

CABINET – 15 DECEMBER 2020

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Public Questions

Question (1): Mr Andrew Matthews

The Government has recently announced new rules for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) funding, restricting how Local Authorities fund SEND. How is Surrey County Council going to continue to meet its obligations under the Children and Families Act 2014, to secure special educational provision and health care provision, in accordance with the wide variety of individual Education and Health Care Plans, and how will this impact schools caring for SEND children?

Reply:

For the financial year 2020/21 the DfE introduced financial restrictions on local authorities to prevent them adding additional monies to schools' budgets and this included SEND, but there is nothing new in the financial regulations for 2021/22. The DfE expects mainstream schools to fund the first £6000 of additional support per pupil if they have special educational needs from their school budgets. When a child has an EHCP the local authority may allocate additional funding to support other elements of a pupil's needs that are set out in their EHCP.

Schools in Surrey are funded to meet the needs of all children through a funding formula set by national government. All schools are consulted on these funding arrangements every September so that they can plan their budgets for the following academic year. There are protections built into these arrangements to ensure every pupil receives a guaranteed minimum, which was increased substantially by government through £7bn additional investment in school funding by 2022-23. The funding arrangements in Surrey also protect small schools from sudden or significant changes in their funding levels which would be difficult to manage.

Supporting our more vulnerable residents – including children with special educational needs – is our number one priority; we are always working hard to ensure we can improve the lives and life chances of these young people.

Over and above national funding, Surrey County Council is making significant additional investment in our schools.

Cabinet has committed £69million of capital investment to deliver an additional 1,100 special school places for children with special educational needs (SEN). The Council is committing a further £32million of its budget this year, above the national funding, on provision such as speech and language therapy for children with SEN. And the £100million Your Fund Surrey will build community capacity which will benefit local schools and pupils.

We must scrutinise the impact of the services we deliver and fund – as residents would rightfully expect – and we firmly believe that the way some of our funding is currently allocated to support children with SEN in our schools is not effective. It simply does not have the positive impact it should have on the lives of these young people.

We are therefore proposing changes that that provide the right level of support and help young people to gain independence where possible and transition to adulthood successfully. And to

do so in a way that is sustainable, giving schools the ability to use funding and resources collectively and more flexibly.

The Surrey SEND System Strategy 2019-22 outlines our ambitions as a partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 in Surrey. We recognise the importance of supporting our children's journey to independence by increasing inclusion at all stages of their lives and ensuring access to the right information and support at the earliest possible stage. Our focus as a partnership in 2021 is making sure we have the capacity, skills and provision in place to help children thrive in their local communities.

Mrs Julie Iles
Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning
15 December 2020