

Meeting held on 17 July 2025 on Teams

Introductions

Tom welcomed people to the meeting, and everyone introduced themselves.

Actions from last meeting

- Nanu to share finalised details of the project once signed off – Nanu clarified that the work has not started yet. Tom to discuss ways forward with Nanu

NCS / TM

- Share summary of feedback on last year's You Said We Did document. Accessible version of this document is not yet complete Narmadha will follow this up

NK

Charging Policy Consultation

Key points discussed:

- Consultation around proposed changes to Surrey County Council Adult Social Care charging policy.
- Impact on autistic people who receive community care services.
- Proposed changes include adjusting capital thresholds and imposing a tariff income.
- Consultation is open until 7th September 2025.
- Events being held in libraries for input.

Discussion

People at the meeting shared their thoughts about the proposed changes.

Kai asked why benefits are counted in financial assessments but earnings from work are not. Natalie explained that this is a national rule,

not something Surrey can change. The idea is to encourage people to work, but Kai said this feels unfair to disabled people who can't work and already face higher living costs.

Natalie said that the council does look at things like rent, council tax, and disability-related expenses when doing financial assessments. People can ask for a reassessment at any time if their money situation changes.

Sara talked about a parent who had problems with the financial assessment system. Their son got very different results even though his situation hadn't changed much. At one point, his funding stopped and took a year to be reinstated. Natalie said that funding shouldn't stop just because someone's savings go over the limit. They would just pay more until their savings go down again.

Tom said it's clear that these issues cause stress and worry for people. He encouraged everyone to complete the consultation, so their voices are heard.

Catherine asked if the rules about counting benefits are local or national. Natalie said they are national rules set by the government. Surrey is only proposing changes to the savings limits and the tariff charges that will bring them into line with most local authorities.

Kai and others said they feel like they don't have much control over what happens and that the system is hard to understand. They asked for more support to help people understand their rights and how the system works.

Natalie and Ursula said their service is happy to help with financial assessments, including home visits if needed. All money collected from care charges goes back into funding care services.

They asked everyone to [fill out the consultation](#) and share any concerns. The council will look at all feedback before deciding.

[Local Government Reorganisation](#)

Key points discussed:

- The government wants to change how councils work in Surrey.

- Right now, Surrey has:
 - 1 County Council (handles services like schools, roads, and social care)
 - 11 smaller District and Borough Councils (handle things like bins, housing, and parks)
- The plan is to replace this with fewer, larger councils called unitary authorities.
- Two ideas are being considered:
 1. Two councils: West Surrey and East Surrey
 2. Three councils: North, West, and East Surrey
- This change is part of a national plan to give more power to local areas.
- Surrey is one of the first places to try this new system.
- The government will choose a plan in autumn 2025.
- Elections for the new councils will be in May 2026.
- A mayor for all of Surrey will be elected in May 2027.
- People can share their opinions now through a [public consultation](#).

Discussion

Haywood said the consultation questions are hard to understand and feel like an exam. He felt it was difficult for people to take part without doing a lot of preparation.

Amanda agreed and said even people who work for the council found it hard. She said the council asked the government to make the consultation easier and offer different formats, but this did not happen.

Tom suggested that the group should tell the government that the consultation is not easy for autistic people or others who may struggle with complex forms. Haywood agreed and said it's not just autistic people who might find it hard.

Kai and others said they didn't really understand what the changes would mean in real life. Tom explained that the new councils will have to deliver similar services, but it's not completely clear what the new structure for this will look like yet.

Sarah asked if it was even legal to not offer the consultation in other formats. Others agreed that it should be more accessible, under the Equality Act.

Amanda and Tom said they would keep the group updated. By the next meeting in October, they might know which plan the government has chosen. Once that's clear, it will be easier to understand what it means for everyone.

15 Minute Break

Hate Crime

Key points discussed:

- Chief Inspector Nolan Heather from Surrey Police spoke about hate crime.
- He leads the hate crime strategy and is updating the plan for the next 3 years.
- Hate crime is when someone is targeted because of:
 - Race
 - Religion
 - Disability
 - Sexual orientation
 - Being transgender
- Whether a crime is considered a hate crime is based on what the victim believes, not what the Police think.
- This rule comes from the Stephen Lawrence case and the MacPherson report.

- Surrey Police also track hate against people who dress differently (like Goths), even though it's not covered by law.
- Reports of hate crime in Surrey have increased, especially linked to events in the Middle East.
- Few cases are solved — only about 10% of disability hate crimes.
- Many victims don't report or don't want to go to court.
- Nolan is working with universities to learn more about why hate crimes happen and how to stop them.
- He wants to hear from the community to help improve the strategy.
- Hate crimes against transgender people seem lower, but Nolan thinks this may be because people are afraid to report them.
- He asked two big questions:
 1. What stops people from reporting hate crimes?
 2. What do people want from the Police about hate crime?

Discussion

Kai raised concerns about hate crimes against transgender people, especially since many autistic people are also transgender. Nolan agreed and said the police are aware of this and are worried that fewer people are reporting these crimes because they don't feel safe or supported.

Fi suggested that the police should give clearer guidance on what information people need to report a hate crime. She said vague questions can make it harder for autistic people to respond. Nolan agreed and said they are working on better resources, including videos and other formats for people with different needs.

Kai shared that as an autistic person, it's hard to know if something is a hate crime unless it's obvious. Subtle or confusing behaviour can be hard to understand or explain. Nolan said this is a common issue and that many people don't realise they've been victims of hate crime.

Camilla asked if the police have specific data on hate crimes against autistic people. She also said that raising awareness is important but

can also alert people who might commit hate crimes. She supported the idea of people reporting anything they're unsure about, rather than waiting until they're certain.

Nolan said the police want people to report any hate incident, even if they're not sure it's a hate crime. He said it doesn't matter how the report is made—by phone, online, or through someone else—if it reaches the police.

The group discussed the importance of making reporting easier and more accessible for everyone. Nolan said he wants to keep working with the group and come back in a few months to share updates.

Any Other Business

Narmadha reminded everyone that a GDPR survey will be sent out soon. This is to check who wants to stay on the Autism Partnership Board mailing list. People need to complete the survey if they want to keep getting updates.

Amanda said she has the contact details for the police disability group. It was agreed that Amanda will contact the disability group and ask for more information about it, what the time commitment would be, etc. Then people can make an informed decision about whether they want to get involved.

Summary of Actions

- Update on when the Suicide Prevention Project is starting- Tom to discuss with Nanu and review at next meeting.

TM /

NCS

Share summary of feedback on last year's You Said We Did document

KC

- Get more information about the police disability group. **AA**
- Complete GDPR survey when it is sent out. **All**

Next meeting dates:

Thursday 16 October 2025 – 10am to 12pm

Attendees:

Co-Chairs:

- Tom Moore – Senior Commissioning Manager Surrey County Council
- Kai Worgan

Board Members:

- Narmadha Kothandapani- Surrey County Council Engagement and Partnership Senior Business Support Assistant, Minute Taker.
- Amanda Aldridge- Surrey County Council
- Haywood Drake- Co-Chair of Autism Reference Group
- Jane Gupta- All Age Autism Strategy, Surrey County Council
- Kim Collen- All Age Autism Strategy Manager, Surrey County Council
- Sara Truman- National Autistic Society
- Kathrine Everett- Surrey County Council
- Parvin Ahmed- Mary Frances Trust
- Christine Malik- National Autistic Society
- Emma Langdon- DWP
- Chris Lane- Avenues Group
- Luke Simmons- Surrey Borders and Partnership Trust
- Christina Earl- Surrey Choices
- Wendy Smith
- Marion Quemby- NHS Surrey Heartlands
- Sabrina Peters- Surrey County Council Senior Communications Officer
- Angela Dobbyne- NHS Surrey Heartlands ICB
- Kai Henderson- All Age Autism Strategy, Surrey County Council
- Ursula Clarke- Surrey County Council
- Natalie Gaynor-Turner- Surrey County Council
- Fi Bovino- NHS Surrey Heartlands ICB
- Joanna Grudzinska-Dmowska- The Grange Centre
- Heather Nolan- Surrey Police