



Supplementary Agenda

Items: 5 (i) and 6

for the Budget meeting of

THE COUNTY COUNCIL

to be held on

6 FEBRUARY 2024

(i)

(ii)

5 2024/25 FINAL BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY TO 2028/29 (Pages 5 - 14)

Council is asked to approve the 2024/25 Final Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2028/29.

- Leader's Statement (Budget) - *to be appended to the minutes.*

There will be an opportunity for Members to ask questions and/or make comments.

Report included: Item 5 (i) - Alternative Budget proposals and amendments to recommendations: Catherine Powell (Farnham North).

6 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME (Pages 15 - 30)

The Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader or the appropriate Member of the Cabinet or the chairman of a committee to answer any questions on any matter relating to the powers and duties of the County Council, or which affects the county.

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MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

6 FEBRUARY 2024

ITEM 5(i) – AMENDMENT TO ITEM 5 - 2024/25 FINAL BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY TO 2028/29

Item 5(i)

Amendment by Catherine Powell (Farnham North) to item 5 – 2024/25 Final Budget and Medium-Term Finance Strategy to 2028/29

Seconder: Jonathan Essex (Redhill East)

Introduction

Whilst the budget narrative places an emphasis on enhancing preventative services in the community, this proposed amendment recognises a need to fund more early intervention, prevention and support services in Adults' and Children's Services that specifically targets some of our most vulnerable residents, particularly in deprived areas, as well as reducing pressures on statutory services.

The Children's, Families and Lifelong Learning Select Committee has raised concerns about the current levels of support provided to parents and carers of children with SEND and the long-term impacts this is having on children and their families. There is also a clear need to do more to encourage more foster carers and provide more support to existing foster carers.

The Adults, Wellbeing and Health Select Committee recommended that given the known trend of rising demand and rising costs, the Council needed to do more to meet the objective set in Section 2 of the Care Act 2014 of "Preventing needs for care and support" by:

- Developing community-based approaches to keeping residents healthy and in their own homes;
- Reducing the overall market demand for high-cost care services by refocusing efforts on prevention;
- Maximising the use of Technology Enabled Care including making the service available Surrey-wide as soon as possible for both self-funders and Surrey funded service users;

This amendment seeks to address the recommendations of these two committees alongside more recent challenges.

Recommendations

Council is asked to approve the following budget proposals, which are aimed specifically at providing support for some of the most vulnerable residents in Surrey in a targeted way, as well as establishing an ongoing funding source to ensure future funding for preventative activities:

- 1. Further investment in SEND Play and Leisure to address increased demand, track and address the waiting lists.**

***Budget commitment:** £0.5m additional ongoing revenue budget to enable providers to address increased demand due to increased numbers of children with EHCPs, tackle waiting lists and collate information on on-going demand for services to prevent escalation of need and family breakdown.*

- 2. Provide funding to support the expansion of the current pilot, where providers of SEND Play and Leisure or Overnight respite groups would allow parents and carers to fund a session or place using their personal allowances, when they are struggling to recruit Personal Assistants (PAs) to provide respite and support.**

***Budget commitment:** One-off spend of £0.05m to enable providers to create the additional capacity required to enable parents and carers to spend personal allowances on Play and Leisure or Overnight respite places / sessions where PAs cannot be sourced after the current pilot finishes.*

- 3. Support the implementation and roll out of the Surrey Fosters Carers Charter, developed alongside the Surrey Foster Carers Association, to support Foster Carers retention and recruitment and ensure the best possible outcomes for the children and young people in their care.**

***Budget commitment:** One-off spend of £0.3m to fund temporary additional roles within the Fostering Service and other engaged council services, dedicated to working alongside partner organisations including the Surrey Foster Carer Association to ensure that the Charter is fully implemented within 6 months.*

- 4. Additional support in schools for neurodiverse children, specifically those in areas of high deprivation.**

***Budget commitment:** £0.7m additional ongoing revenue budget to enable the service to increase the reach of existing mechanisms and add services for primary schools in areas of high deprivation to support neurodiverse children in mainstream schools.*

- 5. Additional revenue budget to create a fund to enable local communities to deliver Strength and Balance Classes in deprived areas and rural villages.**

***Budget commitment:** £0.2m additional ongoing revenue budget to support communities in deprived areas and rural villages with no regular bus service to create a fund for local communities to access, to provide strength and balance classes to support fall prevention and stroke rehabilitation as well as reducing social isolation.*

- 6. Accelerate the roll out of Technology Enabled Care**

***Budget commitment:** £0.25m of ongoing funding to accelerate the roll out of technology enabled care across Surrey. This budget will cover further additional staffing for the extension of the existing scheme to cover the whole of Surrey over the next 2 years and to establish of an option for anyone to self-fund, at a fixed cost.*

- 7. The establishment of a fund, created through voluntary contributions from residents, to provide an ongoing revenue funding source for specific early intervention, preventative and support services for residents in most need.**

The financial impacts are either requirements for initial one-off funding sources or ongoing budget requirements and, if approved, would result in changes to the Directorate envelopes of the Childrens, Families & Lifelong Learning Directorate and the Adults, Wellbeing & Health Partnerships Directorate in 2024/25.

Table 1. Summary of budget proposals

Proposal	2024-25 & annual ongoing revenue impact	One-Off costs	Notes
1. Children Services: Further investment in SEND Play and Leisure to tackle increase in demand, track and address the waiting lists to prevent escalating need and family breakdown	£500,000		Ongoing
2. Childrens Services: Provide funding to support the expansion of the current pilot whereby personal allowances can be used to fund a place at a SEND Play and Leisure or Overnight Respite.		£50,000	One-off funding for Year 1 only
3. Childrens Services: Support the implementation and roll out of the Surrey Fosters Carers Charter within 6 months to support Foster Carers retention and recruitment and ensure the best possible outcomes for the children and young people in their care.		£300,000	One-off funding for Year 1 only
4. Children’s Services: Provide additional support for schools in areas of high deprivation for neurodiverse children in mainstream schools.	£700,000		Effectiveness to be reviewed to determine strategy for Year 2 and beyond
5. Adults’ Social Care: Additional budget to create a fund to enable local communities to deliver Strength and Balance Classes.	£200,000		On-going
6. Adults Social Care: Accelerate the roll out of Technology Enabled Care	£250,000		
7. Voluntary Contribution Fund The establishment of a fund, created through voluntary contributions from residents, to provide an ongoing funding source for specific early intervention, preventative and support services for residents in most need.			Minimal promotional & administrative costs anticipated to set up. Donations to be utilised to provide ongoing financial support for prevention activities into the medium term
	£1,650,000	£350,000	

Proposed Funding

In order to maintain a balanced budget position, the following funding sources are proposed to finance the increases required to support these proposals. The funding sources are listed below in order of priority, with option one being the preferred method of funding and the options following to be considered in order, should the first option not prove sufficient:

1. Allocation of any additional funds announced in the Final Local Government Settlement, over and above the £5m allocated in the final budget proposals to specific preventative activities in Children's Services.
2. Consolidating services and leadership roles across the Communication, Engagement and Public Affairs and the Customer & Communities Directorates.
3. Use of reserves for year one investment with ongoing costs incorporated into the budget planning process for 2025/26 onwards.

Basis for the Recommendations:

Further details on each of the proposed recommendations are provided below.

1. Further investment in SEND Play and Leisure to address increased demand, track and address the waiting lists.

***Budget commitment:** £0.5m additional ongoing revenue budget to enable providers to address increased demand due to increased numbers of children with EHCPs, tackle waiting lists and collate information on on-going demanded for services to prevent escalation of need and family breakdown.*

Current Commitments

In response to the recommendation of the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning Select Committee, the final budget proposal re-instates the funding for play and leisure short breaks that was previously reallocated to statutory overnight short breaks services, as well as including additional funding to ensure there is sufficient budget to commission the same capacity of play and leisure provision in 2024/25 as in 2022/23. Within this, there is a higher level of provision of capacity that is available to enable children and young people who require 1-to-1 support to access short breaks, in response to the changing profile of need in Surrey. Whilst this is a positive change, it is recognised that demand and waiting lists remain high.

Proposed Budget Amendment

Council is asked to increase the budgets for SEND short breaks, stay & play and youth groups to address the increase in demand associated with the increase in the number of children with EHCPs by creating new schemes / extending existing schemes to start to address the multi-year waiting lists that currently exist, whilst also creating a better picture of demand and what is needed to prevent escalating need and family breakdown, including for children that do not require 1:1 support.

The EIA associated with the 2023/24 budget proposals ([\(Equality Impact Assessment - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)\)](#)) identified that the number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans aged 0-18 had increased by 65% since the last time the services were commissioned and that the costs to charities to provide the services had significantly increased. These additional funds will go some way to addressing the associated increase in demand that will not be addressed by the budget increase included in the current budget.

- 2. Provide funding to support the expansion of the current pilot, where providers of SEND Play and Leisure or Overnight respite would allow parents and carers to fund a session / place using their personal allowances, when then are struggling to spend Personal Assistants (PAs) to provide some respite and support.**

Budget commitment: One-off spend of £0.05m to enable providers to create the additional capacity required to enable parents / carers to spend personal allowances on Play and Leisure or Overnight respite sessions / places where PAs cannot be sourced after the pilot finishes.

Current Commitments

The service recognises the challenge of recruiting personal assistants and as a result are piloting a model within the existing Direct Payment policy to offer places to families to utilise this funding for short breaks, rather than having to source a PA. If the pilot is successful, the intention is to roll this out to other providers. The cost of the pilot, relating to underwriting the increased capacity required by providers, is being funded from within existing budgeted resources.

Proposed Budget Amendment

The allocation of £50k of funding to ensure that there are no barriers the roll out of this practice, subject to the success of the pilot and to ensure that all social workers are aware that personal allowances can be used in this way to maximise its use to prevent escalation of need and avoid family breakdown.

- 3. Support the implementation and roll out of the Surrey Fosters Carers Charter, developed alongside the Surrey Foster Carers Association, to support Foster Carers retention and recruitment and ensure the best possible outcomes for the children and young people in their care.**

Budget commitment: One off spend of £0.3m to fund temporary additional roles within the Fostering Services and other engaged SCC Services, dedicated to working alongside partner organisations including the Surrey Foster Carer Association to ensure that the Charter is fully implemented within 6 months.

Current Commitments

The Fostering Service is committed to the Surrey Foster Carers Charter, as developed by the Surrey Foster Carers Association, and agreed at the Corporate Parenting Board. The Fostering Service agree it is vital for the benefit of the children as well as the support, retention and recruitment of Surrey foster carers.

Proposed Budget Amendment

The Council is asked to support a specific investment of £300k as one-off expenditure to fund additional capacity to enable dedicated resources to ensure the timely implementation of the Foster Carer Charter. The implementation will require multi-disciplinary collaboration, involving several services within the Council (e.g. Fostering, Education, SEND), Health colleagues, the Surrey Foster Carer Association and members of the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure that the Charter is fully implemented within 6 months.

Implementing this Charter will provide certainty that Surrey County Council and other stakeholders will provide the support that Foster Carers and the children in their care

require to support placement stability, foster carer retention and positive outcomes for children placed with foster carers, whilst also creating a clear statement of support from the Council to assist with foster carer recruitment.

The current challenges in recruitment and retention of Foster Carers are clear as the Month 8 financial report included in the Cabinet papers for the 30th of January 2024 advise an underspend “*on in-house fostering due to a lower number of children supported through in-house foster carers (£1.1m)*”.

4. Provide additional support in schools for neurodiverse children, specifically those in areas of high deprivation.

Budget commitment: £0.7m additional ongoing revenue budget to enable the service to increase the reach of existing mechanisms and add services for primary schools in areas of high deprivation to support neurodiverse children in mainstream schools.

Current Commitments

Current and planned activity in these areas form part of the Council’s Inclusion Strategy and Transformation programme. There are a number of initiatives in place to support children including:

- As part of the Surrey All Age Autism Strategy we have developed an Autism Review for schools which concludes with a report including positive suggestions about changes they could make to make the environment more autism aware.
- developing the service delivered by our STiPs team which supports children with a wide range of need and are rolling out the Team Around the School programme following a very successful pilot.
- The Inclusion and Innovation Programme, developed with the Schools Forum, focusing on creating autism friendly schools and well as emotional well-being and supporting successful transitions.
- further development of the Autism Outreach programme delivered by a partnership of Surrey specialist schools with primary focus on support for mainstream schools. This support includes Early Years children from the age of 3 years.
- delivering training through partners on Suicide Prevention with a focus on autistic young people, training of Pathological Demand Avoidance and a full day event called Behind the Mask which explores understanding and support for autistic girls.

There is a great deal of activity underway and it is essential that we align and coordinate activities to avoid duplication or overlap.

Proposed Budget Amendment

The Council asked to provide £700k for additional support for Primary Schools in areas of deprivation for neurodiverse children who require additional support in a mainstream environment. This support is likely to benefit all children at these schools and will be provided in addition to current Surrey wide provision.

The proposal is to target this support at all schools in, or servicing, the 18 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are decile 1 for the Children and Young People Sub-domain, the 27 LSOAs that are decile 2 for the Children and Young People Sub-domain and the remaining LSOAs that are included 21 key Neighbourhoods.

The first step will be to identify the schools in these areas and the current outcomes associated with these schools, including academic attainment and attendance.

The second step will be to review existing SCC projects and programmes to identify those that could be specifically targeted at these schools.

The final step would be to look at the specific challenges that schools supporting these more deprived areas have and to provide additional support, for example:

- Additional funded support through STiPs and our specialist schools
- Environmental reviews of each school to identify potential interventions that could improve the environment, for example, quiet / sensory room and / or a minimal distraction area in school and / or classrooms so that every neurodiverse child can take themselves for quiet time if they need to self-regulate.
- Support for screening for dyslexia based on the British Dyslexia Association checklist with a funded position for a BDA Approved Assessor.
- If successful, this would need to be considered alongside the whole SEN sufficiency work and the high needs recovery plan and could be rolled out to a wider range of schools in future years.

5. Additional revenue budget to create a fund to enable local communities to deliver Strength and Balance Classes.

***Budget commitment:** £0.2m additional ongoing revenue budget to support communities in deprived areas and rural villages with no regular bus service to create a fund for local communities to access, to provide strength and balance classes to support fall prevention and stroke rehabilitation as well as reducing social isolation.*

Current Commitments

The Public Health Team recognise the benefits that effective strength and balance classes can bring to physical, and mental health. Active Surrey already promotes a number of targeted classes in line with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Any additional roll out of classes would need to ensure there was no duplication and that classes were of the required standard.

In addition, the administration of such classes needs to be proportionate, so mechanisms to deliver should be looked at alongside the opportunity to incorporate these proposals into the strategic transformation work around prevention, with links to Better Care Fund budgets.

Proposed Budget Amendment

Investment to be targeted at communities in deprived areas (21 key neighbourhoods or one of the 24 LSOA which are decile 1, 2 or 3 for the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People (IDAOPI) decile) and rural villages with no regular bus service to create a fund for local communities to access, to provide sustained strength and balance classes to support fall prevention and stroke rehabilitation as well as reducing social isolation.

It is proposed grant funding of £1,500 - £2,000 per year be allocated to community groups to set up and run courses for at least 25 weeks in any one year in community centres, village halls and churches in the heart of local communities and populations in need. Wherever possible a local resource should be identified to run the courses.

The intention would be to make these schemes self-sustaining where possible after the first year, where attendees can afford to fund and /or match funding can be sourced for example, from the NHS, where this is not possible this fund will provide continuity of funding.

Data will be gathered on the impact of these courses after each quarter so that effectiveness can be established and reviewed as part of future budgets.

6. Accelerate the roll out of Technology Enabled Care

Budget commitment: £0.25m of ongoing funding to support accelerated roll out of technology enabled care across Surrey. This budget will cover further additional staffing for the extension of the existing scheme to cover the whole of Surrey over the next 2 years and to establish of an option for anyone to self-fund, at a fixed cost.

Current Commitments

The Council is committed to the expansion of and investment in Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS), which is already part of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships (AWHP) transformation plans for 2024/25 and beyond.

Funding of c £750k is available through the Better Care Fund and plans are being developed alongside health partners.

As part of AWHP's refreshed transformation plans the directorate is also planning to continue funding for three current temporary transformation funded roles dedicated to progressing the ambition to expand the use of TECS. The plan is to secure funding for eighteen months from April 2024 at a total planned cost of just over £250k as part of the final AWHP transformation business case, which is expected to be presented to Cabinet for approval in quarter 1 2024/25.

The self-funder offer business case will form part of developing the TECS strategy.

Proposed Budget Amendment

Council is asked to identify an additional £0.25m of ongoing funding to support the accelerated roll out of technology enabled care ([Technology enabled care: Surrey Connected Care - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)) across Surrey.

This budget will be used for further additional staffing to cover the acceleration of the extension of the existing scheme to cover the whole of Surrey over the next 2 years and to establish an option for anyone to self-fund, at a fixed cost.

7. The establishment of a fund, created through voluntary contributions from residents, to provide an ongoing funding source for specific early intervention, preventative and support services for residents in most need.

Proposed Budget Amendment

Introduce the Surrey Community Contribution Scheme to fund specific targeted early intervention, prevention and support services in our most deprived and isolated communities.

This fund would not be spent on Statutory Services, only non-statutory services that deliver frontline services through the VCFS.

Voluntary donations to the fund would be encouraged from any resident.

The donations would go directly to a ringfenced fund within Community Foundation Surrey and all those contributing would be asked if they would like their donation to be subject to Gift Aid (adding 25p to every £1 donated).

The target would be to raise £2m per year, this equates equating to less than £100 per year being donated by every Band H household.

In future years, resident or member consultation could be undertaken to prioritise areas of revenue investment, with a cross party group of councillors recommending any changes, based on the level of donations received and the impacts of the funding, in December for incorporation into the budget. The intention is to create a stable and secure revenue funding stream for proven frontline preventative, early intervention, and support services particularly for areas of high deprivation.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

The financial information set out in these proposals has been developed in consultation with officers from the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning Directorate, the Adults, Wellbeing & Health Partnership Directorate and Finance.

All proposals are deemed to be viable and within the legal powers of the Council to implement.

Proposals 2 and 3 request one-off funding for 2024/25 only, with all other proposals requiring ongoing revenue funding. The total investment required in relation to these proposals is £1,650,000 on an ongoing basis, with an additional ask of a further £350,000 in 2024/25, bringing the 2024/25 total to £2,000,000.

Proposal 7 recommends the establishment of a voluntary contribution fund. The mechanism to administer and collect contributions needs to be developed. If successful, this would provide a future income stream to support further preventative activities. It is not suggested that reliance is placed on this source of income to fund these proposals in 2024/25, due to the uncertainty of the level of income that would be achieved through this mechanism. Consideration would also need to be given in the future to funding ongoing activities from an income stream where the level of funding is not guaranteed on an ongoing basis.

The proposals recommend that these additional investments be funded initially from any additional funding announced in the Final Local Government Finance Settlement. The Final Budget proposed by Cabinet recommends proposals for the use of £5m of this additional funding, as announced on 24th January, to be utilised for additional preventative activities within Childrens Services. The ability to fund the investments set out in these alternative proposals would require the additional funding to be in excess of the £5m recommended to Council by Cabinet.

If additional funding were not available, then it is proposed above that a review is undertaken of the current leadership structures in place across the following two Directorates:

- Communications, Engagement & Public Affairs
- Customer & Communities

Detailed proposals are yet to be developed in relation to this and the level of efficiencies deliverable would be subject to the development of a robust business case and delivery plan. If efficiencies are insufficient to cover the investment proposed, then reserves would need to be used for the first-year costs, while other efficiencies were identified to fund these proposals on an ongoing basis.

Despite coming from a strong financial position, due to the Council's focus on financial accountability and improved financial resilience over recent years, the development of the 2024/25 budget proposals have been challenging. Continued increasing demand for key services and high inflation means that the cost of delivering services is increasing at a faster rate than our funding. The budget gap is expected to continue to grow over the medium-term financial strategy period, as demand and price pressures continue and the funding position past 2024/25 is extremely uncertain. This all results in a requirement for the Council to continue its focus on financial management, to mitigate risk and provide sustainability and resilience in the delivery of services. The proposals set out above and the investment requirements over and above those set out in budget recommended to Council by Cabinet, should be considered in light of the overall financial context.

In the event of the Final Local Government Finance Settlement providing additional funding in excess of the £5m already proposed to be utilised in 2024/25, the Council papers recommend that use of such funding is considered by Cabinet once final allocations are confirmed.

MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL**TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2024****QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED UNDER THE PROVISIONS
OF STANDING ORDER 10.1****MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH****1. JOANNE SEXTON (ASHFORD) TO ASK:**

I was contacted recently by the construction firm JCB with regard to a new machine, the JCB Pothole Pro, which the company claims can fix a pothole in just eight minutes at half the cost of current methods. JCB offers a pilot scheme which would enable Surrey County Council to test out the new technology. The company states that one local authority has been able to complete seven years' worth of road repairs in just one year. JCB will be holding a webinar on Thursday 29 February to demonstrate their new innovation. Although Surrey was allocated an extra £3.7m for potholes in the budget in March 2023, the costs of these repairs is enormous.

Is the Cabinet Member aware of this new technology, and are there any plans for Surrey County Council to take part in a JCB pilot scheme which may help to tackle the scourge of potholes blighting our roads?

RESPONSE:

Surrey County Council undertook a trial of the JCB Pothole Pro in 2023. This followed trials of other similar technologies such as RoadMender and Multihog. We trialled the technologies as "larger patch" fixes rather than using them for individual pothole fixes.

Each trial we undertake is evaluated by our Highways Laboratory who look at the quality of repairs and our contractor who reviews the productivity and cost benefit of new technologies. At this time, they felt that the machinery does not provide sufficient improvements in terms of quality, productivity or cost savings compared to the methods we are currently using. We do not believe that these types of technologies are suitable for general pothole repairs in Surrey due to the size of the county and the distances between repairs that the machinery would have to travel in order for us to fix potholes within our agreed timescales.

I am pleased to say that we are seeing a much lower number of potholes this winter compared to last year. We continue to look at new materials, equipment, and processes to enable us to improve our reactive highways service. Improvements that have been made in the past year include:

- implementing larger pothole fixes where appropriate.
- enabling pothole repair teams to “fix now” potholes that have not yet been reported or inspected, but which are in close proximity to potholes they have been sent to repair.
- operating from more depots across Surrey so our teams can get to defects more quickly.
- changing materials to ensure longevity of repairs in winter conditions.

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

2. NICK DARBY (THE DITTONS) TO ASK:

Can the Cabinet Member confirm how long it takes, on average, for a Blue Badge to be issued by Surrey County Council once an application has been received?

RESPONSE:

The Blue Badge Scheme helps thousands of people who have mobility issues, to access goods, services, activities and facilities by allowing them to park close to their destination, in many cases without charge or time limit, in places such as on-street disabled bays and at on-street parking meters and pay and display machines, either as drivers or passengers. For many, this can have a significant impact on their quality of life, mental health, well-being and social life and ensure and enhance levels of independence that would otherwise not be possible.

Some applicants automatically qualify for a Blue Badge on provision of the relevant evidence, although where this is not the case, applicants may still be eligible under one or more criteria set by the Department for Transport (DfT). In these cases, to ensure that decisions are made fairly and consistently, the team uses a robust assessment process and considers all supporting professional evidence submitted as part of the application.

Where applications do not provide sufficient professional evidence on which to base a decision, applicants are given an opportunity for to provide further evidence of how their disability, medical or mental health condition affects their mobility. Where evidence is not available, or a case is particularly complex the team may refer applicants to independent assessors for an expert opinion.

The time taken to process a Blue Badge is currently 9.5 weeks (47 working days), while our average processing time in 2023 was 5.4 weeks (27 working days). Both are well within the DfT guideline of 12 weeks.

The following factors beyond the Council’s control are contributing to the current time taken to process applications:

- Blue Badge applications have risen by 43% from 16,000 in 2020 to just under 23,000 in 2023, driven largely by an ageing population.

- An extension to the eligibility criteria to include non-visible and/or hidden disabilities, many cases of which are complicated and time consuming to process.
- A Department for Work and Pensions Personal Independence Payment (PIP) backlog, resulting in an increase in renewal volumes in these cases (20% of applications are currently issued under PIP eligibility).
- The small Blue Badge team have been impacted by vacancies and unanticipated long-term sickness.

In response to these pressures:

Staff from the Contact Centre team, who already take initial Blue Badge enquiries, have been trained to assess Blue Badge applications and at least one is currently deployed to the Blue Badge team each week.

Residents are being informed about the processing time via the website and e-mail correspondence, to ensure awareness and encourage applicants to renew in good time.

Consideration is being given to the resourcing of the team to better reflect the above factors.

**CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES,
LIFELONG LEARNING**

3. WILL FORSTER (WOKING SOUTH) TO ASK:

At the start of this month, the High Court granted a judicial review into Surrey County Council's decision not to house a child in need, despite the child being known to the Council's social services team and being on the verge of being made homeless.

- a) When did the Cabinet Member become aware of the decision not to support this child?
- b) How much money and officer time was spent on trying to defend the Judicial Review?

RESPONSE:

- a) Reports indicate that these proceedings relate to a decision taken in 2019, predating the appointment of the current Cabinet. However, Cabinet Members are not routinely informed about legal proceedings. Individual issues are raised as relevant in one-to-one meetings with Cabinet Members and Directors.
- b) The legal cost so far (in terms of Surrey's legal officer time spent and the cost of counsel) is in the region of £19,000. As yet, there are no details of the costs being sought by the other side.

MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

4. HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK:

I have been contacted by residents who are not on-line and have struggled to obtain paper parking vouchers for visitors, complaining of a difficult process and significant delays.

- a) Please can the Cabinet Member confirm the process for visitors' vouchers and how long it is taking for residents to receive them?
- b) Please can the Council confirm whether an Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the new arrangements for applying for parking permits/visitor vouchers?

RESPONSE:

Paper visitor vouchers are now available and issued to residents who live in permit parking schemes and that are not able to apply for virtual permits using the Council's online system. They can be ordered and paid for over the phone, with copies of any proof documents required being sent in the post.

The paper visitor permits are delivered via the post to the resident, and they should arrive between 7 and 10 days after a successful application. This process is now in operation and so far, paper permits have been sent to 28 residents who have applied for them in this way.

Unfortunately, delays were experienced in the roll out of the paper permits due to (primarily) printing difficulties experienced by the permit suppliers used by NSL, our parking enforcement provider. We are sorry to all residents concerned for the inconvenience they experienced waiting for these permits and will be taking steps to ensure this does not happen again through our contract monitoring process with NSL.

During this time, we were able to maintain contact with the residents concerned and assist them when necessary to ensure their visitors vehicles were able to park when required.

An EIA checklist was completed that indicated that we should retain paper permits for some applications (such as the carers permit) and consequently the need for paper visitor permits was identified as part of a consultation process about the change to virtual permits. Again, it is disappointing that there were delays by our suppliers rolling out the paper permits, but this has now been rectified.

MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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

The last parking enforcement operational and financial report published by this Council was for 2018/19: [Parking enforcement operational and financial reports - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/parking-enforcement).

- a) Please can the Cabinet Member explain why these statutory reports for the last four years have not been made available on the Council's website?
- b) And confirm that they will be published with immediate effect?

RESPONSE:

- a) Prior to April 2023 (most) of the district and borough councils carried out parking enforcement in their respective areas under agency agreements with Surrey.

The annual parking reports that are on our website have been compiled using data provided by the district and borough councils during this time.

We have received financial returns from all of the districts and boroughs up to the 2021/22 financial year, but only around 50% for 2022/23. We also have incomplete data relating to penalty charge notices issued by the districts and boroughs between 2020 and 2023.

Consequently, we have chosen not to publish incomplete information on the website. We will however continue to evaluate what we can publish and what additional information can be obtained and do so as soon as possible.

- b) Since April 2023 we have been managing on street parking enforcement directly with our enforcement services supplier NSL. Consequently, we will be able to publish a full and comprehensive annual report for the 2023/24 financial year by the end of May, within two months of the end of the year financial year. Monthly reports are also now being sent to all County Council Members highlighting enforcement activity in their areas.

MARK NUTI, CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING, AND PUBLIC HEALTH

6. JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK:

For the last five years please give the amount spent on public health by Surrey County Council and what areas it has been spent on?

Please include the amount specifically spent on sexual health services and how the level of spending compares to the level of demand for services in this area?

RESPONSE:

The amount Surrey County Council spends on public health services is determined by the ringfenced Public Health grant the Council receives from the Government. The table below sets out the Public Health grant SCC has received over the last 5 years:

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
£35.6m	£38.0m	£38.6m	£39.6m	£40.9m

The Council has spent this grant allocation in full each year on a range of preventative services in line with the conditions of the ringfenced grant. The Council's public health service expenditure is aligned with Surrey's Health and Well-being Strategy, and key areas of expenditure include 0-19 healthy children services, substance misuses services, sexual health services, obesity, smoking prevention, health checks and mental health services.

Direct service expenditure on sexual health services in 2022/23 was £6.5m. Demand for sexual health services dropped significantly during the pandemic, but there has been a strong increase in demand since the start of 2023/24, as well as inflationary increases. As a result, direct service expenditure on sexual health services is forecast to be £7.3m in 2023/24. Public Health's 2024/25 budget includes provision to maintain this increased level of expenditure on sexual health services, and demand levels will continue to be closely monitored.

The delivery of all public health services will remain challenging with constrained funding. The Council's Public Health grant is set to increase by only 1.4% to £41.5m in 2024/25, well below the prevailing rate of inflation. The effective provision of sexual health services will though always be a key priority for the Council.

MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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

Surrey County Council's website describes what will be measured to track progress of the Surrey Transport Plan, which was approved in July 2022: [Delivering our transport plan and measuring its success - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/transport-plan-and-measuring-its-success).

Please confirm what baseline data has been collected and what data is being collected currently?

RESPONSE:

The County Council adopted a new Surrey Transport Plan in July 2022, the fourth iteration of our Local Transport Plan, known as LTP4. This sets out a range of ambitious policies and measures that aim to tackle the 41% of carbon emissions in Surrey generated by road and other transport. It seeks to achieve this by providing safer, cleaner and greener ways to travel, helping residents to continue to access services and opportunities right across the county in more sustainable ways.

Implementing LTP4 will help us to decarbonise our transport networks, supporting a pathway toward net zero carbon by 2050. This is set out in our Climate Change Strategy and the Climate Change Delivery Programme, both of which were agreed by Cabinet in October 2021.

In terms of a baseline, 2019 is the agreed baseline for tracking progress on our pathway to 2030 and 2050 net zero targets. This is set out in the Climate Change Delivery Plan and the emerging LTP4 Delivery Plan.

Measuring the success of LTP4 is part of the agreed Climate Change Delivery Plan, where it forms part of the Whole Programme Assessment progress reporting activities, under the headings of Active Travel, Public Transport, Electric Vehicles and Planning, Place and Infrastructure. These are all aligned to the six implementation themes set out in the emerging LTP4 Delivery Plan.

Furthermore, the most recent Climate Change Progress Report was presented to the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee on 5 October 2023 for detailed scrutiny.

Work is ongoing to choose a range of appropriate metrics and measures to track progress for inclusion in the emerging LTP4 Delivery Plan. Metrics will include nationally available datasets from the Department for Transport on monitoring road user statistics and vehicle kilometrage, along with locally collected indicators such as bus patronage, bus fleet composition, electric vehicle registrations, electric vehicle usage and electric vehicle charging points. Other local indicators for place-based programmes, active travel schemes, schools focussed improvements and similar interventions will provide valuable data on mode share, air quality and resident satisfaction. All of this data will be used to estimate and evaluate carbon reduction against our pathway to net zero.

CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING

8. CATHERINE POWELL (FARNHAM NORTH) TO ASK:

The Foster Carers Portal is included the Childrens Social Care Transformation portfolio, and the Fostering Service has advised that this will go live in the first half of this year.

- a) To ensure that we have learned lessons from the Unit 4 roll out please can the Cabinet Member advise if an End User Acceptance Phase has been incorporated into the plan and how the End User Acceptance Group has been selected to ensure that all stakeholders can thoroughly test the system before it goes live?

I am particularly concerned as we need to ensure that the system design supports Foster Carers using this system to reduce the time they spend supplying and completing information requests to maximise the time they have available to look

after the children we place in their care and the roll out of the Unit 4 system had significant challenges for all users.

- b) Please can the Cabinet Member also confirm that the Surrey Foster Carers Association have been included in the End User Acceptance Group and have been able to contribute to the development of the testing protocols and User Acceptance Criteria for go live have been defined and agreed?

RESPONSE:

I can confirm that an End User Acceptance Phase will be incorporated into the plan. An End User Acceptance Group has not yet been selected but the team will ensure that all stakeholders, including a group of social workers (both fostering service and children's teams) and foster carers will form this group as they have done with previous system changes and with previous implementations such as the Foster Carers SharePoint Page and the electronic expenses claim forms, both implemented in 2023.

This project is currently in the "building" stage and ensuring the portal will meet the basic needs of the service prior to sharing with foster carers for consultation. The portal is part of the Liquidlogic Childrens System (LCS) which gives a direct link between the foster carers and the case records held in LCS on foster carers and the children they care for. Surrey is an early adopter of the system and so we are currently learning about the limitations of the system which the fostering service needs to understand before the views of foster carers can be incorporated, as it is important to have a thorough understanding of the system, what it can do and how it supports the Council's statutory duties. This will enable the team to speak about it and its benefits to foster carers with a high degree of confidence. The main purpose of the portal is to make life for Surrey foster carers and the social workers supporting them and the children in their care easier and to improve communication between all parties, so the service is invested in making the portal as user-friendly and helpful for all as possible.

We are aware that the 31 March deadline is tight, if necessary, implementation will be pushed back to ensure that all users are reassured. All concerned will make sure that design and user testing is done thoroughly and that all key stakeholders are consulted and involved. A programme of training for all staff and carers will be rolled out when the service and carers forming the End User Acceptance Group are satisfied that the system will meet basic needs.

**CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES,
LIFELONG LEARNING**

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

- a) Is the Council happy that some school governing bodies are removing from their admission criterion: '*children for whom the school is the nearest to their home address*'?
- b) What is the current advice from Surrey to governing bodies on this matter?

RESPONSE:

The role of the Council is to ensure the admission arrangements for each school comply with the School Admissions Code and Admissions law and to object to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) in cases where it believes a set of arrangements does not comply. It is the responsibility of own admission authority schools (academies, foundation, free, trust and voluntary aided) to determine the admission arrangements that will apply each year and to consult where they propose to make a change. Whilst the Council has no role in agreeing a set of arrangements determined by an own admission authority school, we are supportive of schools which have consulted on removing or clarifying priority on the basis of 'nearest school' in line with our advice (see below), as this ensures their arrangements are compliant with the School Admissions Code.

The Council offers advice and guidance to schools on admission arrangements as and when matters arise from determinations of the OSA, to ensure the admission arrangements for each school are legally compliant. In November 2019, there was an adjudication by the OSA regarding Stamford Green Primary School which highlighted concerns about priority on the basis of 'nearest school' within admission arrangements. The adjudicator set out that this effectively created a catchment area, but not one that was clearly defined, consulted on, or published as required by the School Admissions Code. Following that determination, the Council provided advice to 117 own admission authority schools which gave priority on the basis of 'nearest school' to highlight the issues raised by the adjudicator and to ask them to consider this aspect of their arrangements when they next reviewed them. Since that time, the majority of Surrey's own admission authority schools have removed priority on the basis of 'nearest school' and the Council has also removed it from the admission arrangements for its community and voluntary controlled schools.

Surrey's advice to own admission authority schools which continue to give priority on the basis of 'nearest school' remains for them to review this aspect of their arrangements. However, it is for those own admission authority schools to decide whether they wish to remove priority on the basis of nearest school or, if not, how they might wish to amend their arrangements to ensure they are compliant with the Code. The local authority has suggested the following options to schools to help them in their deliberations:

- Remove nearest school priority and just use home to school distance.
- Replace nearest school with a drawn catchment area.
- Replace nearest school with a straight-line distance radius (making sure that this conforms to the Code).
- Replace nearest school with feeder links (junior and secondary intakes only).

Whilst schools also had the option to retain priority on the basis of 'nearest school,' if they did this, we advised them that, in doing so, they must make sure they can demonstrate that this would meet the requirement of the School Admissions Code. Failure to do so might put them at risk of a successful objection to the OSA.

For 2024 admission, Surrey has nine schools which continue to give some priority on the basis of 'nearest school'. For 2025 admission, we expect that number to drop to just two schools, subject to final determination from schools.

MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH / CLARE CURRAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING

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

The school places team has acknowledged that there is a shortage of secondary school places in the west of Surrey particularly in the Farnham area and in areas along the border with Hampshire. This is being driven by the significant housing delivery in this combined area, particularly in Rushmoor, Hampshire. There are specific issues in Farnham because both primary and secondary schools are ranked as some of the best in the UK in The Times's Parent Power league tables.

There are two specific updates in the December 2023 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that I would like to draw the Cabinet Member to, see below additions in December 2023 in **bold/underlined** and deletions in ~~*italic and struck through*~~:

Paragraph 7

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, **including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner**. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs⁴. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom – have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.

Paragraph 14

In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided ~~all of~~ the following apply:

- a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan ~~two~~ **five** years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and
- b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement (see paragraphs 67-68).
- ~~c) the local planning authority has at least a three year supply of deliverable housing sites (against its five year housing supply requirement, including the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 74); and~~

~~d) the local planning authority's housing delivery was at least 45% of that required over the previous three years~~

Questions:

- a) Given the lack of school places in Farnham and the on-going pressures on the Home to School Transport budget, please can the Cabinet Member advise whether or not SCC is going to take a more proactive approach to responding to the planning applications in areas with acknowledged shortfalls in school places?
- b) Please can the Cabinet Member advise whether particular emphasis will be placed on responding where applications are for new housing developments that are on sites that are not included in Neighbourhood Plans that are less than 5 years old?
- c) For example, will the Cabinet Member confirm that the Surrey School Places team will be providing responses to the applications in this category in Farnham, where a significant shortage has been identified over the whole planning period and for which there are no obvious solutions and where there have already been a significant number of additional housing developments approved (at appeal in the last 12 months) over and above those allocated in the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan, which is delivering to plan and is less than 5 years old?

RESPONSE:

- a) The Education Place Planning team has taken action to promote a more proactive and collaborative working relationship with Waverley Borough Council's Planning team. Meetings have been held with the Head of Planning at Waverley Borough Council to further discuss the challenges with providing additional education provision within Farnham, particularly at Secondary level. The Education Place Planning team has also met with officers at Waverley Borough Council to ensure that the provision of the projected deficit of education provision will be outlined within the latest Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The Education Place Planning have had meetings with Hampshire officers and will continue to build links with the place planning counterparts across the border. The location of pupils across the border means that they may live closer to Surrey schools than they do Hampshire schools. The admissions preference process means Hampshire pupils are correctly placed in Farnham schools. This creates pressure on places for Surrey pupils, as admission legislation does not allow for an artificial boundary such as the county border. The forecast data based on historical trends and other demographic data means that Place Planning are exploring options for additional secondary places in the area.
- b) Working alongside the Planning and Place making team, the Education Place Planning team, has raised with Waverley Borough Council the importance of being notified of all planning applications for developments with 10 units or more.

- c) The Team will respond to all notified planning applications emphasising the significant need for secondary school places in Farnham as a direct result of additional housing. Comments will be provided on all planning applications received from the borough council for developments with 10 units or more. Additionally, the issues highlighted have been noted in terms of cross-border working with neighbouring counties, this is being addressed via the Spatial Policy Team in Planning.

MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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

Cars and vans parked on pavements is an increasing problem in some areas. This can have a detrimental impact on pedestrians but especially disabled people or those with pushchairs etc.

Scotland has recently enacted new legislation in this area. Will Surrey consider a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to address this situation?

RESPONSE:

We recognise the problems caused by antisocial pavement parking and try to tackle the problem either through enforcement where it is possible or the use of parking restrictions as part of our parking review process.

The City of Edinburgh has recently enacted legislation made under the Transport (Scotland) Act, passed in 2019 which banned pavement parking, double parking and parking at dropped kerbs. At present, in England, the legal situation outside of London is that only the police can enforce pavement parking if it causes an obstruction. However, our Enforcement Team can, and do, enforce pavement parking where there are already waiting restrictions (yellow lines) because these apply to the pavement as well as the road; however, in many cases they are not present.

Councils can make Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) to ban pavement parking over a small or large area which they could then enforce, but under current legislation we would need to put up signs at regular intervals to indicate this restriction. On a countywide scale the implementation of such a restriction could cost many hundreds of thousands of pounds and take years to implement.

A blanket ban on pavement parking could also cause significant displacement problems in some residential areas as drivers would park wholly on the road leaving less space for emergency, public service and delivery vehicles to get through.

We think that changes are needed at a national level, and in 2019/20 the Government carried out a consultation concerning new laws that could reduce the problems caused by pavement parking. At the time, we responded positively to their

consultation and fully support an option to introduce a new parking offence called 'unnecessary pavement obstruction' which could be enforced by our own enforcement officers without the need for a TRO. This would help us to manage this problem more effectively across the varied communities in Surrey in combination with our policies to help promote more sustainable modes of transport.

The outcome of the consultation and way forward has not yet been published by the Department for Transport (DfT). More information can be found here: [Managing pavement parking - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/managing-pavement-parking). Both myself and Cllr Deanus, when holding the portfolio, have requested when the report will be published.

In the meantime, we do aim to tackle all types of parking problems through our parking review process and there is more information about reporting these and requesting new parking restrictions, as well as how we carry out parking reviews to reduce obstructive parking by following this link: [The parking review process - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/parking-reviews).

Parking contraventions can also be reported direct to our Enforcement Team via: surreyparkingenforcement@nslservices.co.uk.

Other obstructions on the pavement can be reported to either the police if it is dangerous, or to Surrey Highways via our web page below, and we will aim to investigate and deal with the problem as soon as possible: [Report it online - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/transport-and-highways/report-pavement-obstruction).

MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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

A commitment was made to undertake a review of the Ringway contract following its one-year anniversary, this is now overdue.

- a) Please can the Cabinet Member advise when will it be released to all Members?
- b) Please can the Cabinet Member also advise when this review will be scrutinised?

RESPONSE:

The performance of the Ringway Highways Term Maintenance contract has continued to be reviewed as part of the ongoing governance of the contract, including review by the Cabinet Member. It is anticipated that a report on the Highways Term Maintenance Contract will be taken to the Communities, Environment and Highways (CEH) Select Committee in the new financial year once the forward plan has been agreed. Prior to that report, the Environment, Transport & Infrastructure Performance Report is being shared with the CEH Select Committee meeting on 7 February and has been updated to highlight where Ringway (as well as

other partners) are responsible for the Performance Indicator measure in question being delivered.

Other reviews have taken place since the contract started, including a review undertaken by the Contract Management Advisory Service (CMAS) which considered primarily the officer governance of the contract. The Council's Internal Audit function is also currently undertaking an audit of the outputs of the contract covering planning, performance and quality. Once complete, the findings of the audit and any recommendations will be published in the usual way.

DAVID LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES

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

The Cabinet papers contain a large number of planned efficiencies that were identified as red or amber in the budget planning documents released in October to the Select Committees. As noted in the Budget papers pressures on the in year services have continued to rise since October.

Across all directorates these red and amber rated efficiencies amount to around £35 million, including:

- £9.1m for the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships directorate,
- £7.9m for the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning directorate and
- £15.5m for the Environment, Infrastructure and Growth directorate.

My understanding is that a contingency budget of £20 million is included in this year's budget (confirmed by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources at the Cabinet meeting on 30 January 2024). I believe that this is in the Central Income and Expenditure budget although this is shown separately.

The budget papers include this statement:

"We recognise that this financial year and the next 2-3 are likely to represent an extremely challenging period. Continued increasing demand for key services and high inflation means that the cost of delivering services is increasing at a faster rate than our funding."

There are also ongoing and acknowledged net risks in this financial year - the Month 8 position documented in the Cabinet identifies a net risk of £1.7 million.

- a) Please can the Cabinet Member advise what the contingency plan is if the contingency budget is insufficient to these higher risk efficiencies not being achieved?
- b) Also, please can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the status of the red and amber efficiencies across each directorate as they have been included in the budget?

RESPONSE:

The Final Budget proposals contain a risk contingency budget of £20m, within the Central Income & Expenditure budget. This is to provide financial resilience and mitigation should cost pressures exceed budget assumptions and/or efficiency targets be deemed unachievable. Historically this level of contingency has been sufficient to provide such resilience, prior to 2022/23 contingency budgets were not utilised and instead added to our reserves.

The inflationary and demand pressures, experienced nationally, have resulted in the application of the contingency budget both last financial year and in this year. The contingency budget is one of a number of financial resilience measures in place. Regular financial monitoring ensures that forecast variances to budget are identified in a timely manner. Where Directorates forecast variances against budget, they are expected to identify actions to mitigate forecast overspends and contain costs within available budget envelopes. Where this is not deemed possible, then the contingency provides resilience. Should forecasts exceed the available contingency, then further corporate spending controls may need to be utilised.

In addition, the Council has worked hard over recent year to restore its reserves to a level that is appropriate to the risk environment in which we operate. As a short term measure, reserves are sufficient to provide financial resilience against overspends while medium term measures to reduce revenue expenditure are actioned.

The total efficiency target included in the budget proposals for 2024/25 equates to £53.7m. At the time of this meeting, 79% of efficiencies are rated green or amber, with 21% rated red. These ratings are continually reviewed as delivery plans are developed and by the start of the financial year it is anticipated that more of the red/amber efficiencies will be green, as plans are further developed. The Council has a strong track record of delivery of efficiencies in recent years.

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