

## West Sussex County Council – Ordinary Meeting

**17 July 2020**

At the virtual Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held at 10.00 am on Friday, 17 July 2020, the members present being:

Cllr Duncton (Chairman)

Cllr Patel	Cllr Kitchen
Cllr Acraman	Cllr Lanzer
Cllr Arculus	Clr Lea
Cllr Atkins	Cllr Lord
Cllr Baldwin	Cllr Magill
Cllr Barling	Cllr Markwell
Cllr Barnard	Cllr Marshall
Cllr Barrett-Miles	Cllr McDonald
Cllr Bennett	Cllr Millson
Cllr Boram	Cllr Mitchell
Cllr Bradbury	Cllr Montyn
Cllr Bradford	Cllr O'Kelly
Cllr Bridges	Cllr R Oakley
Cllr Brunsdon	Cllr S Oakley
Cllr Buckland	Cllr Oppler
Cllr Burgess	Cllr Oxlade
Cllr Burrett	Cllr Pendleton
Cllr Catchpole	Cllr Purchase
Cllr Cloake	Cllr Purnell
Cllr Crow	Cllr Quinn
Cllr J Dennis	Cllr Russell
Cllr N Dennis	Cllr Simmons
Cllr Elkins	Cllr Smith
Cllr Fitzjohn	Cllr Smytherman
Cllr Goldsmith	Cllr Sparkes
Cllr Hall	Cllr Sudan
Cllr High	Cllr Turner
Cllr Hillier	Cllr Urquhart
Cllr Hunt	Cllr Waight
Cllr M Jones	Cllr Walsh
Cllr A Jupp	Cllr Whittington
Cllr N Jupp	Cllr Wickremaratchi
Cllr Kennard	

### **1 Public Health Emergency**

- 1.1 On behalf of all members, the Chairman thanked residents and staff for their many sacrifices and hard work in limiting the spread of and responding to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 virus in the county.

### **2 Deaths of former colleagues**

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- 2.1 The Chairman reported the death of a current member of the Council, Cllr Hilary Flynn, who had represented the Felpham division since 2017.
  - 2.2 She also reported the deaths of Dr Howard Bloom, who had represented the Southgate and Crawley Central division from 2009 to 2013, Mrs Bernice Briggs, who had represented the Crawley Number 7 division from 1981 to 1984, Mr Geoff Hart who had represented the East Worthing division from 1993 to 1997, Mr Neil Matthewson, who had represented the Holbrook division from 1993 to 2001 and Mr John Sheridan, who had represented the Pulborough division from 1976 to 1996.
  - 2.3 The Chairman also reported the death of Mr John Hooley, DL, former Chief Executive of the County Council, who was Deputy Clerk to the Council from 1967, County Secretary from 1974 and then Chief Executive from 1975 to 1990.
  - 2.4 Members held a minute's silence.

### **3 Equality and diversity**

- 3.1 The Chairman referred to recent incidents of racism across the world which had raised again the need for everyone to speak out against all forms of racism. She affirmed the Council's support for the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign.
- 3.2 The Chairman also referred to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide and urged all members to continue to promote equality, to challenge hateful behaviour and to welcome diversity in their communities.

### **4 Apologies for Absence**

- 4.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Barton, Cllr Edwards and Cllr A Jones.
- 4.2 Cllr Purchase and Cllr Whittington joined the meeting at 10.58 am and 11.00 am respectively.
- 4.3 Cllr Bridges left the meeting at 12.50 pm, Cllr Brunsdon and Cllr Smith at 1.00 pm, Cllr Oppler at 1.05 pm, Cllr Fitzjohn at 1.12 pm, Cllr Barling at 1.20 pm, Cllr Mitchell at 1.25 pm, Cllr Arculus at 1.28 pm, Cllr Goldsmith at 1.30 pm and Cllr Lea and Cllr Sudan at 1.32 pm.

### **5 Members' Interests**

- 5.1 Members declared interests as set out at Appendix 1.

### **6 Minutes**

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- 6.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held on 14 February 2020 (pages 5 to 36) be approved as a correct record.

## 7 Appointments

- 7.1 The Council approved appointments as set out below.

Committee	Change
Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee	Cllr Oxlade in place of Cllr Sudan Cllr Pendleton to fill vacancy

## 8 COVID-19 Response

- 8.1 The Leader introduced the report on the response to the COVID-19 public health emergency (pages 37 to 66). The Council also had before it answers to written questions submitted in advance by members under Standing Order 11.22 (Appendix 2).
- 8.2 Members asked questions as set out at Appendix 3.

## 9 West Sussex: Reset and Reboot

- 9.1 The Leader introduced a report on a framework by which to address corporate, service and financial challenges facing the County Council in 2020/21 and beyond, and an approach to settling priorities for the future and how to achieve them (pages 67 to 116). The Council also had before it answers to written questions submitted in advance by members under Standing Order 11.23 (Appendix 4).
- 9.2 An amendment to recommendation (5) was moved by Cllr O'Kelly and seconded by Cllr Walsh.
- (5) Agree the priority outcomes for discussion over the summer, as the basis of the County Council's business and financial planning, as set out at paragraph 29 **and additionally agree that climate change is an overarching theme;**
- 9.3 The amendment was carried.
- 9.4 In accordance with Standing Order 11.23, the Leader and Chief Executive answered questions from members during the debate.
- 9.5 Resolved -
- (1) That the proposed approach to creating a Reset Plan, using agreed priority outcomes to drive our activities, deployment of resources, performance management, strengthening of partnerships and communications and lobbying work be approved;

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- (2) That the local evidence base (Appendix 1 to the report) and the national and local policy outlook (Appendix 2 to the report) be noted;
  - (3) That the summary of performance in 2019/20 (Appendix 3 to the report) be noted;
  - (4) That the overview of our financial position and projections (paragraph 17 and Appendix 4 of the report) and identify any additional areas for exploration during the development of plans be noted;
  - (5) That the priority outcomes for discussion over the summer, as the basis of the County Council's business and financial planning, as set out at paragraph 29 be agreed and, additionally, that climate change is an overarching theme be agreed;
  - (6) That officers work up, in consultation with members, staff, and partners, activity, spending and saving proposals and a revised capital programme;
  - (7) That reports on more detailed plans for 2021/22 and beyond be received in the autumn when there is greater certainty about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on West Sussex and future resources; and
  - (8) That the substantial progress already made to strengthen the governance arrangements and approve the next steps laid out at paragraph 35 to reboot how we work be noted.

## **10 Address by Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**

- 10.1 Members asked questions of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People on the Children First Improvement Plan and considered a report (pages 117 to 120).

## **11 Address by the Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities**

- 11.1 Members asked questions of the Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue Service and Communities on the Fire & Rescue Service Improvement Plan and considered a report (pages 121 to 126).
- 11.2 In response to a request from Cllr Smytherman for evidence of reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring authorities for responding to incidents to be shared with the Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet Member said he would seek advice and respond to Cllr Smytherman.
- 11.3 In response to a question from Cllr M Jones the Cabinet Member said he would provide Cllr Jones with statistics about cross-border

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calls and look into updating members on the frequency of such occurrences.

**12 Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee: Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20 and Work Programme 2020/21**

12.1 The Council considered the Annual Scrutiny Newsletter 2019/20 which summarises the work of the Scrutiny Committees and reports the performance measures for the end of the year and the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2020/21, in the light of a report by the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee (supplement pages 3 to 20).

12.2 Resolved –

(1) That the Annual Scrutiny Report 2019/20 be approved; and

(2) That the Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/21 be approved.

**13 Governance Committee: Joint leadership arrangement with East Sussex County Council**

13.1 The Council noted a review of the joint leadership arrangements with East Sussex County Council, in the light of a report by the Governance Committee (pages 127 to 128).

13.2 Resolved –

That the report be noted.

**14 Report of Urgent Action: Regulation 19**

14.1 The report of urgent action taken under regulation 11 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 (pages 129 and 130) was noted.

**15 Report of Urgent Action**

15.1 The report of urgent action taken by the Director of Law and Assurance, in consultation with the Chairman (pages 131 and 132), was noted.

Chairman

The Council rose at 1.41 pm

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## Interests

Members declared interests as set out below. All the interests listed below were personal but not pecuniary or prejudicial unless indicated.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>
Item 5 - Covid-19 Response	Cllr Atkins	Member of Worthing Borough Council
	Cllr Boram	Member of Adur District Council
	Cllr Bradbury	Member of Mid Sussex District Council
	Cllr Crow	Member of Crawley BC re use of K2 Leisure Centre and food distribution and storage
	Cllr Elkins	Member of Arun District Council
	Cllr Goldsmith	Part of Chichester and District Cycle Forum
	Cllr N Jupp	Member of Horsham District Council
	Cllr Lord	Member of Organising Group for Hassocks and Keymer COVID-19 Volunteers
	Cllr Turner	Works as a Pharmacist
Item 6 - West Sussex: Reset and Reboot	Cllr Atkins	Member of Worthing Borough Council
	Cllr Boram	Member of Adur District Council
	Cllr Bradbury	Member of Mid Sussex District Council
	Cllr Elkins	Member of Arun District Council
	Cllr N Jupp	Member of Horsham District Council
Item 7(b) – Cabinet Member Address by Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities	Cllr Atkins	Former Royal Navy qualified fire fighter

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## COVID-19 Response: Written Questions

**17 July 2020**

1. Written Question from **Cllr Michael Jones** for reply by the **Cabinet Member for Adults and Health**

### Question

Recent figures have shown the test and trace service had been unable to reach many people who tested positive for COVID-19 meaning their contacts could not be traced. What action has this Council taken to ensure our residents are clear how they can help prevent a spike in cases locally?

### Answer

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Council has shared a wide range of relevant public health and preventative messages across its communications channels including social media, local press, website and in regular bulletins including the weekly residents e-newsletter, which that is sent to 180,000 people. The content has included information on how residents can prevent COVID-19 infection through maintaining social distancing, regular handwashing and hygiene and how to arrange a test, including the location of local testing sites. As restrictions continue to be eased, we are continuing our efforts to share and remind residents of the continued need to follow public health guidance. These details will be localised and targeted to areas where we identify particular needs.

In addition, the County Council has produced a [COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan](#), as required by the Government, which was published on 30 June 2020 on the Council's website. The publication was communicated to residents via social media, local press and radio. The plan details how local, regional and national organisations and responses will work together as a system to prevent cases of the virus, where possible, in West Sussex and respond to any local outbreaks. The County Council, like all upper-tier local authorities, was asked to produce a first version of a local outbreak control plan by the end of June 2020. The plan will evolve over time.

Next week, week commencing 20 July, sees the launch of the Keep West Sussex Safe campaign which will run throughout the summer across all channels including print and radio advertisements. The aim is to further reinforce these messages including the importance of arranging a test if you identify early symptoms and the guidance around isolation.

In addition, a targeted social media campaign for Crawley is being delivered. This is supported by community engagement work aimed at sharing the messages effectively with hard to reach groups as well as specific groups who have been identified as high risk, for example members of the BAME community.

**2. Written Question from Cllr Brenda Smith for reply by the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health**

**Question**

Does the Cabinet Member regret care homes in West Sussex were required to accommodate residents being rapidly discharged from hospital between March and April 2020 without them having tested negatively for COVID-19, and does she consider this directly led to deaths of residents in care homes?

**Answer**

The Government first published the guidance documents [COVID-19 Hospital Discharge Service Requirements](#) (PDF, 919KB) on 19 March. This has been updated throughout the pandemic, based on emerging evidence and advice as it has become available. It sets out the Hospital Discharge Service Requirements for all NHS trusts, community interest companies and private care providers of acute, community beds and community health services and social care staff in England. It also describes requirements around discharge for health and social care commissioners (including Clinical Commissioning Groups and local authorities). Unless required to be in hospital patients must not remain in an NHS bed. It established the requirement that 'acute and community hospitals must discharge all patients as soon as they are clinically safe to do so' in order to free up hospital capacity for the treatment of those infected with COVID-19. There was an expectation that the NHS would work closely with social care to ensure the discharge pathway was in place. Within West Sussex a multi-disciplinary discharge hub and combined placement and sourcing team was rapidly put in place to ensure the delivery of the discharge requirements in as safe and efficient a way as possible. The guidance has been followed by the County Council since its publication and there has been close working across the health and social care system throughout the period.

- Public Health England's Health Protection Teams have, from the outset, been testing residents when an outbreak is reported at a particular care home.
- On 16 April the Government announced that "the NHS now has responsibility for testing patients being discharged from hospital to a care home, in advance of a timely discharge". This guidance was implemented within West Sussex.
- On 28 April, the Government announced that testing would be expanded in the care sector to include both symptomatic and asymptomatic care home staff and residents.
- On 11 May the Government gave [guidance](#) as to how all symptomatic and asymptomatic care home staff and residents in England became eligible for testing. Testing was prioritised for care homes that look after the over 65s.

Throughout the pandemic people have been discharged from hospital to the place considered the most appropriate for their care, in some cases this would have been a care home; in other cases, people have been discharged home.

Where care homes continue to take new admissions the Government's guidance on [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): admission and care of people in care homes](#) and [COVID 19: our action plan for adult social care](#) is followed. This details how to provide care during the COVID pandemic, including how to care for those discharged from hospital while supporting the wellbeing of those already living in the service. Please note it is the registered managers of care homes and care homes with nursing who are responsible for the safety of the service including considering whether the needs of

any person being admitted to the care home can be met safely when considering those people already being supported and cared for in the home.

Where care homes and care homes with nursing had challenges in obtaining PPE directly, the County Council has enabled access to stocks. It is worth noting that PPE guidance has also changed throughout the period, at the point the country moved to sustained transmission; in April, enhanced PPE recommendations for a wide range of health and social care providers were introduced.

The County Council has communicated directly with providers on a regular and often daily basis and ensured that all available guidance is shared. There is also a specific information page for providers on the County Council's [Connect to Support](#) webpage. A high volume of calls and contacts have been received from care homes which have been responded to directly or via newsletters.

Recognising the importance of effective infection control, particularly in care homes, the Government has provided grant funding to care homes through a specific Infection Control Fund. This highlighted that a contributory factor to increasing the rate of infection may be linked to staff who work in more than one service, including agency workers, thereby increasing the risk of infection across multiple sites. The grant, therefore, includes specific reference to supporting care homes to reduce the use of agency staff.

Testing is also an area that has evolved throughout the pandemic and the County Council welcomes the introduction of the national testing portal and expansion of testing to now include weekly tests for people working in care homes and monthly tests for residents. The County Council is working with the sector to ensure that all Council staff visiting Care Homes are also tested following the same regime.

It is recognised that COVID-19 is a very complex and novel virus and the understanding of its impact is ever evolving. The County Council is, therefore, not in a position to say that people being discharged from hospital between March and April directly led to deaths of residents in care homes; as you will read from the response there are a number of factors that are likely to have contributed to death in care homes.

The County Council is, of course, extremely saddened to hear about any death attributed to COVID-19, be that in a care home or the wider community and collectively extends sympathy to all those directly affected.

**3. Written Question from Cllr Bob Smytherman for reply by the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health**

**Question**

For each calendar week starting on Monday, 16 March 2020, would the Cabinet Member please advise:

- (a) What is the number of excess deaths in West Sussex; and
- (b) What is the number of deaths in care homes in West Sussex due to COVID-19?

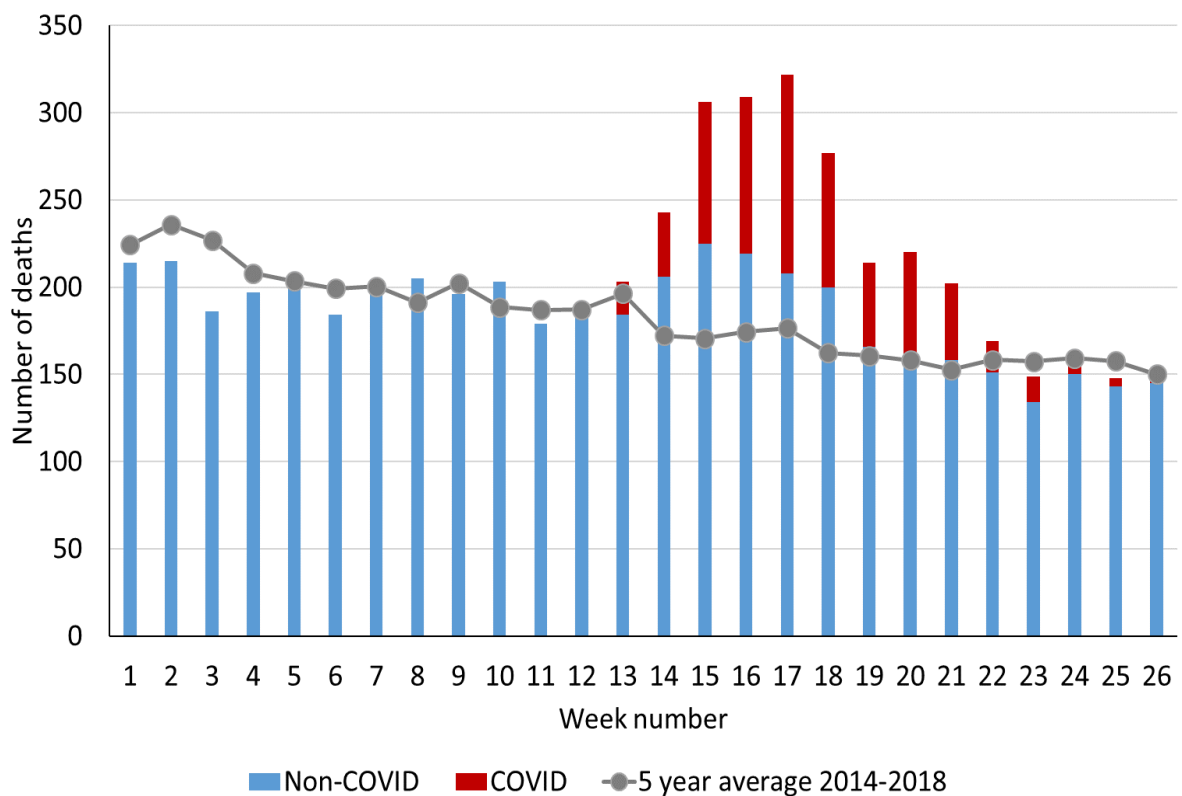
**Answer**

- (a) For the 26-week period of week ending 3 January to week ending 26 June 2020 there were 670 excess deaths (registered by 4 July 2020); this equates to 14 more deaths than the 2014-18 yearly average.

Graph 1 below shows weekly excess deaths, and deaths where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate.

Please note that excess deaths have been calculated as the number of deaths observed in 2020 compared with the average number of deaths in the corresponding period for the five years 2014-18. The information presented here relates to the date of occurrence of death, not the date of registration.

**Graph 1: COVID-19 and non-COVID deaths 2020, by week of occurrence of death and five-year average 2014-18, West Sussex residents**

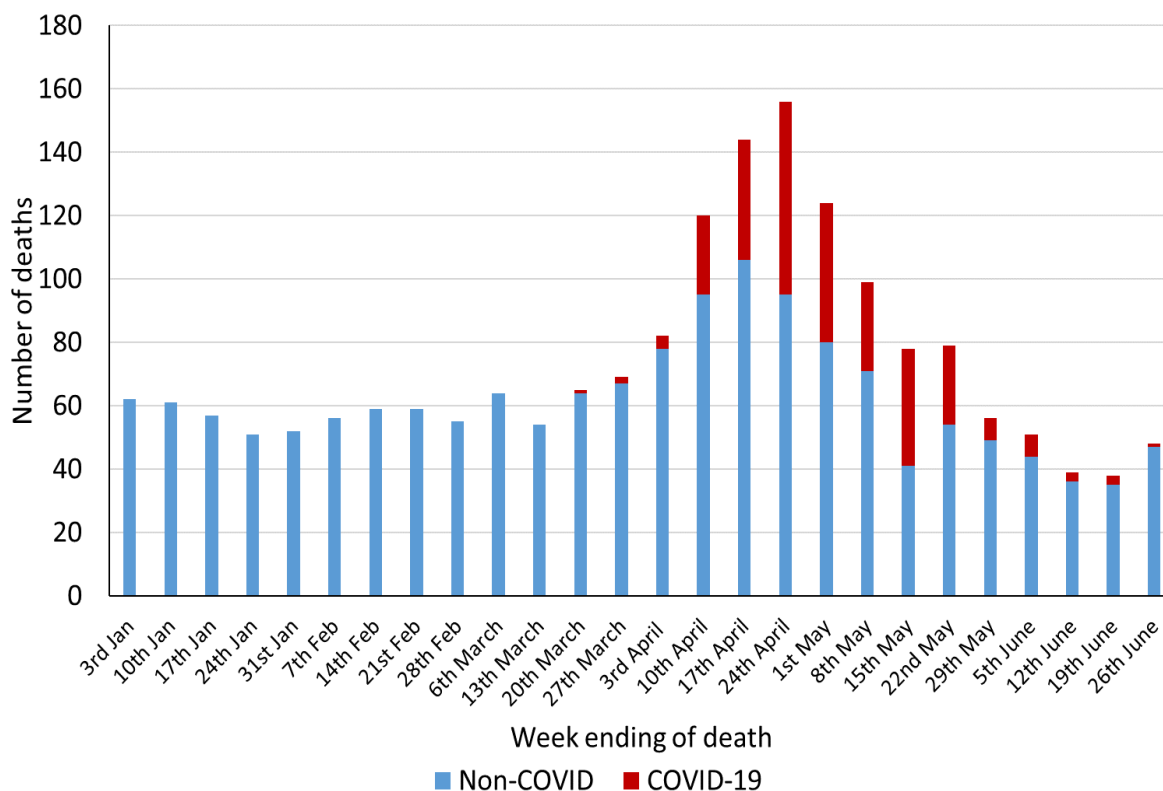


- (b) In relation to deaths of care home residents, for the 26-week period of week ending 3 January to week ending 26 June 2020 there were 286 deaths where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate.

Graph 2 on the next page shows all deaths, and the number of deaths where COVID-19 was mentioned each week.

Please note that this is where death occurred in a care home. However, there will be some care home residents who were admitted to hospital prior to death; these deaths will not be included in this data.

**Graph 2: COVID-19 and non-COVID deaths in care homes 2020, by week of occurrence of death, West Sussex residents**



**4. Written Question from Cllr Kirsty Lord for reply by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**

**Question**

Given the lack of face-to-face support for new parents during lockdown, would the Cabinet Member please advise:

- How many more users accessed the Family Assist website compared to previous periods; and
- What steps are the County Council and partners taking to address the impact on maternal mental health, breastfeeding rates and child wellbeing?

**Answer**

- The number of people who accessed Family Assist and comparisons with previous periods are as follows:
  - At the end of May 2020 there were 11,084 total registered users of the Family Assist resource.
  - When looking specifically at new registrations at the start of the pandemic, Family Assist saw a 95% increase from 270 new registrations in February 2020 to 527 new registrations in March 2020.
  - In the three-month period between 1 December 2019 and 29 February 2020 there were 890 new registrations.

- This compares to 1,442 new registrations in the three-month period between 1 March and 31 May 2020.
- (b) The question relates to steps the County Council and partners are taking around maternal mental health, breastfeeding and child wellbeing during lockdown. The main actions undertaken by the Council and its partners and providers for these three areas, are summarised below.

### **Maternal mental health:**

#### **Family Assist**

When COVID-19 began, Public Health shifted its focus to developing and expanding the digital resource, Family Assist, to ensure that pregnant women, new mothers and their families were supported during these particularly worrying times. In particular, the operational group, led by the Public Health Directorate, worked to:

- Upload new content on mental health of parents as well as children onto the website, alongside information on COVID-19 itself and particularly its implications for pregnant women.
- Upload videos to reassure new parents of what to expect when they came onto the wards during COVID-19.
- Start using new social media platforms such as Facebook to advertise and promote links to the above.
- Launch a Live Chat facility to enable residents to communicate with midwives and health visitors in real time.
- Add additional content on issues which we anticipated might be useful for new parents e.g. cooking on a budget, physical activity during COVID-19.

The Public Health Directorate are in the process of designing an evaluation to help assess which Family Assist services people have found most useful during COVID-19 to inform future service delivery.

#### **ChatHealth Telephone Service**

- School nurses adapted the ChatHealth telephone service to allow parents to use this service as well, as previously this service was only available to children. Most calls are recorded as being in relation to emotional health and wellbeing.

#### **Sussex and East Surrey Perinatal Mental Health Clinical Network**

- The Sussex and East Surrey Perinatal Mental Health (PNMH) Clinical Network experienced an increased demand for the support of specialist PNMH nurses and an increase in referrals following COVID-19; however, many of the PNMH trained champions had been redeployed.
- The PNMH Specialist Health Visitor in West Sussex developed targeted support for service users with PNMH issues in West Sussex and has supported her list of concerned perinatal mothers daily or weekly as needed.

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### **Support groups for new parents**

- Two informal virtual support groups for new parents have been offered in Mid Sussex by the Maternity Voices Partnerships, one focused on mental health and the other on infant feeding. The virtual support groups have been well received by parents.

### **Breastfeeding:**

The Infant Feeding Team was prioritised as an essential service following the onset of COVID-19 and capacity was increased from four to 11 members, including four Lactation Consultants and experienced Infant Feeding Advisors who run the Milk Drop Ins.

To help meet the needs of all infants and mothers within West Sussex during the pandemic the Infant Feeding team:

- Set up a new advice line for all antenatal and postnatal women leading to approximately 100 new calls each week.
- Encouraged access to the Specialist Infant Feeding Service by any Health Professional within West Sussex who needed advice or referral for complex breastfeeding. Video consultations were offered alongside ongoing support with feeding issues to all mothers referred into this service.
- Supported the Live Chat facility on Family Assist.
- Opened an infant feeding Facebook page to provide up to date information for all parents regarding feeding and caring for their baby.
- Training and updating of peer supporters was continued via Google Classroom.
- Although the Breast Pump Scheme, jointly run between West Sussex Children & Family Centres and the Milk Infant Feeding Team was suspended due to concerns regarding the safe management of distribution, collection and cleaning of units across West Sussex, the team made alternative arrangements to enable families to source breast pumps whilst some of the Children and Families centres were closed. Similarly, with Healthy Start, partners worked together to develop a new system to ensure families could apply for and receive their vouchers and vitamins.

### **Child Wellbeing:**

A host of resources have been advertised to schools and GPs in relation to children and young people's wellbeing. These include:

- Information and support via websites such as a new e-wellbeing website, Young Minds and apps to help young people manage anxiety.
- Early intervention and support services such as YES (Youth Emotional Support), MIND and Be OK services.
- Support for specific issues such as bereavement and sexual abuse.
- Specialist mental health services, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and services for eating disorders.

### **Digital e-wellbeing Website**

- Our newest information resource is the [digital e-wellbeing website](#) developed by young people in partnership with YMCA and Sussex

Partnership Foundation Trust to support mental health in children and young people.

- The areas of West Sussex where young people were accessing the website most were highest Crawley and Worthing.
- Young people were focusing on obtaining information around COVID-19, low mood and depression.
- A Back to School Campaign is also being developed with the YMCA over the next few months.

### **Mental Health Support Teams**

- New resources are also emerging in the form of Mental Health Support Teams in schools in two areas (Crawley and Arun) after West Sussex successfully bid for funding.
- Staff are already in schools and being trained to deliver support to children with low to moderate mental health needs in 15 schools in Crawley and 14 in Bognor. Unfortunately, the Council's bid to roll these out to schools in Worthing was not successful.
- Anticipating that Emotional Based School Avoidance might be one of the consequences of COVID-19, the Educational Psychology team in West Sussex has taken steps to ensure that this issue is becoming embedded in the developing work of the Mental Health Support Teams as school term begins in September 2020. There has been interest in this approach from the Department of Education and West Sussex were invited to lead seminars on this topic.

### **5. Written question from Cllr Brian Quinn for reply by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

#### **Question**

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me whether he anticipates increased school transport will be required in order to accommodate social distancing when schools return in September and if so:

- (a) Does the Council have the capacity in place to deliver this; and
- (b) Has the Government provided adequate funds to cover these costs?

#### **Answer**

Initial guidance on school transport has been released by the Government; however, there is a further update expected shortly. It is, therefore, not possible to be definitive about social distancing on home to school transport contracted routes in September 2020. The guidance, as it stands, makes it clear that there is scope for applying social distancing flexibly because school transport is not the same as general public transport. We await schools' confirmation of their opening arrangements in September as this will have an impact on the overall requirement for transport.

Public transport, including buses and rail, and the social distancing on board are subject to separate guidance. The bus companies are in the process of relaxing the social distancing guidance to accommodate c.50% capacity on board. Capacity up to this point has been c.25%.



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- (a) The County Council is working closely with suppliers to understand the capacity in the market that could be made available. The requirement to do so is still unclear for the reasons given above. The County Council has also secured additional capacity within its own transport fleet for September.
- (b) The Government has not confirmed if additional funding will be allocated to cover any additional home to school transport costs that are necessary.

**6. Written question from Cllr Karen Sudan for reply by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

**Question**

Can the Cabinet Member please confirm that, if and when pupils return to school in September, the County Council will not issue a fine to the parents or require head-teachers to do so if the parents decide not to send their child to school due to concerns about the current pandemic.

**Answer**

It is recognised that some children may be anxious about returning to school and the County Council will work closely with schools to help them prepare children and build the confidence of parents and carers in the plans for a safe and managed return.

The Education and Skills service will continue to work with schools to engage with and support parents in getting their children back into school before considering issuing penalties for poor attendance. Issuing fines for non-attendance is always a last resort. We will be exploring strategies for schools to engage and communicate with parents about the importance of school attendance and also about the actions schools are taking to minimise health risks on school return. We believe that work principally needs to build confidence and support a return. However, should there be instances where all efforts to engage with and support parents prove unsuccessful in improving a child's attendance then, in accordance with government guidance, the County Council will consider whether fining would be appropriate.

**7. Written question from Cllr Nigel Dennis for reply by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure**

**Question**

Most bus services in West Sussex have been operated commercially (without subsidy) by the bus operators until the COVID-19 pandemic. Given Government advice against using public transport and the collapse in passenger demand, how will the County Council maintain the network as many of these services may be never commercially viable again?

**Answer**

The Government has been supporting the commercial bus network through the Coronavirus Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) paid directly to bus companies since the start of the crisis based on commercial bus mileage. The first tranche of the funding was to allow reduced services, targeting where key workers may need services. The second tranche of the grant (known as CBSSG Restart) has recently

been paid, allowing the bus companies to start to increase their services towards pre-COVID-19 levels to allow increased access to work and essential services for the wider population. The County Council has also received the first tranche of the local authority component for supported bus services and awaits news on the Restart grant.

The future of the bus network in West Sussex has clearly been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the full extent is not yet understood and likely support needed is not yet known. The County Council will, therefore, continue to work closely with the bus companies and neighbouring local transport authorities to understand what changes are happening and how the commercial bus network might be sustained. If routes become unsustainable in the longer term the County Council will work with all those with a stake in bus services, as well as with the Government, to look at possible solutions for existing services. This work will also include alternative provision such as community transport.

**COVID-19 Response: Questions**

Members asked questions of Cabinet Members and officers on the response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Instances where a member of the Cabinet undertook to take follow-up action are set out below.

**Cabinet Member for Adults and Health**

In response to a question from Cllr Turner about the Local Outbreak Engagement Board and how the Board would work with local members should an outbreak occur in their area and what help and support would be available to members, the Cabinet Member said she would keep all members updated once plans had been developed.

**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**

In response to a question from Cllr Lord about when the baby health visitor clinics would reopen and what was happening to ensure all children had adequate mental health support for their return to school in September, the Cabinet Member said she would respond to Cllr Lord.

**Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

In response to a question from Cllr Oxlade about school attendance and engagement levels for looked after children from March and confirmation that all such children had had access to IT equipment to enable them to carry out schoolwork, the Cabinet Member said he would respond to Cllr Oxlade.

**Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities**

In response to a question from Cllr M Jones about whether the Council could help support heritage and leisure sites which were facing an uncertain future due to COVID-19, the Cabinet Member said he would see if there was anything the Council could do and would also look into a suggestion that the Communities Team might be able to assist.

**Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure**

In response to a request from Cllr Goldsmith for an update about progress with the pop-up cycle and travel walk scheme and bids to the active travel fund, the Cabinet Member said he would provide members with a detailed update on the timing of the schemes.

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## 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.