

West Sussex County Council –West Sussex Reset and Reboot: Written Questions

17 July 2020

- 1.** Written question from **Cllr Chris Oxlade** for reply by the **Cabinet Member for Adults and Health**

Question

The Government issued a Directive to ensure rough sleepers and those with unstable housing arrangements were given emergency accommodation. This represents a golden opportunity to support these vulnerable people longer-term. Can the Cabinet Member confirm the current position and advise if adequate funding is available for this?

Answer

The directive to 'get everyone in' as it was termed was issued to local housing authorities. Two tranches of funding were provided by central government to support this and other financial pressures generated by the COVID-19 emergency.

The district and borough councils in West Sussex continue to provide accommodation to rough sleepers and people that became homeless during the lockdown period as required and would be able to confirm whether or not the funding allocations were adequate to meet this demand.

To support the district and borough councils, the County Council has co-ordinated the West Sussex Covid Response Group: Homelessness & Rough Sleeping. This is a multi-agency group comprising all local authorities within the county as well as the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), the County Council's Adults' Services, substance misuse and mental health services, Sussex Police, National Probation Service/Ministry of Justice, homeless charities in the county, Registered Providers and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Group continues to meet to support local authorities with moving people placed during the lockdown into more stable and secure accommodation.

Throughout the crisis the County Council has funded a hospital discharge initiative to prevent patients being discharged from becoming homeless.

Additional refuge provision is scheduled to open at the end of July. The County Council is funding additional refuge accommodation to meet the anticipated rise in victims fleeing domestic abuse as a result of the lockdown period. Here they can receive specialist support and assistance. This supports the districts and boroughs in providing suitable temporary accommodation to homeless households for whom they have responsibility under homelessness legislation.

2. Written question from Cllr Kate O’Kelly for reply by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure

Question

In view of the climate urgency and the current guidance that discourages use of public transport, would the Cabinet Member please advise:

- (a) How is this Council going to ensure that travel in WSCC during recovery and beyond is increasingly on foot or cycle; and
- (b) What is this Council’s view on the use of E-scooters?

Answer

- (a) The County Council has maintained its normal service levels across highways during the pandemic by making changes to how we work and working closely with key suppliers to ensure operations can be carried out safely in line with government guidance. As demand has risen to use certain cycle and foot paths additional work has been undertaken to keep these paths clear of overgrown vegetation.

Officers have worked closely with the district and borough councils to agree a set of proposals in response to a call for bids for tranche 1 of the emergency active travel fund. The bid was successful and the full £781,000 was allocated. Works will commence very shortly on this programme of improvements for active travel that will include additional cycle lanes and improvements for walking. Details of how to bid for further funding were announced late last week and the County Council is looking to respond positively to that opportunity.

Alongside this a number of minor changes have been implemented in town centres to facilitate safe distancing.

The Cabinet Member has set up an executive task and finish group to oversee the delivery of tranche 1 of the active travel fund, support any further bids and support the review of the walking and cycling strategy.

Over 8,400 pupils received Bikeability cycle training over the last financial year. Training in schools is currently affected by COVID-19 and no training was undertaken during the summer term. The Bikeability Team is developing a new training programme that follows advice on social distancing and is based on intensive one to one training rather than training in groups. Three pilot courses have recently been successfully delivered. Dependant on take up from schools, it is anticipated that 2,850 year 6 pupils will be trained over the coming autumn term. The team is also exploring options for children who missed the opportunity to undertake training during the summer term.

- (b) The Department for Transport is expanding trials of rental e-scooters. At present there is no intention for the County Council to participate in these trials. As evidence emerges from these trials, the County Council will be able to contribute to the national debate from an informed position.