

# Public Document Pack

**Tony Kershaw**  
Director of Law and Assurance

If calling please ask for:

Clare Jones on 033 022 22526  
Email: [clare.jones@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:clare.jones@westsussex.gov.uk)

[www.westsussex.gov.uk](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk)

County Hall  
Chichester  
West Sussex  
PO19 1RQ  
Switchboard  
Tel no (01243) 777100



05 November 2020

Dear Member,

## **County Council - Friday, 6 November 2020**

Please find enclosed the briefing notes for the motions to be referred at the meeting of the County Council to be held on Friday, 6 November 2020.

| <b>Agenda No</b> | <b>Item</b> |
|------------------|-------------|
|------------------|-------------|

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>9(b)</b> | <b>Motion on Hidden Disability</b> (Pages 3 - 4) |
|-------------|--|

Briefing note on factual background information attached.

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>9(c)</b> | <b>Motion on Pension Investments</b> (Pages 5 - 6) |
|-------------|--|

Briefing note on factual background information attached.

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>9(d)</b> | <b>Motion on Council Investments</b> (Pages 7 - 8) |
|-------------|--|

Briefing note on factual background information attached.

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>9(e)</b> | <b>Motion on Milk at School Break Time</b> (Pages 9 - 10) |
|-------------|---|

Briefing note on factual background information attached.

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>9(g)</b> | <b>Motion on provision of Free School Meals in School Holidays</b><br>(Pages 11 - 12) |
|-------------|---|

Briefing note on factual background information attached.

Yours sincerely

Tony Kershaw  
Director of Law and Assurance

**To all members of the County Council**

**County Council – 6 November 2020**

**Item 9(b) - Notice of Motion by Cllr Edwards**

**Hidden Disability – Briefing Note**

The objective of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is to indicate to people around the wearer that they are likely to need additional support, help or a little more time. While some disabilities are visible e.g. using a wheelchair, a white stick, others are not. Those with hidden disabilities – such as autism, learning disabilities, sensory impairments, dementia, mental health difficulties – have needs that are not immediately obvious and can encounter impatience, misunderstanding and hostility due to being misinterpreted by those around them.

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower was launched in 2016 and since then has been adopted by many major airports, including Gatwick, by major supermarkets such as Marks and Spencers and Tesco, small independent stores, by a growing number of visitor attractions and train operators including Network Rail, Govia Thameslink Railway, SWR and Southeastern.

There are some other products with a similar objective e.g. Gatwick Airport also uses a JAM card (Just a Minute) which allow those with learning disabilities, autism and communication barriers to tell others they need a little longer. Sussex Police use a Pegasus card for those with disabilities.

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower can be worn on a lanyard or carried as a card in a wallet or purse to be shown as required. Reviews from users (on Facebook) have been positive, especially in relation to travel but also some good experiences in supermarkets.

Businesses and organisations register to join the scheme and can decide whether or not to be added to the online location map. Members of the scheme are expected to train their staff to identify the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, to gain a deeper understanding of hidden disabilities and learn how to approach customers with a hidden disability. Training videos are provided once an organisation has purchased a starter pack or spent more than £500 on Hidden Disabilities Sunflower products (available from [hiddendisabilitiestore.com](https://hiddendisabilitiestore.com)). Organisations are then asked to make these products freely available to customers.

During COVID-19 the Hidden Disability Sunflower Lanyard has been used to indicate exemption from wearing a face covering. This is a personal choice as some people with hidden disabilities do not want to wear a lanyard.

Government guidance states: 'Those who have an age, health or disability reason for not wearing a face covering should not be routinely asked to give any written evidence of this, this includes exemption cards. No person needs to seek advice or request a letter from a medical professional about their reason for not wearing a face covering. Some people may feel more comfortable showing something that says they do not have to wear a face covering. This could be in the form of an exemption card, badge or even a home-made sign. This is a personal choice and is not necessary in law'.

The adoption of the scheme would be of particular relevance for staff with customer-facing roles. Training and awareness raising would be required to support any use of the scheme.

**Alan Adams**

Interim Executive Director Adults and Health

**County Council – 6 November 2020**

**Item 9(c) - Notice of Motion by Cllr Michael Jones**

**Pension Investments – Briefing Note**

The Pensions Committee has an obligation to act as fiduciaries, safeguarding the interests of beneficiaries of the Scheme. Decisions must be taken in accordance with public law obligations, including the obligations of reasonableness, rationality and impartiality. The pursuit of appropriate risk adjusted return should therefore be the Committee's predominant concern, but it may also take non-financial considerations into account provided that doing so would not involve significant risk of financial detriment to the scheme.

The Pension Fund is a long-term investor and therefore seeks to deliver financially sustainable returns to meet the future pension benefits of its members.

In this context the Fund seeks to integrate environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues throughout its investment decision-making process, from setting investment strategy to monitoring the Fund's investment managers – taking appropriate advice. The Committee expects that ESG principles, including the transition to a low carbon future, are considered at all times in the investment process.

The Committee is supportive of the values and aims of its participating employers, including the County Council, acknowledging that climate change presents a systemic risk which has potential implications on an asset class basis. Taking this into account, the Fund invests responsibly rather than divesting or restricting investment opportunities.

The Fund requires the portfolio managers to perform their stewardship role actively to support investment to identify and generate long-term sustainable growth. In turn portfolio managers invest considerable resources to support their research-driven investment decision-making, long-term stewardship and engagement with companies on matters including climate change.

The Pensions Committee has recently formed a task and finish group to review the investment strategy of the Fund which includes aligning the investment considerations of the Fund and developing a responsible investment policy.

**Katharine Eberhart**

Director of Finance and Support Services

This page is intentionally left blank

**County Council – 6 November 2020**

**Item 9(d) - Notice of Motion by Cllr Millson**

**Council Investments – Briefing Note**

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement is approved annually by full Council as part of the budget process each February. It outlines how the Council manages its cash flows and includes the investment and borrowing strategies.

The purpose of the Council's treasury management activities is to ensure we are able to meet our financial commitments on an on-going basis. It sets out our policy on where the Council can hold its cash by considering the creditworthiness of financial institutions such as banks.

The Council's cash balances move up and down throughout the year as income is received from sources such as council tax and business rates and then paid out throughout the year as the council delivers its services to residents. Because of the fluctuating cash needs the majority of cash balances are held in short-term deposits.

However, we do invest some cash in longer-term funds to earn a higher rate of return when cash flow planning indicates the requirement for the funds is not needed in the short term. Investing in the longer term helps ensure we maximise our interest income to help fund the Council's activities. Our strategy for longer-term funds is outlined in the investment strategy section of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement. We do hold a number of pooled funds for longer term investment and these funds are included in our regular reporting to the Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee.

The requirement to ensure fund managers sign up to the United Nations Principles of Responsible Investment is not currently included in the Treasury Management Strategy and the Cabinet Member for Finance has confirmed he will ensure the Treasury Management Strategy Statement includes this requirement when presented to full Council in February 2021.

We have reviewed our current activities and can confirm the current pooled fund managers investments are signed up to the United Nations Principles of Responsible Investment. We will also ensure any direct investments by the council also adhere to these principles.

**Katharine Eberhart**

Director of Finance and Support Services

This page is intentionally left blank



**County Council – 6 November 2020****Item 9(e) - Notice of Motion by Cllr Michael Jones****Milk at School Break Time – Briefing Note****Background and Overview**

At the January 2020 schools census, there were 11,469 free school meal eligible children in West Sussex who qualify for free school meals (FSM), around 10% of the total school roll. Whilst we are awaiting the Department for Education to verify the October 2020 schools census, we do know that we have processed around 6,000 FSM applications since January, with an additional 3,500 children approximately qualifying for FSM. It is therefore likely that the FSM number in West Sussex is currently around 15,000. As part of that FSM pupils are provided with the option of milk or water to have with their daily meal, in line with the Government's School Food Standards 2014. In addition, until September 2020 in primary phase schools, funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), all pupils qualifying for a free school meal could also receive a drink of milk at morning break.

The DSG is a direct grant provided by the Government and decisions on its use are considered by the Schools Forum, a group of representatives from schools, academies and early years providers. The DSG is split into different elements including the funding of school budgets (Schools Block), the funding of Special Needs (High Needs Block), and the funding of additional education and school related costs (Central Schools Services Block).

Funding for historical commitments including Early Help and children's social care projects, bikeability, non-statutory school milk provision and school-to-school improvement was cash frozen as part of the Central Schools Service Block DSG allocation from 2013 but, in 2020/21, was reduced by 20% as part of the move towards a national funding formula. Due to this reduction in funding, £1m of savings had to be found and the difficult decision to remove the funding for morning break milk for eligible pupils aged five and over was taken. Free break time milk for eligible pupils under five still remains in place as this is a statutory provision.

Schools receive their own Pupil Premium Group funding to support children who are disadvantaged. This funding is closely aligned to pupils who qualify for free school meals. The funding can be, and is, used by schools for a variety of purposes to support children who are disadvantaged. Ofsted surveyed its use across a number of schools in 2012 and reported on a wide range of uses to meet pupils' health, wellbeing and achievement.

Whilst Central Schools Services DSG Block funding is no longer available to fund milk, schools do have the flexibility to use their existing funding for disadvantaged pupils to provide the additional drink of milk if they wish. The provision of school milk is not and has never been a Council-funded service.

**Paul Wagstaff**

Director of Education and Skills

This page is intentionally left blank

**County Council – 6 November 2020****Item 9(g) - Notice of Motion by Cllr Michael Jones****Provision of Free School Meals in School Holidays – Briefing Note****Background and Overview**

At the January 2020 schools census, there were 11,469 free school meal eligible children in West Sussex who qualify for free school meals (FSM), around 10% of the total school roll. Whilst we are awaiting the Department for Education to verify the October 2020 schools census, we do know that we have processed around 6,000 FSM applications since January, with approximately an additional 3,500 children qualifying for FSM. It is therefore likely that the FSM number in West Sussex is currently around 15,000.

As well as COVID-19, a contributing factor to the rise of FSM eligibility is that, since 2018 we are no longer allowed to check FSM eligible children for on-going eligibility under the Government's Universal Credit Transitional Protection scheme. Councils used to check every three months for eligibility. Therefore currently we are adding FSM eligible children to the FSM roll but not taking any away. Pupils cannot be removed from FSM when their circumstances change until the end of their current phase of Education after 31 March 2022.

School meals are provided for 190 term time days and are not provided during school holiday periods. During the Easter and May school breaks, the Government provided supermarket food vouchers at a value of £15 per week during the school holiday periods. Although initially deciding not to extend this through the summer holiday period, the Government altered its position and food vouchers were provided through the Government's own voucher system organised by Edenred over the six-week summer school holidays.

Schools are currently funded for schools meals during term time through their school budget, which is calculated through an agreed formula as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant. FSM funding is included within the additional needs section within the formula and, for 2020/21, is calculated at £540 per eligible pupil. The data set used to calculate the percentage of pupils eligible for FSM is based on parents' receipt of specified benefits, and this information was taken from the October 2019 schools census.

The funding for universal infant free school meals for pupils in reception year, year 1 and year 2 is not included as part of the school budget but is funded through a separate grant.

**Support via the Community Hub**

The Community Hub, which was set up in March 2020 to give practical support and assistance to anyone adversely affected by COVID-19, has provided access to food and essential household supplies since its launch as well as information, advice and guidance.

The Community Hub telephone lines are open from 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week supported by the County Council's [Community Hub website](#) and a series of e-forms to provide digital access.

The Community hub can be contacted directly by residents, their friends or families or via a referral from an agency such as borough and district councils or Citizens Advice where they have identified a support requirement, including the provision of food/household essentials.

Staff are trained to ask the right questions in order to assess the needs of the resident or caller. Incoming calls will be triaged to assess the level of need and an order for a food delivery placed with the relevant supply organisation as appropriate.

The Community Hub has received over 54,000 inbound calls and online support request forms, undertaken over 37,000 outbound calls and delivered in excess of 3,000 food parcels across the county. The food and support provided has reached across all the communities of West Sussex and ensured that support needed has been, and will continue to be, provided to anyone in need.

Prior to receiving the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' hardship grant the County Council had spent £140,000 on providing essential food and supplies to support vulnerable people. Since receiving the grant of £737,319 a further £383,000 has been spent on essential food and supplies £160,000 has been provided to Citizens Advice and local food networks to ensure access to essential supplies and food is available locally.

### **October Half Term Demand**

Children and families who needed support over the school holidays were reminded to contact the Community Hub set up to provide help during the COVID pandemic. Contact volumes into the Community Hub were very low during the October half term period. Two contacts were received in respect of FSM, one seeking information and the other requesting non urgent food support, which was provided.

### **Paul Wagstaff**

Director of Education and Skills

### **Emily King**

Director of Community Services