

Public Document Pack

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12 December 2022

Dear Member,

County Council - Friday, 16 December 2022

Please find enclosed the briefing notes for the motions to be debated at the meeting of the County Council to be held on Friday, 16 December 2022.

Agenda No	Item
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11(a) Motion on Skills	(Pages 3 - 6)
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Briefing note on factual background information attached.

11(b) Motion on Elections	(Pages 7 - 8)
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Briefing note on factual background information attached.

Yours sincerely

Tony Kershaw
Director of Law and Assurance

To all members of the County Council

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County Council - 16 December 2022

Item 11(a) - Notice of Motion on Skills from Cllr Sparkes

Briefing Note

Background

West Sussex is predominantly a service-led economy, with over 60% of the county's employees working in the largest employment sectors which are retail (16%), health and social work (13%), administrative and support services (10%), and transport and storage, education, and accommodation and food services (each 8%)¹. This is like the South-East although West Sussex has a higher proportion of employee jobs in agriculture, forestry and fishing, manufacturing, and transportation than the region.

The Annual Population Survey² suggests West Sussex generally has higher economic activity and employment rates than the national and regional trend. These levels are beginning to rise towards pre-pandemic levels. There are indications that during the pandemic economic inactivity increased. There were more economically inactive residents in West Sussex in the year ending June 2022 than the year ending March 2019. Data suggests that economic inactivity has grown particularly among the 16 to 24 and the 50 to 64 years age groups.

During 2022 there has been an increase in job postings³ to levels higher than five years ago. In October 2022 there were 21,900 job postings in West Sussex. The top 10 posted occupations were: care workers and home carers, nurses, customer service occupations, other administrative occupations, sales related occupations, programmers and software development professionals, kitchen and catering assistants, chefs, HR, bookkeepers, and payroll managers.

Apprenticeship vacancies are advertised on a [national web site](#). There were 4,690 apprenticeship starts across West Sussex in 2021/22.⁴

Green Economy

The [Government](#) has set an ambition for two million [green jobs \(PDF, 2.3MB\)](#) in the UK by 2030. Through the [Net Zero Strategy](#) there is a commitment to reform the skills system to deliver skills for green jobs to meet business need. [Greener Sussex](#) is a Department of Education 'Skills Development Fund' initiative for Sussex, designed to build local collaboration between colleges and employers with the aim of responding to local employment needs and trends in the green economy. The focus includes green technology for land management and food production, decarbonisation, hydrogen, and electric vehicle technology. A range of pathways for skills development will be established, including apprenticeships.

Partnership working

The Council works with partner organisations to seek to address skills gaps. One example is a joint initiative between the County Council and the borough and

¹ 2021 Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) ONS

² The Annual Population Survey, a residence-based labour market survey

³ LightCast – provides details of job postings across the country

⁴ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/>

district councils, funded by the pooled business rates, which will see a range of activities in 2023 to promote digital jobs and tech careers to West Sussex residents. The aim is to raise aspiration around digital careers and to help fill digital skills gaps being experienced by many local businesses. Apprenticeship routes into digital careers will be promoted.

There are existing groups and forums where workforce, skills, and training opportunities such as apprenticeships and internships can be considered and promoted. These include member and officer economy themed meetings (with the latter also involving the South Downs National Park Authority), the [Coastal West Sussex Skills and Enterprise Group](#), Crawley Skills Taskforce and the employability-focussed Synchronise Group. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) also promotes apprenticeships and work experience. In 2021/22 the County Council worked in partnership with the DWP to run 'What Next After Kickstart' events to help businesses to understand how to create an apprenticeship for their [Kickstart](#) participant. The Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership is no longer required by the Government to take a strategic role on skills.

The Government has introduced plans to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) in local areas are designated to develop a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). The Plans need to clearly articulate employers' skills need, and the priority changes required to ensure post-16 technical education and skills provision is more responsive and flexible to meet labour market needs. The Sussex Chamber of Commerce was one of eight national trailblazer ERBs and has developed a [Local Skills Improvement Plan](#) to provide a framework for technical skills provision across Sussex. The County Council is a member of the Sussex LSIP Board.

Apprenticeships

The County Council is proactive in promoting apprenticeships internally, using the apprenticeship levy. There are currently over 350 apprentices across the County Council and schools with around 80 apprentices waiting to start their apprenticeship training. A recent example of use of the apprenticeship levy has seen the recruitment of five individuals in Highways, Transport and Planning as civil engineer apprentices, who will be supported to become fully qualified in their specialism to help fill the Directorate's skills gaps.

The County Council transfers up to 25% of the apprenticeship levy to external organisations in West Sussex. The Local Government Association commended the County Council on this in 2021: 'Among the councils that have transferred funds, the average authority has committed £169,000 to be transferred to create 32 apprenticeship starts. Transfers is an area that West Sussex has excelled in with more than £359,000 committed to be transferred to create 96 apprenticeships in social care, the third sector, non-maintained schools, digital, engineering, design, retail and hospitality and tourism.'

Careers Service

Schools have a statutory duty to provide careers guidance for their pupils and students on all post 16 routes, including apprenticeships. The [Careers and Enterprise Company](#) is funded to deliver support to schools around careers education. The County Council works closely with colleges and training providers to help young people to access apprenticeship opportunities. The Council works in

schools with targeted year 11s at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment, or training) to provide them with high quality careers guidance which will include advice, information and guidance on apprenticeships and other vocational routes to employment.

Lucy Butler

Director of Children, Young People and Learning

Lee Harris

Director of Place Services

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County Council - 16 December 2022

Item 11(b) - Notice of Motion on Elections from Cllr Lord

Briefing Note

The Elections Act 2022 provides for new requirements for elections, including compulsory voter photographic identification (PID) for voting at polling stations. Common forms of PID will be accepted, including passports and driving licences. People who do not possess a valid form of PID will be able to apply to their local election office to obtain a PID card. In West Sussex, this will be the local district or borough council. The May 2023 elections are the first scheduled elections to take place using PID at polling stations. In West Sussex, May 2023 elections or part elections are taking place in Arun, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Mid Sussex and Worthing district and borough areas.

The Government has stated that asking voters to provide evidence of their identity will safeguard against the potential voter fraud - someone casting a vote in the name of another person at the polling station.

Northern Ireland has used voter identification in its elections since 1985 and expanded this in 2003. In the first General Election after photographic identification was introduced in Northern Ireland (2005), turnout was higher than in each of England, Scotland and Wales. Many countries, including Canada and most European nations, require some form of identification to vote.

Research published by the Government indicates that 98% of UK electors own an eligible form of identification, which includes a broad range of documents and expired photographic identification. As part of the Government's implementation plans a free, local Voter Card will be available if any elector needs one.

The Electoral Commission, the independent body which oversees elections, states that the UK has very low levels of proven electoral fraud. It states that two thirds of people surveyed would feel more confident in the security of the voting system if there was a requirement to show ID. It adds that the implementation of voter identification should ensure that applying for a PID is easy and that PID requirements should be realistically deliverable for electoral services teams and introduced with 'manageable timescales and proper funding'.

The Association of Electoral Administrators, the professional body for elections officers, states that many staff are not confident Voter PID can be delivered as currently planned. The Association states that the statutory instrument setting out the detailed arrangements is expected to come into effect in mid-January 2023, less than four months before the elections. The Gould Principle recommends electoral legislation should not be introduced within the six months before a scheduled poll.

The Association has also expressed concern that Electoral Commission guidance cannot be finalised and issued until the statutory instrument comes into effect and that the level of detail they can provide has been affected by the lateness of the secondary legislation. This will have a knock-on effect for poll preparations

and on polling station staff training and risks inconsistency of approach as electoral services attempt to understand and implement the changes.

Work has been undertaken to develop and build the online Voter Authority Certificate application portal. Producing certificates centrally will reduce one burden on Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), which the Association welcomes. However, concern remains about the administrative burden on EROs to check each application manually to verify photographs.

The Association states that local authorities will support the planned national public communications campaign from the Electoral Commission but it criticises the decision not to provide local communications funding, particularly for areas with scheduled polls in 2023. With local knowledge of hard-to-reach groups, the Association would like additional funding for local targeting. The evaluation of the 2019 pilot schemes found the majority of electors cited official local sources as the main way they became aware of the need to bring ID to vote.

According to 2021 census data, the percentage of the adult population within West Sussex aged 18 to 25 is 7.5%, which is lower than the national average of 9.6% or regional average of 8.9%. Within West Sussex the district or borough with the highest percentage of 18 to 25-year-olds is Crawley, with 8.7%.

Tony Kershaw

Director of Law and Assurance