buildings at little or no cost, we would not have the challenge that we do within the system in developing enough new services for this cohort of people.

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The Council is addressing the need for more accommodation and support in Surrey as part of our Right Homes, Right Support Strategy. The three schemes mentioned in the question are part of this strategic approach to use our land and property to build supported living settings tailored for people with a learning disability and autistic people. The accommodation currently being built will support people with a wide range of needs and will boost the numbers and variety of housing options available through other routes. However, one size does not fit all, and some people – as correctly identified in this question - will require more space than will be afforded by the developments that are underway.

Our plan is to identify further sites for use in developing supported living options for the cohort we are discussing. One of the search criteria for future development sites would suit this more complex cohort: *More outdoor space, some separation from busy roads, some distance from neighbours while still facilitating easy access to local community facilities.*

As we seek to identify these sites, an important consideration is the national guidance set out in 'Building the Right Support'. Essentially, it is not appropriate to develop schemes that are 'campus'-like or deemed to represent 'congregate' settings. This is correct but it must be recognised poses an additional challenge for all providers of housing, Local Authorities, charities or private sector organisations as it has implications for cost.

As well as appropriate sites, we also need staff skilled in supporting people with complex needs. Our recently implemented Dynamic Purchasing System for contracting with organisations to deliver supported living already includes recognition of a higher skill level where there is more complexity, and there is a further step built in for people who need highly bespoke accommodation and support. We are working with the provider market to develop the accommodation and workforce needed to staff the support required within Surrey now and into the future.

It is important to note that these schemes will not be cheap, and that support for this group is justifiably more costly. Given this, any proposals for new developments will need to be carefully planned and checked to ensure affordability.

For providers supporting autistic adults we have outlined our requirements and expectations in a Market Position Statement https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/376020/Autism-Word-Clean-May-24-v3-0.pdf which explains the points we are discussing in more detail, emphasising the need for specialist housing design and appropriate space standards, and outlining our approach to commissioning multi-disciplinary bespoke services for people who require support to manage complex or risky behaviour.

In summary, at SCC we continue to work together with providers and developers to address the twin challenges of securing a greater number of supported accommodation options, and ensuring these are tailored for people who require increasingly complex packages of care in accommodation of a higher specification.

We will continue to pursue best practice and ensure that our developments meet the national and Surrey standards and strategic direction.

Sinead Mooney
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care
26 November 2024

Question (2): Gareth Leighton

I'm a parent of a 4-year-old autistic daughter undergoing an EHC Needs Assessment. Regulation 6 of the SEND Regulations 2014 requires the local authority to document specialist advice on needs (Section B), outcomes (Section E), and provision (Section F). When SCC's partners do not provide the advice this way, what steps does SCC take to ensure it acts lawfully?

Reply:

All advice received in respect of needs assessments is quality assured by a SEND Senior Case Manager prior to its inclusion in an initial summary of assessment, and then later, if appropriate, a draft EHC Plan. The SEND team contact providers directly if the advice does not meet the requirements of advice for these purposes.

There will be instances where health advice is being sought in relation to a child who is thought to have a condition that has not been formally diagnosed and where the diagnostic pathway exceeds six weeks. In these instances, it is important to keep in mind that the provision of health advice does not require any formal diagnosis. What is required is informed advice as to the child's needs, the provision required to meet those needs and the desired outcomes. We ensure that the chosen health professionals give advice for the purposes of regulation 6(1)(c) that has sufficient information to give reasonable and informed advice. This should not require expedited completion of a diagnostic process in a way which may be clinically inappropriate.

We have worked with our legal teams to ensure that the application of these expectations is in line with our statutory requirements.

In practical terms, if there are any advices that are late or do not adequately describe the needs or required provision for a child or young person, when a case is being prepared for the multi-agency panel, the SEND team will reach out to the appropriate manager to ensure this is resolved. We have specific link managers who connect with health and social care to support this cross partnership working. All members of the partnership are aware of their statutory duties to comply with these requests.

In addition, Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and any health reports are shared with families when they are produced, which also enables any concerns to be raised should they feel the reports do not adequately describe their child. Any families who have concerns should contact their case officer, or our LSPA contact centre.

Clare Curran
Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning
26 November 2024

Question (3): Paul Kennedy

Thank you for the reply to my earlier question about projected changes to the catchment area for the Howard of Effingham school, in which the cabinet member set out SCC's belief that falling birth rates could absorb the extra demand for school places arising from planned developments in Effingham, Little Bookham, the Horsleys and Wisley. How will that answer be affected by the new government's misguided decisions to (a) charge VAT on private schools which is likely to drive a substantial exodus to the state sector and; (b) resurrect Robert Jenrick's discredited 2020 proposals to effectively double housing targets for Green Belt areas such as Surrey?

Reply:

- a) It is too soon at present to confirm how this will impact the actual number of applications for a state school in Surrey, nor the uptake of places that might be offered. Surrey's education services are ready to work collegiately with our schools and stakeholders to manage any increase in applications and we remain confident in the council's ability to fulfil its statutory duty to offer a school place to any Surrey child who needs one.
- b) The proposed increase in housing targets will take time to materialise as homes. The pupils from additional residential developments are not likely to impact until at least the next decade. Education Place Planning liaise with district and borough councils to ensure that housing developments are known and included in forecasts as appropriate.

Clare Curran

Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning

26 November 2024

Question (4): Sam Neatrou

What did the ARUP report say about the safety report conclusions and what mitigations may be possible or appropriate?

Reply:

The Arup technical review concludes that the "Provision of the active travel scheme from New Inn Lane to York Road along London Road, Guildford would result in a road that is safer and more accessible for children, pedestrians and cyclists travelling around Guildford, for now and in the future"

With regard to potential mitigations suggested by Arup, these include slow markings on the shared path, pedestrian symbols on the paths and 'share with care' to ensure all users know the space is shared.

Active Travel England suggested a coloured strip of paving to indicate the edge of the path. It was also proposed to use markings that indicate that bikes are guests on the path and must yield to pedestrians.

If the scheme were to go ahead, these minor suggested amendments will be carefully considered and included where appropriate.

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