

To all Members of the County Council

A virtual ordinary meeting of the County Council will be held at **10.30 am** on **Friday, 19 March 2021**.

Note: In accordance with regulations in response to the current public health emergency, this meeting will be held virtually with members in remote attendance. Public access is via webcasting.

The meeting will be available to watch live via the Internet at this address:

<http://www.westsussex.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

Agenda

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Members' Interests**

Members are asked to disclose any pecuniary or personal interests in matters appearing on the agenda.

3. **Minutes** (Pages 9 - 22)

The Council is asked to confirm the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the County Council held on 12 February 2021.

4. **Address by a Cabinet Member** (Pages 23 - 26)

At the discretion of the Chairman, to receive any address by a Cabinet Member on a matter of urgency and/or significant interest to the County Council and which relates to the powers and responsibilities of the County Council or which affects the Council.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People will make a statement on the Council's Children First Improvement Plan. A report is also attached. Members may ask questions of the Cabinet Member in accordance with Standing Order 2.33.

5. **Petition** (Pages 27 - 30)

The Council is asked to debate the following petition in accordance with Standing Order 3.43(a). A statement by the petitioners (Appendix 1) and a briefing note by the Executive Director Children, Young People and Learning (Appendix 2) are attached.

Halt the planned cuts to West Sussex Children and Family Centres

'We call on West Sussex County Council to halt the planned cuts to its Early Help service and reverse the proposed closures of the Children's and Family Centres and Find it Out advice centres across the county.'

(5 minutes is allocated for the Lead Petitioner, 5 minutes for the Cabinet Member's response followed by an opportunity for a members' debate of no more than 30 minutes with each member allowed to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes. At the end of the debate and before any proposition is put, the Lead Petitioner and Cabinet Member will each be given 3 minutes for a closing statement.)

6. **Pay Policy Statement 2021/22** (Pages 31 - 42)

Following deferral at the last meeting due to lack of time, the Council is asked to approve the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22, in the light of a report from the Governance Committee.

7. **Governance Committee: Appointment of co-opted Independent member of Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee and change to Joint Scrutiny Arrangements** (Pages 43 - 50)

Following deferral at the last meeting due to lack of time, the Council is asked to consider a proposal for the inclusion in the constitution of the Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee of an independent member and a minor change to the joint scrutiny arrangements, in the light of a report by the Governance Committee.

8. **Question Time** (Pages 51 - 66)

Questions to the Leader and Cabinet Members on matters contained within the Cabinet report, written questions and any other questions relevant to their portfolios. As this item was deferred at the last meeting due to lack of time, the written questions submitted for the meeting of the Council on 12 February are also attached at Appendix 1. Members may also ask questions of the Leader on anything that is currently relevant to the County Council. The report covers relevant Council business or developments in respect of portfolios arising since the meeting of the Council on 11 December 2020. A supplementary report may be published.

(2 hours is allocated for Question Time)

Lunch (In the event that the morning business is finished before lunch the afternoon business will be brought forward as appropriate.)

9. **Report of Urgent Action: Regulation 19** (Pages 67 - 70)

Following deferral at the last meeting due to lack of time, the Council is asked to note urgent action taken under regulation 11 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

10. **Soft Sand Review: adoption of changes to the West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan** (Pages 71 - 118)

The Council is asked to consider and approve the Soft Sand Review: Adoption of changes to the West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan, in the light of a report by the Cabinet Member for Environment.

11. **West Sussex County Council Armed Forces Strategy** (Pages 119 - 126)

The Council is asked to endorse the draft Armed Forces Strategy for approval by the Leader after the Council meeting, in the light of a report by the Armed Forces Champion.

12. **Council meetings - contingency arrangements for pandemic restrictions** (Pages 127 - 132)

The Council is asked to consider proposed contingency arrangements for holding Council and committee meetings if the regulations allowing virtual meetings are not extended or replaced with similar provisions, in the light of a report by the Director of Law and Assurance.

13. **Notices of Motion**

(a) **Motion on Pension Investments** (Pages 133 - 136)

To consider and debate the following motion, submitted by Cllr Michael Jones, which was considered by the Governance Committee following referral at the meeting of the County Council on 6 November 2020.

'In line with the principles previously supported by this Council in taking strong local action to address the climate emergency and recognising the strength of public opinion, as evidenced by the large demonstration at the full County Council meeting in February 2020, this Council calls on the West Sussex Pensions Committee to take all necessary steps to divest all of its investments from fossil fuel companies as soon as practicable.'

and the report of the Governance Committee.

(b) **Motion on Emergency Services**

To consider and debate the following motion, submitted by Cllr Crow, notice of which was given on 25 February 2021.

'This Council supports the campaign to build the UK's first 'Emergency Services Cenotaph', dedicated to all who have served and volunteered in the NHS and all the emergency services, including Fire and Rescue - whom we are very proud to have as part of West Sussex County Council.

Additionally, this Council records its support for the UK's annual national 'Emergency Services Day' which is held on 9 September and which is supported by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II; and that this Council places on record its sincere appreciation for the two million people who work and volunteer in the NHS and emergency services, especially throughout the Covid-19 pandemic when the demands placed upon our emergency services have significantly increased.

In recognition of Emergency Services Day, this Council asks the Chairman to agree to fly the official flag of the 'Emergency Services Day' at County Hall on 9 September each year.'

(c) **Motion on Mental Health**

To consider and debate the following motion, submitted by Cllr Oxlade, notice of which was given on 26 February 2021.

'Although the coronavirus pandemic has impacted everyone in West Sussex, not everyone will have been experienced its consequences in the same way. The effects of social distancing, lockdown, the loss of loved ones to the virus and stress-inducing media reports has had a huge impact on the mental health and wellbeing of a large number of our residents and will continue to have lasting effects long after lockdown is over. West Sussex County Council has a vital role to play in ensuring that residents of West Sussex experiencing mental health issues have access to the support they need. This Council therefore asks the Cabinet to:

- (1) Ensure that access to mental health services will remain a priority both whilst lockdown restrictions remain in place and beyond; and
- (2) Consider the potential impact on the mental health of residents when taking decisions for the foreseeable future.'

(d) **Motion on Bus Lanes**

Following deferral at the last meeting due to lack of time, to consider and debate the following motion, submitted by Cllr Michael Jones, notice of which was given on 26 January 2021.

'This Council considers that licensed Hackney Carriages and private hire taxis offer a means of getting around the county for those who either do not have access to their own vehicle or need to get to places that are not already served by other forms of public transport. This Council considers that licensed Hackney Carriages and private hire taxis carrying more than one passenger results in a reduction of carbon emissions, which contributes towards this Council's ambition to tackle climate change. This Council also believes that this would also assist in reducing traffic congestion at peak times, so would have a substantial impact on reducing pollution in general.

This Council therefore calls on the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure to:

- (1) Facilitate a 12-month pilot scheme to enable licensed hackney carriages and private hire taxis to utilise the bus lanes in Crawley (excluding the Fastway network of guided bus lanes);
- (2) Report back to the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee ahead of the end of the pilot scheme on the benefits or otherwise ahead of a decision whether to make it a permanent arrangement; and
- (3) Explore opportunities when future new developments and infrastructure improvements are programmed and designed to expand the bus lane network around the county to facilitate the reliability and punctuality of the public transport network and contribute towards the reduction of carbon emissions.'

(e) **Motion on Romance Fraud**

Following deferral at the last meeting due to lack of time, to consider the following motion, submitted by Cllr Michael Jones, notice of which was given on 26 January 2021.

'This Council recognises that romance fraud has been a growing problem since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, with many people experiencing loneliness potentially being targeted.

Romance fraud is the engineering of a supposed friendship or relationship for fraudulent, financial gain. Criminals invest significant amounts of time into socially engineering their victims – knowing that as they gain the victim's trust, their chances of extracting considerable funds from them simultaneously increase.

This Council notes that Sussex Police indicated in October 2020 that nearly £3m had been lost by victims of romance

fraud in 128 incidents, with a total of 195 reports of romance fraud being received from January to September 2020. It is concerned to note that this was a 56% rise on the previous year from the same period and that there are estimates that this could be only a fraction of the true extent of the crime, with many victims either too embarrassed to report it, or simply unaware that they have been deceived. Moreover, in 2020 the Times newspaper described Sussex as 'the nation's dating fraud capital'.

This Council welcomes the work undertaken so far by the Council's Community Safety Team to promote awareness and educate on the risks of romance fraud to residents of West Sussex, but calls on the Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities to continue to commit to supporting the 'Get Safe Online' initiative as well as putting stronger energy, capacity and resource into efforts to support the Sussex Police campaign to provide a seamless solution, through continuing to reach potentially vulnerable residents via virtual means while restrictions on movement remain in place during 2021.'

(f) **Motion on Unitary Council Status**

To consider and debate the following motion, submitted by Cllr Goldsmith, notice of which was given on 1 March 2021.

'At the last Council meeting there was a 4.99% increase to the Council Tax for the coming financial year which was agreed. This was a further 1% increase on last year's Council Tax increase of 3.99%. For some who are struggling financially due to the economic impact of Covid this increase will represent a further unwelcome financial burden and greater pressure on the Foodbanks and Charities who are supporting people who are no longer 'just getting by'.

Last month government borrowing reached a stratospheric high of £34.1 billion with the economy in recession. At some time we will need to start paying off this debt through further taxes which will undoubtedly mean we will all have to tighten our belts including the County Council. There is a strong prospect that in future years the residents of West Sussex will be receiving less in the way of services when demand is growing while paying more.

This Council believes that one way to counter this prospect is to actively seek a change from a two-tier authority to a single unitary authority. Instead of one County Council and seven district councils there would be one single County Authority. The merging of departments and streamlining of services will undoubtedly mean greater savings which should be channelled into services. The other very tangible benefits would be a much simpler service for residents to navigate as it will be one authority delivering a full range of services

across the county.

This Council therefore resolves:

- (1) To support the Unitary Model in favour of the current two tier model; and
- (2) To ask the new Administration's Governance Committee formed in May 2021 to actively and urgently seek agreement from the Department for Communities and Local Government to proceed.'

County Council concludes

Items not commenced by 4.15 p.m. will fall away.

Director of Law and Assurance
10 March 2021