

To all Members of the County Council

The Annual meeting of the County Council will be held at **10.30 am** on **Friday, 26 May 2023** at **County Hall, Chichester PO19 1RQ**.

Agenda

1. **Election of Chairman**

To elect a Chairman of the County Council for the ensuing year (the Chairman to make a declaration of acceptance of office).

2. **Election of Vice-Chairman**

To elect a Vice-Chairman of the County Council for the ensuing year (the Vice-Chairman to make a declaration of acceptance of office).

3. **Apologies for Absence**

4. **Members' Interests**

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

5. **Minutes** (Pages 7 - 20)

The Council is asked to confirm the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the County Council held on 17 February 2023.

6. **Result of By-election** (Pages 21 - 22)

To receive the County Returning Officer's return of the by-election held on 4 May 2023 for the East Grinstead Meridian electoral division.

7. **Review of Proportionality** (Pages 23 - 24)

The County Council has a statutory duty to review the proportionality on its committees each year and must do so following the recent by-election. An explanation of the proportionality rules and how they are applied is attached. A table showing the number of seats on committees will follow.

8. **Notification of Appointment of Cabinet Members and Advisers to Cabinet Members** (Pages 25 - 30)

The Leader is required each year to give notice to the Council of his appointments to the Cabinet and allocation of Cabinet portfolios between the cabinet members, together with the appointment of advisers to cabinet members.

9. **Appointments**

(a) **Appointments to Committees**

Following the review of proportionality and in the light of the Leader's notification at item 8, to appoint members of non-Executive committees, to appoint the chairmen, vice-chairmen, panels and substitutes of those committees in accordance Standing Order 2.10 and to appoint the members of scrutiny committees (the chairmen and vice-chairmen will be appointed at the next meeting of each scrutiny committee). The appointments will take effect from the end of the meeting.

(b) **Appointment of an Independent Member to the Independent Remuneration Panel** (To Follow)

The Council is asked to approve an appointment to fill a vacancy for an independent member on the Independent Remuneration Panel, in the light of a report by the Chairman of the Standards Committee.

10. **Address by a Cabinet Member**

At the discretion of the Chairman, to receive an 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.

11. **West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan: Five-yearly Assessment** (Pages 31 - 32)

The Council is asked to consider the outcome of the five-yearly assessment of the Joint Minerals Local Plan and agree that a formal review, either in whole or in part, is not required, in the light of a report by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change.

12. **Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children Services Judgement of the County Council's Children's Services 11 May 2023** (Pages 33 - 60)

The Council is asked to consider and comment on the recently published Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services Report, in the light of a report by the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills.

13. **Governance Committee: Review of Webcasting** (Pages 61 - 62)

Following a one-year trial, the Council is asked to consider adding Health and Wellbeing Board meetings to the list of meetings in Standing Orders where there is a presumption that they will be webcast, in the light of a report by the Governance Committee.

14. **Report of Urgent Action** (Pages 63 - 64)

To note urgent action taken under regulation 11 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

15. **Question Time** (Pages 65 - 72)

Questions to the Leader and Cabinet Members on matters in the Cabinet report, written questions and any other questions relevant to their portfolios. Members may also ask questions of the Leader on anything current, relevant to the County Council. The report covers portfolio-related business since the meeting of the Council on 17 February 2023. A supplementary report may be published.

(2 hours is allocated for Question Time)

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

16. **Motion on Defibrillators**

To debate the following motion, submitted by Cllr Greenway, notice of which was given on 9 May 2023.

'West Sussex County Council recognises the importance of making defibrillators accessible and having them registered, especially in public places, sports grounds and Government-funded facilities.

This Council understands the role that it has in facilitating the delivery of new defibrillators across West Sussex.

The Council supports and welcomes the planned rollout of defibrillators by the Government to all state-funded schools that currently do not have one, with over 20,000 expected to be delivered to 18,000 schools by the end of the academic year.

This Council asks the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing to:

- (1) Commit to working with the local community to find suitable places to place defibrillators, acknowledging that they are most effective within three minutes of a person collapsing, and to support finding funding for defibrillators in public places and community spaces;
- (2) Seek to register defibrillators held within County Council facilities with 'The Circuit', The National Defibrillator Network, supported by the British Heart Foundation;
- (3) Encourage schools to also register their government-funded defibrillator; and
- (4) Promote via the Council's publications (including on social media) the benefits of having a defibrillator in the community and explaining how they can be used in an emergency situation.'

County Council concludes

Items not commenced by 4.15 p.m. will be deferred to the following meeting.

Director of Law and Assurance
17 May 2023

Webcasting

Please note: this meeting is being filmed for live and subsequent broadcast via the County Council's website on the internet. The images and sound recording may be used for training purposes by the Council.

Generally the public gallery is not filmed. However, by entering the meeting room and using the public seating area you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes.

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West Sussex County Council – Ordinary Meeting

17 February 2023

At the Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held at 10.30 am on Friday, 17 February 2023, at County Hall, Chichester PO19 1RQ, the members present being:

Cllr Bradbury (Chairman)

Cllr Wickremaratchi (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr Lord
Cllr Albury	Cllr Markwell
Cllr Atkins, RD	Cllr Marshall
Cllr Baldwin	Cllr McDonald
Cllr Baxter	Cllr McGregor
Cllr Bence	Cllr McKnight
Cllr Britton	Cllr Mercer
Cllr Burrett	Cllr Milne
Cllr Cherry	Cllr Mitchell
Cllr Chowdhury	Cllr Montyn
Cllr Condie	Cllr Nagel
Cllr Cooper	Cllr Oakley
Cllr Cornell	Cllr O'Kelly
Cllr Crow	Cllr Oppler
Cllr J Dennis	Cllr Oxlade
Cllr N Dennis	Cllr Patel
Cllr Duncton	Cllr Payne
Cllr Dunn	Cllr Pendleton
Cllr Evans	Cllr Pudaloff
Cllr Forbes	Cllr Quinn
Cllr Gibson	Cllr Richardson
Cllr Greenway	Cllr Russell
Cllr Hillier	Cllr Sharp
Cllr Hunt	Cllr Smith
Cllr Johnson	Cllr Sparkes
Cllr Joy	Cllr Turley
Cllr A Jupp	Cllr Urquhart
Cllr N Jupp	Cllr Waight
Cllr Kenyon	Cllr Wall
Cllr Kerry-Bedell	Cllr Walsh, KStJ, RD
Cllr Lanzer	

148 Deaths of Mr Jack Campbell DL and Mr John Cherry

148.1 The Chairman reported the deaths of two former members, Mr John Cherry who had represented Midhurst from 2012 to 2013 and Mr Jack Campbell DL who had represented Steyning from 1979 to 1989 and then from 1993 to 2001.

148.2 Members also remembered the many victims of the terrible earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria in the previous week

148.3 Members held a minute's silence.

149 Anniversary of war in Ukraine

149.1 The Chairman informed members that he had asked for the Ukrainian Flag to be flown at County Hall from 17 to 24 February, the anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine, as a mark of respect for and solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

150 Apologies for Absence

150.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Ali, Cllr Bennett, Cllr Boram, Cllr Burgess, Cllr Elkins, Cllr Hall and Cllr Linehan. Cllr Markwell arrived at 12.44 pm. Cllr Sharp arrived for the afternoon session at 2.05 pm.

150.2 Cllr Richardson was absent for the afternoon session.

150.3 Cllr Walsh gave his apologies and left at 2.30 pm. Cllr Joy, Cllr Markwell and Cllr O'Kelly left at 4.20 pm, 4.45 pm and 5.00 pm respectively.

151 Members' Interests

151.1 Members declared interests as set out at Appendix 1.

152 Minutes

152.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the County Council held on 16 December 2022 (pages 3 to 28) be approved as a correct record.

153 Governance Committee: Pay Policy Statement 2023/24

153.1 The Council considered the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24, in the light of a report from the Governance Committee (pages 29 to 38).

153.2 Resolved –

That the proposed revisions to the Pay Policy Statement, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

154 Governance Committee: Pensions Committee Terms of Reference

154.1 The Council considered a change to the Pension Committee's terms of reference, in the light of a report by the Governance Committee (pages 39 to 44).

154.2 Resolved –

That the Pension Committee's terms of reference be amended to include responsibility for determination and consideration of the

Pension Fund policy documents, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

155 Report of Urgent Action

155.1 The report of urgent action taken under regulation 11 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 (pages 45 and 46) was noted.

156 Council Plan and Budget 2023/24

156.1 The Leader moved the report on the Council Plan and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property moved the report on budget for 2023/24, the Capital Strategy 2023-28 and the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2023/24 (budget pack pages 1 to 233).

156.2 An amendment was moved by Cllr Lord and seconded by Cllr O’Kelly as set out below.

Proposed amendment to the Revenue Budget

Growth

Ongoing amendment to the revenue budget	2023/24 £m
Highways – Additional Officer - Active Travel	0.060
Highways – Additional Officer – Buses	0.060
Highways – Additional Officer – Rights of Way	0.060
Adults – 3 x Occupational Therapists	0.135
Adults – 2 x Carers Support Officers	0.080
Environment - Community Climate Emergency Fund Officer	0.060
Additional support for children and adolescent mental health within schools	0.500
Borrowing costs to fund £0.5m of Public Rights of Way capital improvements, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and £0.5m on Climate Emergency Fund	0.057
Total	1.012

One-off amendment to revenue budget

One-off amendment	2023/24 £m
Cost of living support to enable local voluntary groups to meet their needs to support people in need	0.200
Total revenue budget amendments	1.212

Reduction options

Ongoing amendments to the revenue budget	2023/24 £m
Increase discretionary income from Fees and charges excluding Adults social care by 1% over RPI included within budget proposals	0.153
Remove advisers to Cabinet Members	0.032
12% Reduction to communications budget	0.262
Efficiencies from reviewing the insourcing of Capita services (3%)	0.240
Reduction to Executive Personal Assistants (2xFTE)	0.075
Reduction to customer experience (2x FTE)	0.100
Reduction to Insight & Performance (3XFTE)	0.150
Total	1.012

One-off amendments	2023/24 £m
Use of Covid 19 Grant reserves to support cost of living – one-off funding	0.200
Total Funding for ongoing and one-off amendments	1.212

Proposed amendments to the Capital Programme

Growth

Amendment to the Capital Programme	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Fund a Climate Emergency fund to encourage innovative community projects that will reduce carbon levels locally and improve our environment	0.500	0.500
Additional funding for Public Rights of Way capital improvements, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure	0.500	0.500
Total Amendment	1.000	1.000

Funding

Amendments to the Capital Programme	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Use of the unallocated Capital Improvement budget in 2024/25 to fund Climate Emergency fund		1.000
Funded through borrowing – see detail in the revenue changes table above	1.000	
Total Amendments	1.000	1.000

156.3 The amendment was put to a recorded vote under Standing Order 3.36.

(a) For the amendment – 13

Cllr Cherry, Cllr Condie, Cllr N Dennis, Cllr Gibson, Cllr Johnson, Cllr Kerry-Bedell, Cllr Lord, Cllr Mercer, Cllr Milne, Cllr Oppler, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Sharp, and Cllr Wild.

(b) Against the amendment – 35

Cllr Albury, Cllr Atkins, Cllr Baldwin, Cllr Bradbury, Cllr Britton, Cllr Burrett, Cllr Cooper, Cllr Crow, Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Duncton, Cllr Dunn, Cllr Evans, Cllr Forbes, Cllr Greenway, Cllr Hillier, Cllr Hunt, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr N Jupp, Cllr Kenyon, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Marshall, Cllr McDonald, Cllr McGregor, Cllr Mitchell, Cllr Montyn, Cllr Oakley, Cllr Patel, Cllr Payne, Cllr Pendleton, Cllr Russell, Cllr Sparkes, Cllr Urquhart, Cllr Waight, Cllr Wall and Cllr Wickremaratchi.

(c) Abstentions – 8

Cllr Baxter, Cllr Chowdhury, Cllr Cornell, Cllr McKnight, Cllr Oxlade, Cllr Pudaloff, Cllr Smith and Cllr Turley.

156.4 The amendment was lost.

156.5 An amendment was moved by Cllr Baxter and seconded by Cllr Oxlade as set out below.

Proposed amendments to the Revenue Budget - ongoing

Growth

Ongoing amendments to the revenue budget	2023/24 £m
Funding for a communication officer (0.5 FTE) in the fostering service to engage hard-to-reach Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities	0.023
Funding for an additional officer post (1.0 FTE) to support and respond to carers funding enquiries	0.045
Funding for a design support officer (1.0 FTE) within the strategic commissioning and procurement team to conduct a review and identify which existing contracts could deliver better value for money if brought in-house	0.070
Total	0.138

To be funded (ongoing budget reductions) through:

Ongoing amendments to the revenue budget	2023/24 £m
Invest to save funding to delivery future savings on Commissioning and Procurement	0.070

Ongoing amendments to the revenue budget	2023/24 £m
Removal of the posts of cabinet advisers from the Council's list of special responsibilities for members The value of the deletion would be the value of the special responsibility allowances currently set against these posts	0.032
Remove the budget for member catering	0.011
Reduce the Policy Team budget by 15%	0.045
Total Ongoing Funding	0.158

Proposed amendments to the Revenue Budget – one-off in 2023/24

Growth

One-off Spending	£m
Funding for an additional officer post (1.0 FTE) to identify new funding streams across the organisation and support the development of bids	0.050
Funding for a Bio-diversity and Climate Action Fund to enable communities to fund planting, green initiatives and take over verges and small greenspaces across the county	0.100
A pilot scheme to enable voluntary, community and social enterprise groups (VCSE) to bid for funding to support young peoples' initiatives including counselling and mental health	0.050
A pilot scheme to enable voluntary, community and social enterprise groups (VCSE) to bid for funding to support early help initiatives such as stay and play where these do not already exist	0.050
Funding for supplementary support for voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) to address need for social inclusion and preventative social care	0.050
Homeless Support Fund (participatory fund) Housing and homelessness support fund (funded by underspend in homeless budget) voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) supporting homelessness outreach initiatives	0.050
Cost of Living emergency fund (CoLE) Funding for voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) supporting people with poverty and the CoLE	0.100
Total One-off Funding	0.450

To be funded through:

One-off Spending	£m
Use of Covid-19 Grant Reserve to fund the Cost of living emergency fund	0.100

One-off Spending	£m
Carry Forward overachievement of income received from Recycling in 2022/23 to fund Bio-diversity fund	0.100
Carry forward of unspent homelessness budget in 2022/23	0.050
£0.020 of the ongoing budget reductions identified above	0.020
Reduce the one-off spend on highways maintenance – this will be funded through the £4.5m (see below)	0.180
Total	0.450

Budget Allocation from Corporate Budget of £4.5m for highways and roads – £0.180 used to fund one-off proposals above	2023/24 £m
Accelerated Road safety pothole and pavements fund – ringfence new projects rather than for routine maintenance.	3.820
Ringfence corporate priorities highways fund for active travel initiatives and vulnerable road user initiatives	0.500
Total Allocation	4.320

156.6 The amendment was put to a recorded vote under Standing Order 3.36.

(a) For the amendment – 13

Cllr Baxter, Cllr Chowdhury, Cllr Cornell, Cllr Gibson, Cllr Johnson, Cllr McKnight, Cllr Oxlade, Cllr Pudaloff, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Sharp, Cllr Smith, Cllr Turley and Cllr Wild.

(b) Against the amendment – 37

Cllr Albury, Cllr Atkins, Cllr Baldwin, Cllr Bence, Cllr Bradbury, Cllr Britton, Cllr Burrett, Cllr Cooper, Cllr Crow, Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Duncton, Cllr Dunn, Cllr Evans, Cllr Forbes, Cllr Greenway, Cllr Hillier, Cllr Hunt, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr N Jupp, Cllr Kenyon, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Marshall, Cllr McDonald, Cllr McGregor, Cllr Mitchell, Cllr Montyn, Cllr Nagel, Cllr Oakley, Cllr Patel, Cllr Payne, Cllr Pendleton, Cllr Russell, Cllr Sparkes, Cllr Urquhart, Cllr Waight, Cllr Wall and Cllr Wickremaratchi.

(c) Abstentions – 8

Cllr Cherry, Cllr Condie, Cllr N Dennis, Cllr Kerry-Bedell, Cllr Lord, Cllr Mercer, Cllr Milne and Cllr Oppler.

156.7 The amendment was lost.

156.8 An amendment was moved by Cllr Sharp and seconded by Cllr Johnson as set out below.

Proposed amendments to the Revenue Budget

Growth:

Ongoing amendments to the revenue budget	2023/24 £m
Additional monies to resurface the central red brick panels in North and East Street of Chichester City Centre	0.500
Total amendment	0.500

To be funded through:

Ongoing amendments to the revenue budget	2023/24 £m
Prioritisation of £500,000 of the £4.5m additional budget that has been set aside for maintenance of highways and roads	0.500
Total amendment	0.500

156.9 The amendment was put to a recorded vote under Standing Order 3.36.

(a) For the amendment – 4

Cllr Gibson, Cllr Johnson, Cllr Sharp and Cllr Wild.

(b) Against the amendment – 38

Cllr Albury, Cllr Atkins, Cllr Baldwin, Cllr Bence, Cllr Bradbury, Cllr Britton, Cllr Burrett, Cllr Cooper, Cllr Crow, Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Duncton, Cllr Dunn, Cllr Evans, Cllr Forbes, Cllr Greenway, Cllr Hillier, Cllr Hunt, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr N Jupp, Cllr Kenyon, Cllr Kerry-Bedell, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Marshall, Cllr McDonald, Cllr McGregor, Cllr Mitchell, Cllr Montyn, Cllr Nagel, Cllr Oakley, Cllr Patel, Cllr Payne, Cllr Pendleton, Cllr Russell, Cllr Sparkes, Cllr Urquhart, Cllr Waight, Cllr Wall and Cllr Wickremaratchi.

(c) Abstentions – 16

Cllr Baxter, Cllr Cherry, Cllr Chowdhury, Cllr Condie, Cllr Cornell, Cllr N Dennis, Cllr Lord, Cllr McKnight, Cllr Mercer, Cllr Milne, Cllr Oppler, Cllr Oxlade, Cllr Pudaloff, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Smith and Cllr Turley.

156.10 The amendment was lost.

156.11 The recommendations were put to a recorded vote under Standing Order 3.36.

(a) For the recommendations – 37

Cllr Albury, Cllr Atkins, Cllr Baldwin, Cllr Bence, Cllr Bradbury, Cllr Britton, Cllr Burrett, Cllr Cooper, Cllr Crow, Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Duncton, Cllr Dunn, Cllr Evans, Cllr Forbes, Cllr Greenway, Cllr Hillier, Cllr Hunt, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr N Jupp, Cllr Kenyon, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Marshall, Cllr McDonald, Cllr McGregor, Cllr Mitchell, Cllr Montyn, Cllr Nagel, Cllr Oakley, Cllr Patel, Cllr Payne, Cllr Pendleton, Cllr Russell, Cllr Sparkes, Cllr Urquhart, Cllr Waight, Cllr Wall and Cllr Wickremaratchi.

(b) Against the recommendations – 0

(c) Abstentions – 21

Cllr Baxter, Cllr Cherry, Cllr Chowdhury, Cllr Condie, Cllr Cornell, Cllr N Dennis, Cllr Gibson, Cllr Johnson, Cllr Kerry-Bedell, Cllr Lord, Cllr McKnight, Cllr Mercer, Cllr Milne, Cllr Oppler, Cllr Oxlade, Cllr Pudaloff, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Sharp, Cllr Smith, Cllr Turley and Cllr Wild.

156.12 The recommendations were carried.

156.13 Resolved –

That, taking account of the priorities contained in the Council Plan, the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and noting the Director of Finance and Support Services' assessment of the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves as required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 (Section 9), the following recommendations be approved:

- (1) The Council Plan and KPIs for 2023/24 (as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report and Appendix 8).
- (2) The net revenue budget requirement in 2023/24 of £708.803m (as set out in paragraph 3.37 of the report and Appendix 1).
- (3) An increase in Council Tax in 2023/24 of 4.99% comprising 2.0% in the precept for the costs for Adults' Social Care and 2.99% for General Fund services.
- (4) The increase in fees and charges as set out in Appendix 7.
- (5) The five year capital programme of £747.247m over the period 2023/24 to 2027/28, of which £124.883m is expected to be spent in 2023/24.
- (6) The overall indicative budget envelopes as set out in Appendix 1.
- (7) An allocation of £0.4m be made available from the Covid-19 reserve to provide funding to support the continuation of the council tax hardship schemes across the West Sussex districts and boroughs for 2023/24 (as set out in paragraph 3.17 of the report).

(8) The following amounts be approved for the financial year 2023/24 in accordance with Section 42A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:

- (a) That the Council Tax requirement for 2023/24 is £567.120m.
- (b) The Council Tax base for the year 2023/24 is the aggregate amount calculated of Band D equivalents by the billing authorities to which the County Council issues precepts totalling 347,199.83.
- (c) The amount of Council Tax being the council tax requirement at (8)(a) above divided by the council tax base at (8)(b) above, shall be £1,633.41 to the nearest penny for Band D.
- (d) The amount of Council Tax payable for dwellings listed in a particular valuation band, calculated in accordance with the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, shall be as follows:

Band	2023/24 Council Tax £	2022/23 Council Tax £	Increase £	Increase %
A	1,088.94	1,037.16	51.78	4.99
B	1,270.43	1,210.02	60.41	4.99
C	1,451.92	1,382.88	69.04	4.99
D	1,633.41	1,555.74	77.67	4.99
E	1,996.39	1,901.46	94.93	4.99
F	2,359.37	2,247.18	112.19	4.99
G	2,722.35	2,592.90	129.45	4.99
H	3,266.82	3,111.48	155.34	4.99

- (e) That the district and borough councils be requested to make payments totalling £567.120m to West Sussex County Council of sums due under precepts calculated in proportion to their Council Tax Band D equivalents as set out in section 10 of the report.
- (9) The Medium Term Financial Position for period 2024/25 to 2026/27 as set out in Section 6 of the report.
 - (10) The total Schools Budget of £775.8m through the Dedicated Schools Grant to meet the County Council’s statutory requirement on schools funding as set out in Section 4 of the report.
 - (11) The delegation to the Director of Finance and Support Services (as Section 151 Officer) of authority to make changes to the report on net revenue expenditure or to the precepts required:

- as a result of a change in the Council Tax base notified by the district and borough councils;
- arising from updated information from the district and borough councils to the Council Tax collection funds and business rates forecast and collection funds; or
- arising from any funding announcements from central government, including through the final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24.

All such changes of funding (positive or negative) to be applied through the appropriate reserve.

(12) These ancillary financial management provisions:

- (a) The Capital Strategy for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28, as set out in Annex 2(a).
- (b) The policy for making a prudent level of revenue provision for the repayment of debt as set out in Annex 2 (a) Appendix B.
- (c) The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2022/23 and 2023/24 as set out within the Capital Strategy, Annex 2(a), section 8.
- (d) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2023/24, as set out in Annex 2(b).
- (e) The Prudential Indicators, as set out in Annex 2(c).
- (f) The importance of effective lobbying with local, regional and national partners to ensure the Government understands the needs of West Sussex residents, businesses and communities.

157 Question Time

157.1 Due to lack of time Question Time fell away.

Chairman

The Council rose at 5.23 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.

Item	Member	Nature of Interest
7 – Pensions Committee Terms of Reference	Cllr Burrett	Deferred member of the Local Government Pension Scheme
7 – Pensions Committee Terms of Reference	Cllr Lanzer	Deferred member of the Local Government Pension Scheme
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Atkins	Member of Worthing Borough Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Baldwin	Member of Horsham District Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Burgess	Member of Crawley Borough Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Burrett	Member of Crawley Borough Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Cooper	Member of Arun District Council and Vice-Chair of Housing and Wellbeing Committee
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Duncton	Member of Chichester District Council and South Downs National Park Authority
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Elkins	Member of Arun District Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Hillier	Cabinet Member at Mid Sussex District Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Lanzer	Member of Crawley Borough Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr McGregor	Member of Adur District Council, Lancing and Sompting Parish Councils
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Oakley	Member of Chichester District Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Oppler	Member of Arun District Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Pendleton	Deputy Leader of Arun District Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Pudaloff	Member of the Royal Society for Public Health

Item	Member	Nature of Interest
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Sharp	Member of Chichester District Council and Chichester City Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Smith	Member of Worthing Borough Council and parent of children with an Education and Healthcare Plan and registered with West Sussex carers
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Sparkes	Member of Worthing Borough Council
9 – Council Plan and Budget	Cllr Waight	Member of Worthing Borough Council
10 – Question Time	Cllr Gibson	Member of Mid Sussex District Council
10 – Question Time	Cllr Mercer	Chair of Orchard Hill College Academy Trust

County of West Sussex
By-Election of County Councillor
for the East Grinstead Meridian Electoral Division
4 May 2023

Return by County Returning Officer
of persons elected as County Councillors

Electoral Division	Name and Address of Person Elected	Description
East Grinstead Meridian	Mr John Dabell 43 Mindelheim Avenue East Grinstead West Sussex RH19 3US	Conservative

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Proportionality

Background

- 1** It is the duty of the County Council, both annually and following the East Grinstead Meridian by-election, to review the entitlement of political groups to seats on committees in line with the proportionality rules set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The rules allow adjustments to be made to make whole numbers of seats and, once the County Council has determined how adjustments should be made, appointments are made to committees on that basis.
- 2** The proportionality rules are as set out below:
 - (1) No political group can have all the places on a committee (the exception is the Cabinet).
 - (2) A group having an overall majority on the County Council is entitled to a majority of seats on each committee.
 - (3) The gross number of seats is allocated in accordance with each group's entitlement.
 - (4) The number of seats on each committee is allocated in accordance with each group's entitlement.
- 3** The application of these rules produces different figures so the figures have to be reconciled by applying the rules in descending order of importance. The critical rule is rule (2) if, as in the case of the County Council, there is an overall majority, and numbers of seats are then reconciled with rules (3) and (4). Under the rules, if there are members of the Council who do not belong to a political group (independent members) then, once the division of seats between the political groups has been made, any remaining seats are allocated to the independent members by the County Council.
- 4** A table detailing the results of the proportionality changes will follow.

Tony Kershaw

Director of Law and Assurance

Contact Officer: Charles Gauntlett 033 022 22524

Background papers

None

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Notification of Appointment of Cabinet Members and Advisers to Cabinet Members

- 1 The Leader has confirmed the appointment of cabinet members and their portfolios, together with the appointment of advisers to cabinet members, as set out below, for the ensuing year.

Portfolio	Cabinet Member	Adviser to Cabinet Member
Leader	Paul Marshall	Jacky Pendleton (Armed Forces Champion)
Adults Services	Amanda Jupp	-
Children and Young People, Learning and Skills (Lead Member for Children)	Jacquie Russell	-
Community Support, Fire and Rescue	Duncan Crow	-
Environment and Climate Change (Deputy Leader)	Deborah Urquhart	-
Finance and Property	Jeremy Hunt	-
Highways and Transport	Joy Dennis	-
Public Health and Wellbeing	Bob Lanzer	-
Support Services and Economic Development	Steve Waight	-

Notification of Cabinet Portfolios – May 2023

Collective Responsibilities

The collective responsibilities of the Cabinet are as follows:

- Co-ordinating priorities and policies across the County Council
- Assurance and performance management of the delivery of the Council Plan and budget (revenue and capital), including assurance that corporate risks are effectively managed
- Development and review of the Council Plan and the budget, policies and programmes to achieve it
- Ensuring value for money and co-ordinated external bidding
- Climate Change Strategy
- The West Sussex Economy Plan
- Co-ordinating communications and lobbying
- Customer service and providing a focus for community leadership
- Ensuring co-ordinated and effective partnership working
- Representing and promoting the reputation of the County Council

- Ensuring sound democratic systems, effective scrutiny and local member engagement
- Fire and Rescue Authority functions except where delegated to the relevant Cabinet Member or Chief Fire Officer.

The Cabinet shall meet to debate matters of corporate importance, significant cross-portfolio matters and other matters of significance for the County Council's responsibilities for the people of West Sussex as it may determine and shall take decisions on areas of collective responsibility or in relation to decisions within individual portfolios as indicated in the Forward Plan of key decisions.

All decisions about finance, property and support services are taken in consultation with the relevant cabinet member or as part of collective decision making.

A number of the specific responsibilities for particular cabinet members, as set out below, will be discharged in consultation with the Leader or another cabinet member as specified.

Leader of the Council

The following functions are allocated to the Leader of the Council:

- to chair meetings of the Cabinet and oversee the preparation of business for its consideration
- to indicate to the Chief Executive and executive directors the priorities and programmes of the Cabinet and majority party, and their likely reaction to new policies or projects.
- to be the principal political spokesman for the County Council at internal and external meetings
- to decide matters on behalf of another cabinet member if he or she is unwell, out of the county, has an interest in a matter under consideration, or is otherwise unable to act, or in the Leader's absence, to nominate the Deputy Leader or another cabinet member to do so
- to have responsibility for the following portfolio areas:
 - Strategic Political Direction
 - Policy and Strategy
 - Communications and lobbying activity
 - Partnerships including locally, SE7 and CCN
 - Economy (supported by cabinet members on some specifics)

Deputy Leader of the Council

To undertake the functions of the Leader of the Council in the absence of the Leader where the business cannot await the return of the Leader due to urgency or to the compelling interests of the Council or when specifically requested by the Leader to do so, within the scope and limitation set out below.

Acts as the Leader in key partnership roles in relation to the Economy Portfolio

Scope:

- To chair meetings of the Cabinet
- To act for the Leader at meetings of the Council or any of its committees, sub-committees or other member meetings which the Leader is expected or required to attend
- To act for the Leader at any external meetings or meetings with partners or other scheduled events to which the Leader is requested or invited to attend
- To make, when urgently required, appointments to the Council's Executive or decisions related to such appointments and the allocation of cabinet portfolios
- To take executive decisions relating to the Leader's portfolio or on matters reserved to the Leader or which would otherwise fall to the Leader

Limitation:

- Not to take any decision on the Council's business, or to attend any meeting on behalf of the Leader, and not to receive information on any matter, which has been identified by the Leader as the responsibility of another member or members of the Executive

Adults Services

- Adults' Social Care services
- Safeguarding
- Health integration
- NHS Partnerships (working with Cabinet colleagues)
- Voluntary and Community Sector
- Domestic Abuse

Children and Young People (and statutory Lead Member for Children)

- Children's Social Care and Safeguarding
- Youth Services
- Youth Justice
- Early Help Services
- Children's Health – Public Health
- Education, Schools and Adult Skills (discharged through the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills)

Learning and Skills (for the Lead Member for Children pending future review)

- Adult Skills and Learning, Further and Higher Education, apprentices
- Post 16 Skills partnership
- Schools including schools place planning, Schools Forum and schools Capital Programme
- Special Educational Needs

Community Support, Fire and Rescue**Support to Communities:**

- Libraries and Archives
- Registration Services
- Coroner and Mortuary
- Community Safety and Police Liaison

- Trading Standards
- Refugees, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers
- Community Engagement and Support
- Linked with Parish and Town Councils
- Voluntary Sectors

Fire and Rescue:

- Fire & Rescue Service
- Emergencies and Resilience

Environment and Climate Change (Deputy Leader)

- Climate Change/Carbon Net Zero
- Waste and Recycling Strategy
- Energy
- South Downs National Park and AONBs
- Coast and Countryside and Rural Economy
- Minerals and Strategic Planning
- Flood prevention
- Rights of Way

Finance and Property

- Finance including Revenue and Capital Programme
- Pensions
- Treasury and Investment Management
- Property, Assets and Facilities Services
- Procurement

All decisions involving finance and property to be taken in consultation with this Cabinet Member

Highways and Transport

- Highways
- Transport Planning
- Strategic Transport (including engagement with Transport for the South East)
- Transport and Infrastructure including support for Public Realm and Town Centre Regeneration
- Railway and Public Transport Liaison
- All aspects of Cycling

Public Health and Wellbeing

- Public Health (in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Adult Services and Children and Young People for relevant business)
- Wellbeing in the community
- Health partnerships

Support Services and Economic Development

- Business Planning and effective business infrastructure and corporate resources
- Human Resources
- Legal Services

- Democratic and Member Services
- IT and Information
- Digital/Broadband
- Communications Services
- Economy and representations (working with Leader)

Tony Kershaw

Director of Law and Assurance

Contact: Clare Jones 033 022 22526

Background Papers

None

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West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan – Five Year Assessment of Relevance and Effectiveness

Background

- 1 The [West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan](#) (JMLP) was prepared in partnership by West Sussex County Council and the South Downs National Park Authority (the 'Authorities'). The JMLP was first adopted in July 2018, following examination hearings in September 2017. A partial review, specifically related to the supply of soft sand, resulted in formal changes to the JMLP, that were adopted in March 2021.
- 2 The JMLP sets out detailed planning policies for minerals and includes site allocations. It is the most up-to-date statement of the County Council's land-use planning policy for minerals. The Plan is part of the statutory development plan for West Sussex, and it is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Five Year Assessment

- 3 Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 requires local planning authorities to assess local plans every five years from their date of adoption to determine whether they need to be formally reviewed through changes to a local plan, where it is determined that they (in part or whole) are no longer relevant or effective.
- 4 The JMLP has been subject to an assessment of its relevance and effectiveness, **as set out at Appendix 1 (available via the website)**. It has been prepared by officers of the joint authorities, taking account of monitoring undertaken on an annual basis.
- 5 The assessment identifies there have been no substantive changes in national or local circumstances and the policies have generally performed as expected since the adoption of the Plan. The policies are still considered to be consistent with national policy, relevant and effective, and working to achieve the vision and strategic objectives of the JMLP. Accordingly, the assessment concludes that the Plan is still relevant and effective, and it does not need to be formally reviewed, in whole or in part.
- 6 SDNPA approval of the assessment will be subject to a decision at the SDNP full Authority meeting of 22 July 2023, after which the assessment will be published.

Recommended

That the Joint Minerals Local Plan is still relevant and effective and does not need to be formally reviewed, in whole or in part.

Deborah Urquhart

Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Contact Officer: Rupy Sandhu, Principal Planner, 0330 222 6454

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Five Year Assessment of Relevance and Effectiveness (available via the website)

Background papers

None

Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children Services Judgement of the County Council's Children's Services 11 May 2023

Introduction

Ofsted undertook the full Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) for West Sussex County Council from 13 to 24 March 2023, undertaking a thorough and comprehensive inspection of the service. Their report, recently published **and attached at Appendix 1**, recognises that 'Services for children and families in West Sussex County Council have substantially improved' and that 'a relentless and incremental approach to improving practice has led to significant progress'.

The Leader and Cabinet Member are pleased to present this report as a summary of the outcome of the inspection and its independent endorsement of the significant investment and political commitment to improvement of these critical services over the last three and a half years and the corporate systems and governance which have enabled them to be realised.

This was confirmed by the Ofsted judgements following the inspection.

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children in care	Good
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Requires improvement to be good
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement to be good

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 This report and Ofsted judgement confirms the progress made by the Council is substantial and reverses the inadequate judgement of the last ILACS inspection in February 2019. The Ofsted report makes clear that West Sussex County Council has made 'substantial progress' and there is now, 'a strong, determined and cohesive leadership team' in place. The regulator also acknowledged the progress made across the Council, where the previous 'corporate and political weaknesses have been addressed'. The overall effectiveness of Children's Services is judged to be 'Requires improvement to be good' with the impact of leaders on the social work practice with children and families judged to be 'Good'.
- 1.2 The shortcomings outlined within the 2019 inspection were widespread including the quality of management, the quality of practice, the effectiveness of process, staff recruitment and retention, inadequate partnership arrangements, but above all poor outcomes for children across a range of factors. These failings in the service were considered by the regulator to be

symptomatic of a wider corporate failing and this in turn led the Secretary of State requiring the County Council to cooperate with a Commissioner for Children's Services in West Sussex (hereafter 'the Commissioner').

- 1.3 The Commissioner's role was to bring together evidence to assess the County Council's capacity and capability to improve itself and he undertook a detailed examination, both of the workings of Children's Services and the wider political and constitutional arrangements. One of the Commissioner's recommendations was to create an Alternative Delivery Model (a Children's Trust), which would have taken Children's Services out of the Council responsibility.
- 1.4 Following the 2019 inspection and Commissioner's report, the Council embarked on a comprehensive review and transformation of the service which included a Council-wide Good Governance review and the creation of a new Department of Children Young People and Learning. This report outlines the significant changes and improvements that have taken place since the inspection and Commissioner's report at a political, corporate and service level. The Ofsted report published on 11 May 2023 demonstrates that the Council's actions, commitment and resources have been used well and have been highly effective. The regulator has acknowledged the improvements made corporately to cement the organisational culture, leadership and management which have led to the required improvements in professional practice to achieve sustainable change.

2. Timeline of Corporate and Service Improvement

- 2.1 In response to the previous Ofsted report and the Commissioner's initial report, the authority took the following key steps in 2019:
 - Introducing greater transparency in the conduct of business generally, as part of a 'Good Governance' review – for example through more frequent Cabinet meetings in public that include contributions from scrutiny committees and other members.
 - Ensuring that the portfolio of the lead member for children (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) encompassed all services for children and families including services for schools. The Cabinet Member, who has held the post throughout the improvement period, has maintained a firm, rigorous leadership oversight and has done so with the backing of the Cabinet and through regular updates to the public meetings of full Council.
 - Revised the constitution, membership and remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel, which under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People has enhanced its profile, becoming more robust and delivering tangible improvements to outcomes for children. Children and young people now participate on the Panel and are represented in its subgroups.
 - Creating greater constructive challenge through a revised Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee. The Cabinet Member and other elected members provide a high personal commitment and scrutiny towards the progress of Children we Care for (those in care) and care experienced children (those who have left care).

-
- Enhancing the Director of Children’s Services (DCS) role so that it became an Executive Director post, directly accountable to the Chief Executive and enabled to undertake the full legal remit in respect both of Social Care and Education & Skills.
 - The Council has provided significant financial investment into the service through a 39% increase in revenue budgets by 2022/23 and a dedicated improvement grant to accelerate and maintain a trajectory of improvement throughout the ‘Children First’ programme, over £6m annual for the period of the improvement programme.
 - Improving young people’s participation and engagement in the design of services for them – including through the Children in Care Council.
- 2.2 These measures were amongst those that influenced the Secretary of State’s decision to first pause (2021) and then withdraw (2022) the statutory direction that a Children’s Trust should replace the Council’s management of the service. This was the first and only time the Secretary of State has rescinded such a decision and was a mark of confidence in the Council’s turn-around and ability to improve at pace.
- 2.3 With the authority being in special measures, there has been a robust framework of improvement activity to support the required change since 2019, which included;
- Six Ofsted monitoring visits
 - A monthly Improvement Board independently chaired by John Coughlan
 - Significant financial investment to deliver a wide-ranging transformation programme, Children First, which have led to a comprehensive service redesign
 - Cultural and a comprehensive service re-design to deliver improved professional practice across social work teams and the early help service
 - A focus on the leadership and management across the department to improve oversight and accountability of all areas of practice
 - Full engagement with the Department for Education which led to the decision to rescind the proposed Children’s Trust (February 2022)
- 2.4 This progress has been achieved despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and all the restrictions on the workforce and changes in demand this led to. Throughout the pandemic, at all times the safety of children was paramount: cases were rated for severity which determined the action needed, and all high-risk cases were closely monitored; PPE was readily available to staff and face-to-face visiting was reintroduced as soon as this was feasible. In the meantime, full use was made of remote contact through technology (to which most children responded positively), combined with co-operative partnership arrangements with schools and other stakeholders. Staff were early recipients of the vaccine and staff sickness remained low, with operational levels always in excess of 90% throughout the pandemic. This helped to maintain performance, which included managing the inevitable surges of demand experienced when schools reopened after lockdown.

- 2.5 In terms of service demand and need, the true impact of the pandemic is still being felt – most critically in terms of exacerbating pre-existing concerns about children’s mental health. The cluster of serious incidents in the Horsham area together with other isolated events in 2021 led to closer and more co-operative engagement with schools; at the same time, work is underway with NHS partners about meeting additional need. The service is therefore learning from the demands resulting from the pandemic and has made further improvements that will keep children and young people safer in the future. These arrangements will take fuller and more formal shape through the emerging Integrated Care System (inaugurated in July 2022), comprising NHS, local authority and the voluntary sector organisations involved in delivering health care.
- 2.6 The senior leadership team has taken a ‘relentless and incremental approach to improving practice’, implementing change across the department, embedded a culture of Children First over the last four years with all staff, to improve the quality and standards of professional practice for children and families across West Sussex.

Financial Investment to support the improvement and transformation of the service

- 2.7 From the outset there was political commitment by the Cabinet and by full Council for the financial investment required to enable the Council to realise the level of transformation required. The scale and pace of the improvement in the children’s services has only been possible with the significant increase of the budget since the last inspection in 2019. The summary below set out how those additional resources, both revenue and capital, have been deployed.
- 2.8 This financial investment has included increased revenue budgets within the service from £100m in 2019/20 to £139m in 2022/23. This increase has been used to facilitate the major service re-designs in the children and family social work teams, the fostering service, the management redesign, improved social work pay and conditions offer and dedicated recruitment activity. Specifically, the Council’s increased revenue spending has enabled the delivery of the Family Safeguarding model which has meant an increase in staffing numbers, dedicated Motivational Interviewing training for all of our staff and (for the first time) the implementation of specialist adult workers within the service.
- 2.9 This increase in revenue spend was also used to provide the initial phase 1 of the Fostering re-design to provide more funding to enhance payments to the Council’s foster carers and then the implementation of phase 2 of the service redesign which provided higher levels of staffing to support improved recruitment, assessment and support to our carers.
- 2.10 The Council has also specifically awarded a dedicated transformation improvement grant to accelerate and maintain a trajectory of improvement throughout the Children First programme which has been over £6m annually for the period of the improvement programme. This financial commitment towards the Children First programme has enabled the Department to implement comprehensive service re-design, workforce development, better use of technology, practice improvement and corporate parenting workstreams that have been fully supported by dedicated project managers. The dedicated budget provided extra improvement managers and project managers to ensure

the Children First programme was implemented at pace whilst allowing operational staff and managers to remain focused on service delivery.

- 2.11 The final strand of the Council's financial investment into the service is related to the increase in capital spend in the region of £12m which was predominantly used to review and improve the in-house residential provision. The resource has been used to close and re-build three of the Council's residential homes, which re-opened as state-of-the-art provision for the children we care for. The extra budget was also used to re-furbish the remaining three residential homes, providing an in-house residential provision that is now acknowledged by the regulator as providing a physical environment that is of an extremely high standard.
- 2.12 This investment programme represents a substantial commitment by the Cabinet and whole Council towards Children, Young People and Learning and is indicative of the high priority that the Council puts on its children's services. It also marks a statement of intent to not only address previous underfunding but to put the service on a sure and sustainable footing to ensure the improvement work will continue.

3. Comprehensive Improvement and Transformation of the Service

- 3.1 Director of Children's Services and her leadership Team developed the Children First programme which included three 'pillars' to represent the fundamental principles of change:
- **Pillar 1 - 'What good looks like':** setting, promoting and modelling common standards and expectations.
 - **Pillar 2 - Creating the right Environment:** this includes developing 'the Social Work Offer' – comprising competitive remuneration, the best working environment, a balanced workload, the right equipment, professional techniques and support for staff – to make West Sussex an 'employer of choice'.
 - **Pillar 3 - Improved Service Model:** a service offer stressing managing demand and reducing escalation through a preventive approach - always with children and families at the heart of all undertakings. This has included bringing together the three main service areas (early help, social care and education) under one departmental structure.

Children First Programme

- 3.2 The Children First programme of improvement and transformation was adopted in 2020 is a comprehensive framework of activity guided by the Children First Vision, which set out the ambition and road map for improving the outcomes of children and families in West Sussex. It describes what it means to put children first in West Sussex (strategic intent); and how the Council (with its strategic partners) will all work together to ensure that children really do come first (culture and behaviours). As outlined above this comprehensive transformation programme has been funded in addition to the revenue increase to the service budgets to provide a high degree of pace and breadth to the process.

The Children First Practice Improvement Plan

- 3.3 The detailed service development work being undertaken is set out in a Practice Improvement Plan. The original plan was adopted in August 2019 and was closely aligned to the 12 main recommendations made by Ofsted in its inspection report of May 2019. A refreshed Improvement Plan was adopted in March 2020. An Investment Plan, agreed by the Cabinet, has enabled the delivery of the Improvement Plan at pace, culminating in the ILACS in March 2023.

A permanent senior management team

- 3.4 One of the first stages of improvement that was implemented by Lucy Butler, the incoming Director of Children Young People and Learning, was to recruit a high-calibre Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) that had the capacity and capability to lead and champion the improvement process. The importance of a stable DLT cannot be over-stated: one of its key aims has been to create a culture that is inclusive, supportive and communicative. To this end, a wide range of opportunities have been put in place to encourage strong two-way engagement with staff. These have included staff conferences, collaborative problem-solving events, staff surveys, on-line question-and-answer sessions and the Director's weekly message to staff. Enhancing managerial capability at all levels has helped to magnify these effects, ensuring, through supervision meetings, that staff feel well supported by their manager, which they have confirmed to be the case.

Improving management capability

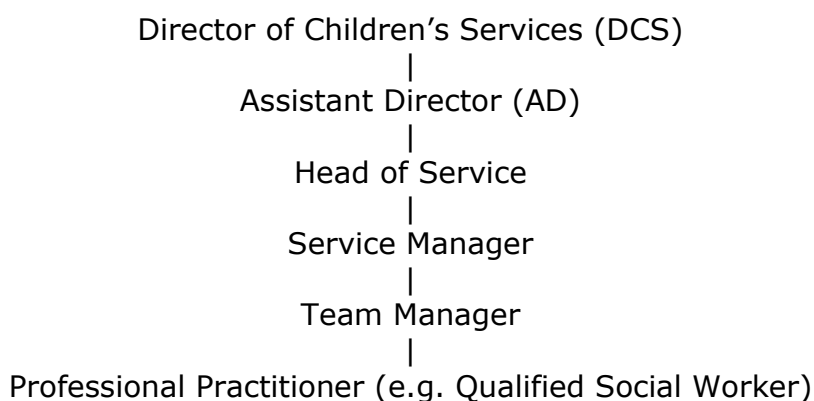
- 3.5 The Ofsted inspection in February 2019 and the subsequent Commissioner's report of Autumn 2019 highlighted significant weaknesses in the ability of managers to ensure that good quality social work was delivered to improve outcomes for children and their families. The service response to the original managerial deficit has been decisive and delivered through a major programme of assessment, training and coaching.
- 3.6 The Council invested in a bespoke programme for all managers in Children's Social Care at the start of 2021. Following on from the Inspection in 2019, the service had to build confidence, competence and capability in the cohort of managers across the service. Every manager was therefore put through an assessment and development session based on the Council's competency framework and the Social Work England competencies, which the service commissioned through an independent partner. This was co-delivered with the independent partner, to provide an independent assessment that was also backed up by line management accountability.
- 3.7 The process was communicated to all staff in engagement sessions beforehand; the senior leadership team promoted it as an investment in staff and their career development. Take-up was very good: although there was some disquiet initially, this was quickly dispelled when managers started the assessment and planning sessions. The data gathered was then processed to give the service key organisational themes for development as well as data about the functioning of each manager, which was collated into individual development plans. This enabled the service to have an overall understanding of the

strengths and areas for development for all managers, which was followed up by line managers in supervision and in appraisals.

- 3.8 The service created a bespoke leadership and management development programme from the assessment data for all managers, building on the key themes as follows:
- putting Children First and at the centre of all work, (essentially implementing the vision and improving communication and engagement across the organisation)
 - empowering and engaging the teams to influence their own practice and achieve results, (the 'bottom-up approach')
 - dealing with silo working, getting away from the sense of a blame culture and encouraging personal accountability
- 3.9 All Social Care managers went through this programme in 2021 and the process has evolved to focus on key priority areas of problem-solving to further improve practice. The programme has been crucial to delivering the Council's aim to bring about a change in culture, with managers taking responsibility and holding accountability, and better engagement with and ownership of the issues and priorities for improvement.

New Staffing Structure

- 3.10 A simplified staffing structure was developed and implemented from July 2021 and is now thoroughly embedded. It addressed one of the key concerns expressed in the Commissioner's original report regarding excessive layers of management and ambiguity of job titles and roles, which he advised were hampering service effectiveness. The new structure removes ambiguity and promotes accountability as the foundation of strong performance management; it is supplemented by revised schemes of delegation that are appropriate for the new management, structured as follows:



Social Work Offer

- 3.11 West Sussex had long struggled to recruit high calibre staff in sufficient numbers because of a historically uncompetitive remunerative package accompanied by issues of perceived excessive workloads and low morale. Up to June 2021, a Recruitment and Retention scheme had attempted to offset these issues but could not provide the basis for a satisfactory long-term solution. The increased revenue budgets within the service enable the Council to offer an improved permanent Social Work Offer, ensuring that West Sussex is

competitive in the employment market with its local authority neighbours, as an attractive and rewarding place to work.

- 3.12 The introduction of the Social Work Offer significantly changes the dynamics of the relationship between the authority and its staff in a range of positive ways. In creating a permanent competitive pay and reward model, the Offer provides a stable and assured employment environment in which professionals can build and enhance their careers through a long-term commitment to this authority. The Offer complements the other service transformation activity, which cumulatively helps to brand West Sussex as a service with high aspirations for the future and a progressive stance towards introducing the best professional techniques and standards. One of the key features of the new Offer is that it allows staff to apply for progression to higher pay grades and levels of responsibility, but only where they can demonstrate more developed skills within their working practice. In this way, strong performance and reward are tangibly linked in a way that directly benefits the service and its customers.

Embedding Quality Standards

- 3.13 These provisions in turn allow the service to specify to staff what is expected of them to achieve good practice standards and to develop a culture in which maintaining high standards becomes the norm. The link between the staff offer and expectations is now strong and helps to develop and reinforce an ethos of good quality being understood as an integral part of all working practice, with 'what good looks like' being applied as a standard element. Practice improvement is now underpinned by a robust Performance Management and Quality Assurance framework, which enables managers at all levels of the service to know their service and ensure appropriate actions are in place to maintain the trajectory of improvement that our children and young people deserve.
- 3.14 The quality of practice is a key theme running through all activities associated with the Children First Improvement agenda. It is essential to be able to measure the quality-of-service delivery as well as compliance with the statutory requirements, such as visiting timescales. Casework auditing fulfils a key function both in maintaining and raising quality and to provide examples of good practice. This work is overseen through a Quality Assurance Framework, supported by new Core Practice Standards, launched in November 2021 and promoted as a key resource throughout the service. Hampshire County Council, this authority's 'Partner in Practice' has supported and guided the Quality Assurance work.

Motivating the Workforce

- 3.15 Despite the challenges of the pandemic and coming to terms with significant organisational change, Staff Surveys conducted in 2021 and February 2022 broadly demonstrate the workforce responding positively to the transformation agenda and showing steadfastness and pride in the journey of improvement. The senior leadership team also maintain regular and ongoing communications with staff regarding recruitment and retention. The available evidence suggests that the factors involved in this positive feedback include the following:
- The benefits of the Social Work Offer, including the prospect of grade and career progression

- Stable, energetic, and visible senior management
- Improved communication and trusted two-way messaging
- Much greater support from line managers through supervision
- Stabilising caseloads in most areas and a reduction in the vacancy gap
- Greater clarity about roles, responsibilities and expectations
- Introduction of new social work techniques
- A clear route through a post-Covid-19 world, with recovery led by senior management, and openness to 'new ways of working'

Service Re-design

- 3.16 An initial part of the re-design was the development of an integrated 'front door' to the service. It has been important to ensure that an effective and efficient 'front door' to all services is developed and maintained, including the alignment of early help provision with the statutory social work activity. This has been crucial in being able to develop and evidence appropriate thresholds for intervention and assessment within the service. The Integrated Front Door was launched in January 2020, with the following features:
- Creating one pathway within Children's Services for referrals relating to children and young people
 - Enabling a joined-up approach, with one combined Early Help and Social Care team at the Front Door
 - Children receive a service proportionate to their needs, in a timely way
 - A reduction in the number of transfer points on the child's journey
 - A reduction in the time from initial contact to outcome
 - Providing a simplified process for the public and professionals
 - Potentially reduce unnecessary social work interventions
- 3.17 The Family Safeguarding Model (FSM) is one of the foundation stones of transforming social work practice. This well reviewed approach takes the journey of the child as its starting point and puts children, young people and their families right at the heart of all service decisions. In doing so it takes full account of the child's relationships, the family context and the broader parenting strengths and vulnerabilities that may be present. It fully grasps the primacy of early intervention, both to avoid the tragedy of family breakdown, and thereby to seek to minimise demand for costly, high-end social care services. The Council committed an extra £5.3m to this part of the service in order to introduce the model and make it sustainable going forward.
- 3.18 The Family Safeguarding Model phase 1 has been successfully introduced in February 2022, with its staffing structure, comprising Assessment and Family Safeguarding teams across the western, central and eastern areas now fully operational. A key feature is the formation of Multi-Disciplinary Teams so that the totality of family issues can be addressed and parenting capability strengthened. Specialist adult practitioners for domestic abuse and substance misuse have also been introduced successfully. The remaining component is to introduce mental health practitioners through the new arrangements with Health partners. Maintaining the integrity and parenting capability of families means that fewer children will need to be taken into care, which in turn assists the County Council and its partners to manage otherwise potentially unsustainable costs. This element of the model was originally to be funded by the Department for Education; however, the promised funding stream was not forthcoming. Despite this, the Council has continued to fund the model.

- 3.19 To support the new FSM model, a restructure of staffing has led to the creation of Assessment and Family Safeguarding teams based on three geographic areas: West (equivalent to Chichester and Arun district areas), Central (Worthing, Adur and Horsham) and East (Crawley and Mid Sussex). A new Supervision system has been introduced concurrently, to provide the best support to staff and maintain improvements in practice standards.

Fostering Service Redesign

- 3.20 Another key aspect to the overall improvement was the Council's ambition to create a high performing Fostering Service that provides those Children we Care for with the best start in life. A two-phase programme to redesign and transform the Fostering Service commenced with a decision to ensure that from April 2021, all internal foster carers received the same skills level payment for each child, where more than one child was in their care. In Phase 2 (from March 2022), work commenced to ensure the County Council can strengthen its market position by offering in-house foster placements to different cohorts of children with a broad range of needs, strengthen the offer to existing carers to improve retention, introduce the Mocking bird model and increase the social care workforce to ensure caseloads for staff within the service are manageable.
- 3.21 These measures will help to address current challenges being faced in the fostering market, improve the ratio of in-house foster carers to independent providers and transform the Fostering Service to the desired position of becoming the 'provider of choice' for current and future foster carers across West Sussex. This work will result in enhanced life experiences for cared-for children, supported by an investment enabling the Council to manage sufficiency budgets more effectively and control the costs of placements.

Early Help Redesign

- 3.22 The Council also undertook a major review and improvement of the Early Help service. Following broad public and internal consultation during the early part of 2021, with Cabinet approval a redesign of the Early Help service was implemented in October 2021. The effect was to configure the resources of the service to enhance service delivery to children and families in the community, thereby maximising impact; at the same time the administrative burden of maintaining an excessive number of buildings was rationalised, with 12 centres retained around the county, and a hub system instituted so that Early Help and Children's Social Care are now much more closely aligned.
- 3.23 These improvement were made alongside a range of other developments within children's social care including improvements to the Council's in-house residential provision, expanding and improving our service to unaccompanied asylum seeking children, expanding the virtual school which provides a dedicated education service to the children we look after, improvements in the permanency planning and life story work for the children we care for and starting the process of expanding the service we offer to our care leavers.

Demonstrating Impact

- 3.24 It is essential to hold in view that the purpose of all this work is to improve the service to children and families and that customer needs must remain at the

heart of all endeavours. Impact has been demonstrated through the following means:

- Evidence from successive Ofsted Monitoring Visits, culminating in the ILACS in 2023
- The confidence and support of the former Commissioner for Children's Services, John Coughlan, who chaired the Improvement Board
- Improvements in a range of performance indicators – for instance timeliness of visits, the routine presence of case supervision and other compliance with specified professional practice standards
- Reduction in court activity, especially the number of Care Proceedings needing to be placed before the Court
- Measures of quality, as identified through the monthly internal auditing process
- Evidence of improved service-user outcomes and increased customer satisfaction, reductions in complaints etc.
- Evidence of improved working with partners – especially Health and Schools
- Positive feedback from managers, staff and Unison
- Successful recruitment and retention of staff, and associated wellbeing indicators

4. The Ofsted report: published on 11 May 2023

4.1 The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services was undertaken by Ofsted 13 and 24 March 2023. The report opens with the statement that, 'Services for children and families in West Sussex County Council have substantially improved since the inspection in 2019.' It goes on to outline the change in how the Council has made the changes with improved corporate governance and has backed the improvement programme with significant political support and financial resources. Senior leaders know the service well and are realistic in their understanding of the service strengths and areas for improvement. The Council is aware that more work is needed to ensure that all children in West Sussex receive a consistently good and ultimately outstanding level of service.

4.2 The Ofsted report is attached at Appendix 1 but key findings are summarised as follows:

- Most children coming into care make good progress
- The voice of children and young people is strong and well-considered in decision-making
- Early Help support is making a positive difference to children's lives
- Staff benefit from a wide range of support, and training and development opportunities; and feel valued
- The implementation of the new Family Safeguarding practice model has been carefully considered with clear plans for the next steps
- Partnership working is improving, although there is more to do
- Leaders have been determined to shift the organisational culture and put children first
- Practice in some teams is variable and more work is needed to ensure all children receive a consistent service
- The advice and support provided to care leavers aged 21 and over requires further improvement
- Placement choices for children who are looked after requires improvement

- There needs to be a stronger response to specific children aged 16 and 17 who present as homeless or who are missing from home

Responding to the Ofsted report and judgements

- 4.3 This inspection outcome confirms that significant improvements have been made within Children's Services following the support and resources provided by the Council. Senior leaders are proud of what has been achieved across the service by all staff and managers. They consider the report to be fair and balanced, as it accurately reflects the key elements of the improvement journey, the significant progress that has been made, the areas still to be further improved and reflects accurately where the services are now. Importantly, it also reflects to senior leaders and staff that their understanding of the service; illustrated in the existing self-evaluation and practice improvement plan, was accurate and that they knew themselves well.
- 4.4 The report provides the Council with evidence and validation of the significant improvements and transformation that has been successfully completed and establishes that the service will no longer be in special measures. This in turn will enhance the confidence of staff and managers and will build on restoring the reputation of the service and the Council as a whole. It is expected that this will also provide further motivation to staff to make the necessary continuous improvements in the future.

5. Delivering continuous improvement and 'getting to good' and outstanding

- 5.1 This is a significant milestone for the Council as part of the journey towards being an outstanding children's services. However, the leadership team is not complacent and they fully acknowledge what needs to improve as outlined within the Ofsted report. Plans are already in place to ensure there is continuous improvement across the service. Senior leaders and managers are implementing the vision of 'Children First' and prioritising the organisational change and strengths-based practice across all areas of the department, including the further embedding of the Family Safeguarding model. More work with partner agencies including police, health and education to deliver effective services that meet the needs of children in a timely way, will be required.
- 5.2 Engagement events with staff and managers are planned from May 2023 to consult on the priorities and areas of improvement as well as to celebrate the success that has been achieved so far. The framework used to prepare for the Ofsted inspection and ensure all areas of practice are effectively overseen by managers will continue, although these meetings will now be known as 'getting to good' meetings. The focus will be on the seven areas of improvement identified by Ofsted plus other priority areas of practice. The areas to improve identified by Ofsted are as follows:
- The timeliness and quality of strategy discussions and child protection investigations
 - The consistent quality and effectiveness of assessments and plans for children in need and children in need of protection
 - The response to children aged 16 to 17 who present as homeless

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- The timeliness of initial health assessments and access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) for specialist assessments and therapeutic support when children are in care
 - The completion of return home interviews and their impact on planning for children when they go missing
 - Sufficiency of placement choice when children come into care
 - The quality of advice and support provided to care leavers aged 21 and over and unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people as they transition their leave to remain
- 5.3 Other key areas of practice and priorities will continue to receive scrutiny and monitoring of performance at the relevant governance boards or at Departmental Leadership Team to progress the service to good and then outstanding. For example, key priorities already in progress such as:
- the participation of children across all areas of services
 - the recruitment and retention of staff across the department
 - placement sufficiency for children we care for
 - the development of our staff and managers to embed further a strength-based relationship model including the development of a management academy to support this
 - to further shift and embed the organisational culture to enable the service to 'get to good and outstanding'
- 5.4 There is more work needed with partner agencies, particularly with our health and police partners, to improve access to child and adolescent mental health services and therapeutic support, initial health assessments for children we care for and the timeliness of strategy discussions. Plans are already in place to start working more closely with our mental health partners to ensure that there are effective pathways and provision for children and young people. Further work with our accommodation providers to improve placement sufficiency and choice for children we care for is already in place, and will require effort, determination and commitment to improve choice, given the current national challenges.
- 5.5 It is planned that there will be a realigned Improvement Board to continue to focus on the areas of practice outlined above. Alongside this, the transformation programme and the practice improvement plan are being reviewed and updated to ensure their effectiveness going forward and that they impact upon the areas of improvement outlined in the Ofsted inspection report.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 This report confirms that the unparalleled period of activity within the service, marked by its intensity, the exacting standards set; and the breadth of topics being covered has been an overwhelming success and has put the Council's children's services back on a sure footing. The outcome of this ILACS is the result of the Council's corporate leadership and support to ensure children's

services are at the heart of everything we do. The Council also wishes to acknowledge that turning around a previously 'inadequate' service is a significant and enduring commitment by everyone involved, the Director of Children's Services, Managers, staff, our children and young people and our partners. It has also required significant financial investment to develop and implement the Children First programme and will continue to be fully supported and resourced by the Council as an ongoing and iterative process.

- 6.2 At the present time the Council is three years into this journey, it can be proud of the progress and improvement achieved set against the challenges set by Ofsted and the Commissioner in 2019. These improvements (across the service) have now been verified by Ofsted ILACS and through the evidence presented and scrutinised by the previous Commissioner.

7. Actions and next steps

- (1) The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills and the DCS will work with the independent chair to scope out the focus of activity for the next six months for the Improvement Board as the Council transitions out of special measures.
- (2) The Council will continue to support the improvement of strengths-based practice for children and their families across the department and with partner agencies as outlined in the Children First programme to ensure a consistently good or outstanding quality of services are delivered.
- (3) The Cabinet Member, the Leader and all of the Cabinet will continue to champion and support the investment in the improvement programme and the successful realisation of our ambitions for the wellbeing of the children and families of West Sussex

Recommended

That the report be noted.

Paul Marshall

Leader

Jacquie Russell

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills

Contact Officers: Vince Clark, Assistant Director, Children First Transformation
Louise Warren, Senior Improvement Lead

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Ofsted Report

Background papers

None

Inspection of West Sussex local authority children's services

Inspection dates: 13 to 24 March 2023

Lead inspector: Maire Atherton, His Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children in care	Good
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Requires improvement to be good
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement to be good

Services for children and families in West Sussex County Council have substantially improved since the inspection in 2019, when they were judged to be inadequate across all areas. Corporate and political systemic weaknesses have been addressed and there is now a strong, determined and cohesive leadership team.

A relentless and incremental approach to improving practice has led to significant progress in some areas, such as the safeguarding and planning for unborn children, achieving permanence for children, and the effectiveness of quality assurance. There remain inconsistencies in children's experiences, particularly in the assessment and intervention teams and family safeguarding service. In part, this is due to turbulence in the system following the implementation of whole-scale service change in 2022, but it is also due to some high social worker caseloads and, until recently, turnover of staff in some teams. This is now stabilising and, following a successful recent recruitment drive, caseloads are beginning to fall.

Leaders have a clear and realistic understanding of the further improvements needed to ensure that all children receive a consistently good service, and they are committed to and focused on continuing to lead the necessary improvements.

What needs to improve?

- The timeliness and quality of strategy discussions and child protection investigations.
- The consistent quality and effectiveness of assessments and plans for children in need and children in need of protection.
- The response to children aged 16 to 17 who present as homeless.
- The timeliness of initial health assessments and access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) for specialist assessments and therapeutic support when children are in care.
- The completion of return home interviews and their impact on planning for children when they go missing.
- Sufficiency of placement choice when children come into care.
- The quality of advice and support provided to care leavers aged 21 and over and unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people as they transition their leave to remain.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: requires improvement to be good

1. Early help support makes a positive difference to children's lives. Most families receive the right level of support at the earliest opportunity and their situations improve. Meaningful work with parents helps to provide them with insight and understanding about their children's needs and improve their parenting. Safety plans are routinely completed, with children and their families. Many children have their own age-appropriate understanding of what to do when there are risks and concerns. When concerns increase for children, appropriate action is taken to step up to statutory services.
2. The vast majority of children referred to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and the emergency duty team receive a timely and appropriate response. Managers and social workers demonstrate a clear understanding of risk. Thresholds are applied well. Decisions are informed by partnership-working, with children at the centre. The need for parental consent is understood and well considered.
3. The domestic abuse hub within the MASH ensures a timely and comprehensive response to children and their families where domestic abuse is a concern.
4. When children are referred to the MASH for escalating mental health concerns and suicidality, their needs are triaged by the children's mental and emotional health team, which provides consultation, support and advice to the partnership to help reduce risk and inform sensitive work with children. The breadth of

work offered by the service is impressive and has supported a growing confidence in practitioners supporting children and identifying self-harm as a safeguarding issue.

5. When social workers in the MASH identify safeguarding concerns for children, a daily multi-agency meeting takes place to consider the social worker recommendation for a strategy discussion. This can lead to an unnecessary delay in decision-making for some children. The rationale for decisions to overturn the initial recommendation are not always clear or recorded. For some children, there are delays in strategy meetings taking place. When strategy meetings are held, they are mostly well attended by professionals, who share appropriate information to inform risk assessments and next steps. Plans recorded at the end of strategy meetings do not always specify short-term safety planning and next steps to inform a subsequent investigation.
6. The quality, timeliness and depth of child protection investigations are inconsistent. For some children where investigations are joint with the police, there is a small delay in them first being seen due to police availability. Some investigations are incident-focused and lack an assessment of wider needs.
7. Assessments and plans are of variable quality and impact. Some assessments provide a comprehensive picture of the child, which subsequently informs plans to address complex needs. However, other assessments do not capture the views of non-resident parents or the impact of interventions that have previously been tried. For a small number of children, child protection planning has not made enough difference in improving their day-to-day lives. For some children, child protection plans are ended prematurely and the subsequent support provided to them as children in need is insufficient. Consequently, some children experience repeated interventions and have a long history of involvement and neglect before they receive the help they need.
8. Most children are seen regularly by their social workers. Inspectors saw many examples of meaningful, creative direct work with children, conveying the child's voice, informing their plans and helping to make a positive difference to their lives. However, some children have experienced too many changes in social worker.
9. Practice within the Children with Disabilities service is also variable. For some children, highly imaginative work and persistence are used to address their needs and ensure the best outcomes. Weaker practice includes some assessments and plans that are too narrowly focused and do not consider the wider needs of other children or adults in the family.
10. The introduction of a pre-birth specialist role is having a positive impact in the early identification of concerns, assessments and interventions for unborn children. Tracking of unborn children, along with advice and support to social workers, ensures that work is progressed at pace. Appropriate support is identified for birth parents and parallel plans considered when required.

11. The oversight and response to children when they go missing have been strengthened since the last inspection. Comprehensive performance information is used effectively to provide managers with oversight of children who go missing and ensure that appropriate actions are taken when situations escalate. The completion of return home interviews to understand risks and inform planning is low. When return home interviews are completed, they are comprehensive and provide a strong sense of the child's experience, and the reason and circumstances leading to the missing episode.
12. Children identified as at risk of harm outside of the family benefit from support and intervention from a specialist team. Assessments provide a clear understanding of risk, including any wider risk to brothers and sisters. Clear, realistic and jargon-free safety plans address immediate safety and are used effectively to inform plans to reduce risk. Visits to children are purposeful, targeted direct work is undertaken and reachable moments or key opportunities are used well to further engage with and support children.
13. Management oversight and the effectiveness of practice for children in pre-proceedings have been significantly strengthened since the last inspection, but there remains some inconsistency. The duration of pre-proceedings is reducing and overall practice is more focused. This has enabled an increasing number of children to remain at home safely and be diverted from care proceedings. The quality of pre-proceedings assessments has improved. Letters before proceedings clearly outline the local authority concerns, the support offered to families and next steps. Some letters are not written in a style that helps parents to clearly understand what is required. A small number of children remain in pre-proceedings for extended periods of time. Long gaps between key meetings taking place and lags in assessments being completed contribute to delay in these cases.
14. Children living in private fostering arrangements benefit from comprehensive assessments and support from social workers.
15. An ever-increasing number of children are electively home-educated in West Sussex. The local authority has good oversight of elective home education. There has also been an increase in children missing education. Sometimes, this is because elective home education has not been successful. The local authority has recently further strengthened how it tracks and responds to children missing education.
16. The management and oversight of allegations against professionals are effective.
17. When children present as homeless, many benefit from a joint housing assessment and are appropriately supported to return to their family home. For some children, their vulnerability and circumstances are not well understood. Children are not routinely or clearly provided with information to inform them of

their rights and entitlements. This means that some children miss out on the benefits of having care-leaver status and support as they move into adulthood.

The experiences and progress of children in care: good

18. When children come into care, it is for the right reasons. Over time, their circumstances improve and the vast majority make good progress. For a small number of children, the decision to bring them into care is not taken quickly enough.
19. The quality and timeliness of care proceedings for children are not yet consistently good. The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service and the judiciary report provide a variable but improving picture of practice. The local authority recognises this as a practice area in need of ongoing improvement. Decisions to place children with their parents in care proceedings are well considered and supported. For complex situations, multi-agency working is well coordinated. This is less effective when older children opt to return to their parents' care in an unplanned way.
20. Concerted efforts are made by social workers to support birth parents to look after their children. Effective and intensive support to families by Solutions workers prevents some children from coming into care and enables children to return home from care when it is safe to do so. There is a strong ethos of securing permanence for children within their families and wider network wherever possible. Family members who are willing to provide ongoing care are considered promptly.
21. Many children have benefited from a stronger approach to permanence planning and the creation of a dedicated team to help take this forward. This area of work is becoming increasingly robust and embedded but there remains some variability in the frequency, quality and impact of permanence planning for all children. For example, the number of children living in permanent long-term foster homes and benefiting from the security and stability this brings has increased significantly, but some children are yet to have their permanence agreed and celebrated. Early permanence planning is a strength and well considered. An increasing number of children benefit from living in Fostering for Adoption arrangements. This is having a significant, positive impact on children who are placed at a younger age, enabling them to grow strong attachments to their forever families.
22. While most children in care benefit from stability and are living in homes that meet their long-term needs, a small number of children experience several placements when they first come into care before being matched with long-term carers. For a few of these older children, a lack of suitable emergency placements when they first come into care means that they are spending a short period of time living in hotels or rented accommodation while more appropriate arrangements are sought. In these emergency situations, locality

- risk assessments are not always clear or well recorded. Leaders took steps to rectify this during the inspection.
23. A small and reducing number of children live in unapproved kinship arrangements. These arrangements are appropriately considered to be in the children's best interests. Where needed, steps are taken to mitigate vulnerabilities and provide additional support. Senior managers closely oversee and monitor children in these arrangements.
 24. Most children benefit from having their care arrangements reviewed regularly. Children's plans are informed by an up-to-date assessment of their needs and focus on the support they require to help them make progress. For a minority of children, their plans are too broad and have long timescales for completion.
 25. Many children benefit from having a consistent independent reviewing officer, who knows them well. Children are encouraged to (and do) attend and participate in their reviews. Key professionals are not always in attendance, but reports are provided. For some children, the absence of professionals is at their request. Records of reviews are captured in a letter written directly to the child. Most are child-centred and sensitively written, providing an informative and accessible account so that children can understand the decisions that are made for them. Records of reviews and plans for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are more complex and less accessible due to an extensive and repeated explanation of triple planning.
 26. Unaccompanied children seeking asylum receive strong support from the dedicated social work team, which has the breadth of knowledge necessary to support children in the complex area of seeking leave to remain, alongside managing the impact of trauma, learning a new language and coming to terms with a new culture. Social workers have ready access to high-quality and sensitive interpreters who ably assist them in ensuring that children and young peoples' experiences are understood.
 27. Children are seen regularly and in line with their changing needs by their social workers, who know them well. Some children continue to experience changes in social worker and, for a minority of children, this impacts on their engagement with the social worker and the progression of their plans. However, this is an improving picture.
 28. Records of visits to children are warmly written and capture the child's voice as well as observations of the child's presentation by the social worker. Children and young people are actively engaged in their care planning. The child's voice is strong in their records and well considered at key decision-making points. Social workers use a wide range of purposeful, age-appropriate activities and creative direct work to engage with children.
 29. Life-story work is evident, and most children have a clear understanding of why they are in care and what is happening to them. The quality of life-story books

is variable but includes some strong examples that draw on key interests of the child to personalise and engage them with their story.

30. Children’s participation and influence in service delivery and practice have improved significantly since the last inspection. Children’s voices are heard, and actions progressed via an active and engaged Children in Care Council.
31. While there have been improvements since the last inspection, there continue to be significant shortfalls in the timeliness of assessing children’s initial health needs, despite senior management oversight in children’s services and health. This means that, when children first come into care, their health needs are not fully understood. Most children benefit from comprehensive annual health assessments of their needs and their physical health needs are well met. An increasing number of children have access to a dentist, but this remains an ongoing area of focus.
32. For many children, there is evidence of strengths and difficulties questionnaires being completed but there is limited consideration of these in subsequent planning. Some children are accessing therapeutic support via an independent fostering agency or residential placement but, for others, there is a very long wait for specialist therapeutic support and assessments of neurodiversity. Leaders are aware of this and are exploring alternatives to address the need. Positively, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive timely support through the specialist CAMHS team to address the trauma they have experienced.
33. Children have opportunities to participate in a wide range of activities and hobbies that reflect their interests and abilities. Careful consideration is given to the arrangements for family time, which is appropriately informed by the child’s best interests, and wishes.
34. The virtual school actively monitors children’s attendance and academic progress, and mostly intervenes when needed. A minority of children are not accessing appropriate education provision, either because they are awaiting an education, health and care plan or because a suitable provision has not been identified. Provision for post-16 has been strengthened. The virtual school now continues to work with young people until they reach the end of Year 13, regardless of when they turn 18.
35. When children go missing, social workers go the extra mile to support them, and social workers have a good awareness of their children and an understanding of the risks they might be exposed to. However, the completion of timely return home interviews and the subsequent impact on planning are limited.
36. Mothers who have previously had children removed from their care benefit from some exceptional and tenacious interventions and support by practitioners to improve future outcomes for them and their children.

37. Foster carers benefit from a varied training offer to support them in meeting children's needs. However, sometimes there is a delay in being able to access the relevant mandatory courses. Not all connected carers are clear in their understanding about what this arrangement means for them and the children they care for.
38. The local authority has a strong and effective relationship with the regional adoption agency (Adoption South East). The quality of assessments presented to the adoption panel is of a high standard, ensuring the best possible matches for children. Adoption support plans for some younger children are too generic. Careful consideration is given to matching and the support required to enable children to move into their adoptive families. Plans for children are reviewed and amended in line with their changing presentation and needs.

The experiences and progress of care leavers: requires improvement to be good

39. For many young people, the period of handover between children's social workers and personal advisers is too short. Despite an aim for personal advisers to be allocated to young people at 17.5 years of age, too many young people are allocated a personal adviser close to their 18th birthday. This means that young people have a limited opportunity to build a trusting relationship with their personal adviser. For some young people, this limits joint planning and does not support their move towards adulthood effectively.
40. Most young people have access to their key documents as they turn 18 but, for a small number of young people, this is not timely.
41. Pathway plans are completed collaboratively with the young person and many capture the young person's words and views. Some pathway plans are updated every six months but the updating of young people's plans when circumstances change is less evident. Elements of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking care leavers' pathway plans are generic and not written in accessible language. This is a particular concern as English is not their first language and the plans include detailed information to explain entitlements depending on the outcome of their pending asylum claim. While not yet live, the pathway plan template has very recently been refreshed and co-produced with young people. The revised template asks more specific questions and is outcome- and goal-focused in approach.
42. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people are well supported through their asylum claim, including attendance at substantive interviews and appointments for biometrics. However, when they are given leave to remain, those who are living in block contract accommodation are given three months' notice to move. This is a vulnerable time for young people and, for a small number, their progress is hampered by this change in circumstance, environment and support provided, as they are moved away from the networks they have already developed.

43. Personal advisers can access a range of housing for young people. Most care leavers are living in accommodation suitable for their needs, where they feel safe. Young people are encouraged to stay put with their foster carers where appropriate and inspectors saw evidence of lifelong links between young people and carers as they moved further into adulthood. One young person described themselves as staying there long into the future, 'until I am an old man'. Links with housing are being further strengthened. A joint housing protocol is under development to promote a consistent approach from district councils to all young people in the county.
44. Young people's views are actively sought using a variety of different communication methods. Personal advisers are committed to ensuring that young people's needs are met. In times of need or crisis, personal advisers are highly responsive and available, ensuring that young people are appropriately supported. Workload pressures mean that some personal advisers do not always see young people when things are going well, and this restricts a more consistent and proactive level of support.
45. Many young people, including those in custody, are participating in education, employment or training. Young people are well supported to move from education to work and vice versa when requested. Some young people who are not in education, employment or training are actively supported to return by their personal adviser. For example, a personal adviser strongly advocated for and supported a young person when their university place was under threat. However, other young people do not have a clear support pathway to achieve their ambitions. While the virtual school has extended some support for care leavers post-Year 13, it is underdeveloped. A bridging course run jointly with the University of Chichester has supported some young people into apprenticeships and further education courses where no prior education attainment is needed.
46. Young people know how to contact their personal advisers and there is a well-publicised and used duty system.
47. Too few care leavers aged over 21 are actively supported by the local authority. The local authority website for care leavers is clear that support is available until the age of 25 years. However, only a small number of young people aged over 21 are actively open to and supported by the local authority. Leaders are aware of this and currently contacting the 300 young people closed to the service to ensure that they are aware of the offer available to them.
48. Young people are actively involved in the development of council initiatives. Care leavers have a strong, committed and effective participation group and they told inspectors of the direct influence they have had in shaping and developing the service. For example, they have co-produced the revised pathway plan template, been involved in the recruitment of staff, facilitated training across a number of key professionals, and are active participants in and co-chair the Corporate Parenting Panel and subgroups.

49. The local offer has recently been refreshed and developed, in co-production with the Care Leavers Advisory Board. There is a vibrant and comprehensive website which provides lots of useful information. However, some areas of the local offer are discretionary, and not open to all as they are dependent on a young person's current circumstances and where they live, for example regarding access to leisure services and Wi-Fi. This is compounded by different approaches of individual districts within the county. Care leavers told inspectors that the cost-of-living crisis is a big worry for them. Personal advisers know how to access various charitable funds to support young people and the local authority has just introduced an annual clothing allowance to support young people.
50. Most young people have access to their health histories and are registered with universal health services. The effectiveness of mental health support for care leavers as they transition from child to adult services is inconsistent. Some young people have good access to specialist mental health services when needed, but others are closed to CAMHS at age 18 and signposted to other services, which hinders their access to therapeutic support or diagnostic assessments.
51. Responses to young people at risk of exploitation or harm are mostly well considered and proportionate. Young people are supported by their personal advisers to work through issues that are causing them distress, drawing on other specialists within the team when needed, such as in relation to housing support.
52. Care leavers who are parents receive sensitive work to address their own needs as well as their children's needs.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: good

53. A cohesive and effective senior leadership team, supported by corporate and political leaders and united by a shared vision, has made significant improvements to practice since the last inspection in 2019.
54. A root and branch review of the whole service began with a clear determination to shift the organisational culture to ensure that children are kept at the very centre of everything. A co-produced logo, 'Children First', encapsulates this. This change has been felt by children and care leavers and was a strong feature of inspector conversations with practitioners. Leaders recognised that the wholesale change could not be achieved all at once and have incrementally and successfully built the foundations for improvement.
55. The introduction of a service-wide practice model has been carefully considered and phase one successfully implemented. Phase two is now underway and includes increasing the number of specialist adult practitioners to support families. The implementation of and training in the model have provided a

service-wide platform for a common strengths-based language and a consistent way of working with families. Leaders are aware that expectations for recording have been challenging to implement, and they have a plan to review and streamline children's records.

56. Governance arrangements are strong, multi-layered and informed by the widespread use of accurate performance information. Operational boards interact meaningfully to deliver a consistent approach.
57. Significant financial investment has supported several key improvements and transformational change but there remains variability in the quality of service children and their families receive. Leaders know the service well and are committed to persistently progressing realistic improvement plans.
58. The local authority works well with improvement partners and has been open to external scrutiny and support to strengthen practice. Well-established, comprehensive and effective quality assurance processes give leaders a clear line of sight to practice. The collaborative involvement of social workers in the process provides an opportunity for reflection and a sound understanding of 'even better if' to further improve practice.
59. The local authority acts as a committed corporate parent. Political and corporate leaders ensure that outcomes for children in West Sussex improve. Since the last inspection, leaders have prioritised the active involvement of children in care and care leavers in the decision-making and development of the service. A notable achievement is the meaningful roles and participation of children and care leavers in the Children First Board and Corporate Parenting Panel. Children and young people co-chair corporate parenting meetings and are actively involved in setting the agenda. Children told inspectors that their opinions are actively sought and heard, and are making a difference.
60. Strategic partnership-working is improving, with senior leaders meeting and seeking solutions to issues together, but the impact remains variable. A strategic partnership response (led by children's services) to the prevention of, and support following, teenage suicides was creatively and thoughtfully developed, and implemented effectively. Conversely, too many initial health assessments are delayed, there are long waiting lists for some CAMHS provision, and a lack of police capacity is impacting on the timeliness of some strategy discussions and child protection investigations.
61. In common with a number of other local authorities, the sufficiency of suitable homes for children is a real challenge. Leaders have actively responded to the challenge. Since the last inspection, a comprehensive fostering service review substantially improved the support and training available to foster carers. Subsequently, West Sussex has seen a significant increase in fostering enquiries and newly approved households. This, alongside significant financial investment in high-quality residential provision, has enabled more children to live closer to

- home. Despite this, there remains a shortage of foster carers to meet children's needs.
62. Leaders actively seek feedback from practitioners and adopt a solution-focused approach when there are areas of concern or barriers to practice. This has contributed to a palpable improvement in staff morale and enabled them to put children first, as they share this vision with each other and the leadership team.
 63. Social workers find supervision to be reflective and helpful. Records of individual supervision are of variable quality and the subsequent impact is sometimes limited in progressing children's plans. Records of group supervision provide a greater depth of hypothesis, reflection and, therefore, value in understanding the child's experience and progressing their plans.
 64. Senior leaders recognise that some children have experienced too many changes in social worker and that caseloads have been too high in some teams. The recruitment and retention of staff have been a strong and clear priority and a whole-service endeavour. This has improved retention and recruitment in the past six months.
 65. Social workers, managers and other practitioners within the service benefit from a wide range of training and development opportunities. Career progression is actively encouraged and supported. A management assessment programme has provided managers with an understanding of their strengths and areas of practice that they would like to develop. Equally, there is a clear staff development programme, known to staff so that they know what they need to do to achieve career progression. Practitioners feel well supported and valued by managers and leaders in West Sussex.



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Governance Committee: Review of Webcasting

Background

- 1 Webcasting is important for open and transparent government and increasing access to democratic processes. The Council has been webcasting meetings since February 2008 and, since September 2021, there has been a presumption that all meetings of the County Council, Cabinet, scrutiny committees and the Planning and Rights of Way Committee are webcast. Other committees can be webcast at the request of their chairman and vice-chairmen where there is good reason, such as when matters of significant public interest are due to be discussed.
- 2 In May 2022, the Governance Committee agreed that Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) meetings should be webcast for a trial one-year period. This was at the request of the HWB Chairman to help raise the profile of the Board and its role as a forum for partners to discuss plans to improve the health and wellbeing of the residents of West Sussex.
- 3 The Governance Committee has reviewed the webcasting statistics at the end of the one-year pilot. The data shows relatively low numbers of live views (an average of 19 for three meetings), but significantly higher archive views (an average of 191), so a relatively high number of views with an even balance between viewers who were internal to the Council and external viewers.

Proposal

- 4 It is recommended that the HWB be added to the list of meetings where there is a presumption that they be webcast. This does not mean that all meetings must be webcast and would not preclude future HWB meetings being held at community-based venues which do not support webcasting. The addition to the list of meetings to be webcast can be met from within existing resources. This requires a minor amendment to Standing Orders as set out below:

4.06 Meetings of the County Council and some committees are webcast and the following provisions will apply. There is a presumption that all meetings of the Cabinet, scrutiny committees, *the* and Planning and Rights of Way Committee *and the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board* will be webcast. Other committees can be webcast at the request of their chairman and vice-chairmen.'

Recommended

That Health and Wellbeing Board meetings be added to the list of meetings in Standing Orders where there is a presumption that they will be webcast.

Pete Bradbury

Chairman of the County Council

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Background papers: None

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Report of Urgent Action: Regulation 19

- 1 Under regulation 19 of the The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 the County Council is required to receive a report from the Leader on any decisions taken under regulation 11. These are key decisions which were not in the Forward Plan and which needed to be taken with less than five clear days' notice. Such urgent decisions can only be taken with the agreement of the relevant scrutiny committee chairman or, in his or her absence, the Chairman of the County Council.
- 2 Such action is avoided wherever possible as it circumvents the normal mechanism for publication of decisions for ensuring that members have the opportunity to comment before decisions are taken.
- 3 However, on occasion this was not possible and the County Council is asked to note the following decision which has been taken by the appropriate decision-maker, in consultation with the relevant members.

Award of Contract: Support Services related to Financial Assessments

- 4 Up until August 2020, financial assessments of Adult Social Care customers were provided as part of a contract delivered by Capita Business Services. Since this date, financial assessments and re-assessments have been undertaken in-house.
- 5 During 2021/22, the service was impacted by a high level of staff vacancies and there has been a delay in the processing of assessments for new adult social care customers and the annual review for existing customers. Since the transfer of the service from Capita Business Services in August 2020, work has been underway to review, develop and deliver an improved operating model. The new operating model is required to modernise the service and support the need to fully assess all new clients, re-assess all customers at the annual review time in preparation for the anticipated Social Care Reforms (cap on care) which were, at the time, planned for October 2023.
- 6 Additional resources were required to implement the new operation model and market research at that time identified only one potential provider, Civica, who were appointed under appropriate authority via a single tender. Civica successfully undertook that phase of the work which has now concluded, and the new operating model is in the process of being implemented.
- 7 The plan is also to change processes such that, from April 2023, all financial details for every customer will be held within Mosaic – the County Council's Adult Social Care system. This is on track to be achieved and will improve the processing times for all new assessments and annual review of assessments.
- 8 However, there remains a significant backlog in the processing of existing assessments. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Property, with the agreement of the Director of Law and Assurance and the Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee, has therefore approved a decision published on 7 March 2023 to award a further contract to Civica for support to administer the backlog of financial assessments for Adult Social Care customers that remains.
- 9 Notice of the decision did not feature in the County Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions because it was not anticipated that the final cost of the contract would

exceed the £500,000 key decision threshold. An urgent decision was required because there remains a significant backlog in the number of financial assessments waiting to be processed. Additional support is required and the Council's existing support provider, the proposed contractor, has confirmed that additional capacity can be provided immediately by their ready-trained staff.

Paul Marshall

Leader

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Cabinet Report: Delivering Our Council Plan 2021-25

This report sets out the key strategic decisions, policy and programme initiatives, consultations, government announcements and key events within each Cabinet portfolio area to deliver our strategic priorities.

Leader – Paul Marshall

- The Leader attended a **[Business Hothouse: end of programme celebration](#)**, hosted by the University of Chichester, at the Butlins conference centre on the 27 April. The programme ran from 2020 to 2023 providing extensive support across the county for those considering starting a business and for existing businesses looking to adapt, innovate, or grow. The programme was funded through £5.5m of European Regional Development Funds allocated to the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership geography, with match funding from West Sussex local authorities. The total programme value was just under £10.9m. The event highlighted the challenges arising from the pandemic, lessons learnt, and successes. The programme had more than 750 West Sussex beneficiaries, including around 500 businesses and 250 people considering starting a business. Grants were given to more than 100 West Sussex businesses, totalling just under £1.3m. The programme overall is estimated to have had a £144m economic impact.
- The County Council achieved Gold Award status in August 2020 on the **[South East Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association \(SERFCA\) Employer Award Programme](#)**. On 21 March, the Leader attended a **Gold Leadership Luncheon for South East Gold Award holders** at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. The event included presentations on army and private sector approaches to leadership, networking and idea sharing with other attendees, discussions and Q&A sessions in pursuit of employer support for defence. Attendance at events such as these ensure that the Council continues to provide a consistent, high-quality service for the armed forces family as part of the commitments in the **[West Sussex Armed Forces Covenant \(PDF, 1.1MB\)](#)**.
- The Leader, in consultation with his Cabinet, has established a cross-cutting **Executive Task and Finish Group (TFG) on Careers and Skills**. The purpose of the TFG is to provide feedback on the opportunities for the Council as an employer to reset its role on careers and skills in West Sussex. The TFG will consider the role of apprenticeships and internships in providing career pathways. The TFG will also consider opportunities for vulnerable adults to be further supported into meaningful employment. The considerations will fully comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics therein. The TFG will report back to the Leader at the end of June.
- Following the **recent local elections, the Leader will meet district and borough council leaders** to build on the strong foundations already in place, hear about new and renewed ambitions; to discuss shared priorities and areas of mutual challenge. These conversations will continue the ongoing collaborative working between the councils as we work together to serve the same residents, communities and businesses.

Adults Services - Amanda Jupp

- The County Council has commissioned [Carers Short Breaks](#) to help deliver the Adult Social Care Policy priorities to support independence and assist residents to remain in their own home. Over 1,000 **family and friend carers** were consulted in the development of the current [West Sussex Carer Strategy](#). A key message was that more affordable day respite was needed. As a result, contracts have been awarded for the provision of respite care to commence from April. Services will focus on providing family and friend carers with much needed short breaks.
- As co-chairman, the Cabinet Member regularly attends the [Learning Disability Partnership Board](#) which works to improve the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families in West Sussex. People with learning disabilities attend the Board, as equal partners, helping to lead the work. The other co-chairman to the Board is elected from the Self Advocacy Groups. Each board has a theme and the most recent meeting (9 February) focus was 'on doing things differently'. This included a presentation on Individual Service Funds feasibility (ISF) work and a chance for Board members to feedback. An ISF is where the customer chooses the support provider, having a say over how support money is spent.
- Adults' Services recently held a **Staff Conference themed, 'Working Together'** which recognising staff achievements with a focus on wellbeing and resilience. The Cabinet Member and the Director of Adults and Health introduced the day that saw around 250 staff attend. Workshops were provided on Putting People at the Centre of Care, Equality, Inclusion and Belonging, Working with Health, and Working in Co-production and a key note speaker, [Kev House](#), spoke on flourishing in an ever demanding world. Presentations were filmed, as well as the question-and-answer session so the content of the day can be shared with all adults services staff following the event. Due to its success, a further conference will be planned for next year to be held in the north of the county, reaching out to those staff unable to attend this year.
- Drafted in partnership with care providers, the County Council has published its ['Market Sustainability Plan' \(MSP\)](#), which focuses on addressing sustainability issues across care markets and confirms its intention to target resources at areas requiring development such as, complex care, extra care, supported living and enabling people to remain living in the community. Strengthening the care workforce and supporting providers to improve the quality of care is also a key focus of the MSP, which will build on the existing work. The County Council has been involved in partnership with **West Sussex Partners in Care (WSPiC)**, to shape the training offer that is provided to external care providers, as well as to continually advise and influence to achieve care for all. WSPiC recently celebrated this year's excellence achieved by individuals working in social care at the '[West Sussex Care Accolades](#)'. Twenty-one finalists were invited to a celebratory evening ceremony at the Chichester Park Hotel.

Children and Young People, Learning and Skills (Lead Member for Children) – Jacquie Russell

- All five of the **County Council's open Children's Homes continue to be rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted** following the outcome of the most

recent inspections. [Bright Star](#), a home which provides permanent accommodation and short breaks for children with complex physical and learning needs, has maintained a rating of 'Outstanding'. [Breakwater](#), a home that supports children who have social, emotional and mental health needs, has been rated 'Good'. Both homes have benefited from the investment programme to refurbish and renovate the County Council's in-house residential provision to ensure a range of accommodation and support can be offered to meet the varying needs of children across the county.

- The County Council has [published a new Education and Learning Strategy 2023-25](#) that aims to broaden the skills, ambitions and opportunities for all children, young people and the most vulnerable adults. The Strategy is underpinned by seven key themes, developed following input from partners and stakeholders, that contribute towards achieving the education and learning goals and ambitions for the next three years and set the foundations to meet the national education policy ambitions for 2030.
- A **new school for children with special educational needs and disabilities** (SEND) will be built following the [County Council's successful bid to the government's free school building programme](#). The new school will provide 130 places for children aged from four to 18 who have autism spectrum and social emotional and mental health needs. These additional places will contribute to meeting a key priority for the Council that all children have the opportunity to fulfil their potential regardless of their needs.

Community Support, Fire and Rescue – Duncan Crow

- [West Sussex Trading Standards](#) has been undertaking test purchasing exercises with child volunteers across the county to uncover businesses selling age restricted products to children. West Sussex Trading Standards has a 'zero tolerance' approach to the sale of alcohol to children. Alcohol Licence Reviews will be requested for anyone found to have [broken the law](#) and during January to March five businesses saw their licence suspended or even withdrawn entirely. Anyone who believes a shop is selling alcohol, tobacco, vapes or knives to under 18s is asked to [report it online to West Sussex Trading Standards](#).
- The Cabinet Member opened the [Crawley Library - Business and Intellectual Property Centre](#) on 25 January which offers valuable support to the county's many entrepreneurs with help and advice to make sure their businesses have the best chance of success. The **Section 106 West Sussex Library Improvement Project** has also been ongoing with the aim to improve services by the end of March. Various works have been undertaken at local libraries in Crawley, Horsham, Hassocks, Durrington, Chichester, East Grinstead, Haywards Heath, Shoreham and Littlehampton. Projects have included the installation of meeting pods, refitted children's areas, retail areas and reconfiguration of space for community support groups such as Citizens Advice, also tourist information, reshelving and flexible furniture, whole library upgrade and installation of study spaces.
- **Fire stations in Burgess Hill, East Grinstead, Haywards Heath and Shoreham** will now provide an immediate wholetime firefighter response capability from 7 am until 7 pm, seven days a week. Outside of these times the stations will continue to be served by retained (on-call) firefighters, who will

provide cover between 7 pm to 7 am, seven days a week. The changes will provide greater flexibility and capacity for completing vital prevention and protection work, such as carrying out [Safe and Well Visits](#), delivering community safety events, and working with businesses to support their fire safety responsibilities. The enhancement will also improve the service's emergency response times by 13 seconds to all incidents across West Sussex which delivers on the second strategic priority as set out in our [Community Risk Management Plan 2022–26](#).

- From 1 April West Sussex and Brighton & Hove Coroner's jurisdictions merged to form one jurisdiction known as **West Sussex, Brighton & Hove Coroner Service**. The Coroner's Office now formally sits with West Sussex County Council (the obligation under the Coroners and Justice Act is that each local authority still has the responsibility to supply the service). Physical offices remain in both Horsham, Chichester and Woodvale, Brighton and the Senior Coroner remains appointed by West Sussex County Council. The coroner's officers have also moved over to the County Council in an agreement by both local authorities. Amalgamating the systems will greatly improve the efficiency of how deaths are reported, recorded, and managed. The comments of the public using both services have been very positive. The West Sussex Senior Coroner, Coroner's Officers and the Administrative Support Teams will continue to give careful consideration and attention to meeting the specific needs of residents throughout the area.

Environment and Climate Change (and Deputy Leader) - Deborah Urquhart

- The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has published final annual results for local authority collected waste for 2021/22 which demonstrates the County Council's [increased recycling rate and that the County Council has risen to fourth position](#) out of 29 disposal authorities in England. Landfill is reported at 7% for West Sussex, the lowest on record.
- [Re-Energise Manor Royal](#) is a new local energy community (LEC) working on behalf of businesses to attract investment into Manor Royal in Crawley and deliver new clean energy projects for the business district, such as roof-mounted solar panels and batteries to store clean electricity. The County Council played a leading role with the Manor Royal Business Improvement District in creating the county's first business led LEC, which launched in March. In addition, the LEC, which has already approved its first new solar PV system, has been shortlisted for a national award by the Association of Decentralised Energy.
- [Solar Together Sussex](#) enables small and medium sized businesses to sign up for high quality and competitively priced solar panels, battery storage and electric vehicle charging points. The '**Let's Go! Net Zero**' programme has been launched by the County Council and the district and borough councils to support businesses who are at the very early stages of their low carbon journey or who are unsure how to start. Six Green Business Champions will support the programme and showcase exemplar green businesses through a series of demonstrator events. Further details as well as information about other carbon cutting stories is on the [Business West Sussex Low Carbon and Green Business Support](#) page, where you can also sign up to receive the Green Business Matters newsletter.

Finance and Property – Jeremy Hunt

- In February the County Council approved its [Council Plan, revenue budget and capital programme for 2023/24](#). Work is already underway on planning the 2024/25 budget, as well as looking at how the County Council will balance its books over the medium term. In [December 2022 the Government published a policy paper](#) which included its funding expectation for 2024/25. However, there remains a high level of uncertainty from 2025 onwards. Over the next few months officers will be reviewing their economic assumptions and spending pressures, as well as assessing any financial risks and how these will be managed. An update on the medium-term financial position will be presented to members at the Member Development Session on 19 July. The commencement of the full budget reporting process, including scrutiny, will begin in the autumn.
- Both the [West Sussex County Council accounts for 2021/22](#) and the [West Sussex Pension Fund accounts for 2021/22 \(PDF, 4MB\)](#) were signed off with an 'unqualified opinion' on 28 February. The County Council remains one of the few authorities which has published its 2021/22 accounts. The delay was due to a national issue relating to the accounting treatment of infrastructure assets. Following publication of the updated Code by CIPFA and a temporary change in accounting treatment from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, both in December 2022, the County Council was able to satisfy the audit requirements. Work has now commenced on producing the draft annual statement of the 2022/23 accounts for both the County Council and the West Sussex Pension Fund. These are expected to be published by the statutory deadline of 31 May. Following the usual audit process, final accounts and the External Auditor's report will be presented to the Council's Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee.

Highways and Transport – Joy Dennis

- The [Highway and Transport Delivery Programmes](#) identify capital highways infrastructure maintenance and transport improvement schemes for delivery during 2023/24 and beyond. In terms of scale and value, these are probably the most significant the authority has undertaken; capital funding required for delivery is £36.484m (not including major road projects). The funding is predominantly received from the Government for roads maintenance and transport improvements, and this is supported by additional County Council funding and developer contributions. Scheme delivery has already started.
- The County Council has been awarded further funding to deliver more [Electric Vehicle \(EV\) chargepoints across the county](#) for residents, both on-street and within car parks. This brings the total funding achieved to £6.9m and will enable the installation of more than one thousand chargepoints. Residents and other stakeholders will soon be invited to provide feedback on proposals for the next phase of proposed sites.
- School Streets trials are to be undertaken at three schools with a planned start in September. A '**School Street**' is a timed road closure where traffic is restricted (applies to school and through traffic) at school drop-off and pick-up times. The aim is to create a safe, healthy and pleasant environment which has cleaner air and less traffic congestion and to encourage families to walk, scoot and cycle to school.

- Signs have been placed on **School Keep Clear** markings ('zig zags') outside of six schools on a trial basis with the aim of discouraging parking. The signs have an emotive caricature design of a child with the message 'Please Don't Stop Here'. Communication to raise awareness of the trials will be undertaken by the schools and will remind parents and carers not to park or stop on the zig zags when dropping off or collecting children.

Public Health and Wellbeing – Bob Lanzer

- **National No Smoking Day** took place on 8 March. This year's campaign focused on brain health and the link between smoking and dementia, with the message that stopping smoking improves brain health and reduces the risk of dementia. The national campaign encouraged smokers to 'Never give up giving up' and signposted them to the [NHS Better health Quit Smoking website](#). The County Council supported the campaign locally in West Sussex, with public health and communications teams working together to share key messages with residents and communities via social media and local networks, raising awareness of free support from [local stop smoking services](#), including tailored advice from trained advisors in local Wellbeing teams, GP surgeries and pharmacies. A [short video](#) has also been produced featuring a case study of 'Andy' who successfully gave up smoking with the help of the West Sussex Wellbeing Service.
- The County Council's Public Health Directorate is funding access to the '[Gro health' app](#) in response to increasing numbers of people who are overweight or obese, in addition to a range of existing funded weight management services available via [West Sussex Wellbeing](#) and the NHS. Gro Health will offer an additional local programme for those wanting access to free digital support who are not eligible for the NHS digital weight management offer ([eligibility criteria](#) available). It is the first time that people in West Sussex have been offered free access to such an innovative digital service for weight management without a GP referral. The number of adults who are overweight or obese in West Sussex has increased from 61.6% in 2019/20 to 63.8% in 2020/21 and 23.3% were classified as being obese. Gro health provides tailored support for individuals for 12 months and is available in 19 different languages. It can be accessed online using a phone, tablet or computer, without the need to download any special software, and can be accessed via free apps available for both iPhone and Android for those who wish to download them.
- Part of the [West Sussex Wellbeing Programme](#), funded by West Sussex Public Health, **Crawley Wellbeing**, based at [K2 Crawley](#), offers a free, friendly and impartial service to support people who live or work in West Sussex, to make positive improvements to their physical and emotional health and wellbeing. On 2 March, the service launched a new [Wellbeing Mobile Unit](#), enabling it to be more accessible than ever before, visiting local neighbourhoods throughout Crawley. Individual appointments and information are available for a range of health and wellbeing issues, including help to stop smoking, drink less alcohol, and advice on how to lose weight, as well as how to get more active, and eligible residents will be able to have an NHS Health Check. It will also promote health and wellbeing campaigns be able to visit workplaces as part of a workplace health programme and appear at community events. The new mobile unit has been jointly funded by Crawley Borough Council in partnership with the County Council as part of the West Sussex Wellbeing Programme.

Support Services and Economic Development – Steve Waight

- The County Council is committed to leading West Sussex initiatives to improve digital connectivity, as set down in [Our Council Plan \(2021-25\)](#) and [Economy Plan \(2021-24\)](#) and will soon be publishing its **Digital Infrastructure Strategy**. This will detail plans to ensure connectivity is future-ready and capable of underpinning a strong and vibrant economy that attracts businesses and people to visit, live and work in West Sussex. The Strategy will highlight this exciting journey into the digital future and also serve to invite partners to work creatively with the council to drive digital connectivity forward at scale and pace.
- As part of work to inform the Council's move toward **Smarter Ways of Working** the Cabinet Member recently visited Bridge House, Durrington to see how the two floors of office space, refurbished at the taking of the lease in 2021, are functioning to support the council's new ways of working. The office spaces have been specifically designed to support team collaboration and face to face meetings, including with the public, and also include modern equipment for virtual and hybrid meetings. Staff feedback on the working environment has been mostly positive and will inform future office refurbishments undertaken by the council.

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Background papers

None

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