

To all Members of the County Council

An ordinary meeting of the County Council will be held at **10.30 am** on **Friday, 13 October 2023** at **County Hall, Chichester PO19 1RQ**.

Agenda

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Members' Interests**

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

3. **Minutes** (Pages 7 - 26)

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

4. **Appointments**

To consider any proposed changes to appointments. Any proposals will be circulated and changes will take effect from the end of the meeting.

5. **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.

6. **Governance Committee: Changes to the Constitution** (Pages 27 - 40)

The Council is asked to consider a number of minor changes to the Constitution including changing Standing Orders to limit other business at the annual budget meeting and changes to the terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee, in the light of a report by the Governance Committee.

7. **Corporate Parenting Report for the Children We Care For and Care Leavers: September 2023** (Pages 41 - 84)

The Council is asked to consider and note the report of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

8. **West Sussex County Council's Armed Forces Covenant 2022/23** (Pages 85 - 88)

The Council is asked to consider and note the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2022/23.

9. **Report of Urgent Action** (Pages 89 - 90)

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

10. **Question Time** (Pages 91 - 96)

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 and relevant to the County Council. The report covers portfolio-related business since the meeting of the Council on 17 July 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.)

11. **Notices of Motion**

(a) **Motion on impact of the London Ultra-Low Emission Zone on West Sussex**

To debate the following motion, submitted by Cllr Burrett, notice of which was given on 26 September 2023.

'This Council values economic growth, and supporting our communities and small businesses in all their endeavours to grow.

This Council values the aspirations of the vulnerable in our communities to thrive, and places great store in its commitment to support them wherever it can.

This Council therefore deplores the action taken recently by the Mayor of London to extend the London Ultra-Low Emission Zone without regard to its adverse impact on the communities and small businesses of this county.

In particular it notes that:

- The London Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) was extended by the Mayor of London on 29 August 2023 to cover all London Boroughs.
- Many small businesses and traders rely on travel,

especially from communities in the north of the county, into parts of London now covered by ULEZ.

- Many West Sussex residents have a need to travel by car to outer London Boroughs for a variety of reasons, including work and specialist hospital appointments.
- Residents on lower incomes are more likely to own older vehicles and to be unable to afford to replace them.

This Council is concerned that:

- (1) No assessment has been produced by Transport for London of the volume of people living outside Greater London who are likely to be impacted by the ULEZ expansion.
- (2) People directly affected but living in West Sussex will not benefit from the mitigation package, and have no access to the diesel scrappage scheme for those on low incomes.
- (3) There will be a clear disproportionate impact on West Sussex small businesses, traders, and residents on low incomes who need to travel into Greater London, particularly at a time when cost-of-living pressures are already having an effect on them.
- (4) The ULEZ expansion could push congestion out of Greater London, making air quality worse in surrounding areas, including West Sussex.

In view of the above concerns, this Council resolves to ask the Cabinet to support the position taken by Surrey County Council and other affected local authorities in maintaining opposition to the ULEZ expansion, and asks the Leader to write to the Mayor of London, in the strongest terms, to ask him to reconsider his decision to expand the ULEZ zone in the light of the serious detrimental effects the expansion is now having on residents and businesses across the South East, including those in West Sussex, and especially those on low incomes.'

(b) **Motion on Support for Care Leavers**

To debate the following motion, submitted by Cllr Linehan, notice of which was given on 26 September 2023.

'The Independent Review of Children's Social Care headed by Josh McCallister published in May 2022 had a final report and recommendations that included:

"Government should make care experience a protected characteristic" and "New legislation should be passed which

broadens corporate parenting responsibilities across a wider set of public bodies and organisations.”

The Care Leavers service in West Sussex supports our young people to grow and develop into young adults successfully as they move towards independence and operates under a clear legislative framework provided by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

As corporate parents to the children and young people in our care, and care leavers, we in West Sussex take those responsibilities extremely seriously, as any good parents should.

But as West Sussex county councillors, we should go further and support the aspirations of Care Leavers, making sure that no Care Leaver is discriminated against, and that they have every opportunity to live fulfilling and successful lives without barriers.

This Council therefore recognises:

- That care leavers and those children who have been cared for are a group who are likely to face discrimination.
- That councils have a duty to put the needs of disadvantaged people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration with them and all our local partnerships.
- That any future decision with respect to services and policies by the County Council assessed through Equality Impact Assessments should also consider the likely impact on people with care experience.
- To formally call upon all other bodies and partners, locally and pan-Sussex to treat care experience in the same way as they do a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.
- For the Council to continue to proactively seek out and listen to the voices of Care Leavers when developing new policies based on their views.

This Council therefore calls upon the Leader and Cabinet to ensure the Council treats care experience as if it were a protected characteristic, to provide greater authority to employers, businesses, public services, and policy makers to put in place policies and programmes which promote better outcomes for care experienced young people.’

County Council concludes

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

Director of Law and Assurance
4 October 2023

Webcasting

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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 July 2023

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

Cllr Bradbury (Chairman)

Cllr Wickremaratchi (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr N Jupp
Cllr Albury	Cllr Lanzer
Cllr Ali	Cllr Linehan
Cllr Atkins, RD	Cllr Lord
Cllr Baldwin	Cllr Markwell
Cllr Boram	Cllr Marshall
Cllr Britton	Cllr McDonald
Cllr Burrett	Cllr McGregor
Cllr Cherry	Cllr McKnight
Cllr Chowdhury	Cllr Mercer
Cllr Condie	Cllr Milne
Cllr Cooper	Cllr Mitchell
Cllr Cornell	Cllr Montyn
Cllr Crow	Cllr Oakley
Cllr Dabell	Cllr O'Kelly
Cllr J Dennis	Cllr Oxlade
Cllr N Dennis	Cllr Patel
Cllr Duncton	Cllr Payne
Cllr Dunn	Cllr Pendleton
Cllr Elkins	Cllr Quinn
Cllr Evans	Cllr Russell
Cllr Forbes	Cllr Sharp
Cllr Gibson	Cllr Smith
Cllr Greenway	Cllr Sparkes
Cllr Hall	Cllr Urquhart
Cllr Hillier	Cllr Waight
Cllr Hunt	Cllr Wall
Cllr Johnson	Cllr Walsh, KStJ, RD
Cllr Joy	Cllr Wild
Cllr A Jupp	

20 Apologies for Absence

- 20.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Baxter, Cllr Bence, Cllr Burgess, Cllr Kenyon, Cllr Kerry-Bedell, Cllr Nagel, Cllr Oppler, Cllr Pudaloff, Cllr Richardson and Cllr Turley. Note: A number of members gave apologies due to a change in meeting date.
- 20.2 Cllr Markwell arrived at 12 noon. Cllr Joy gave his apologies and left the morning session at 12.20 pm. Apologies for the afternoon session were received from Cllr Britton, Cllr Crow, Cllr Marshall and Cllr Smith.

20.3 Cllr Evans was absent for the afternoon session. Cllr Markwell and Cllr Chowdhury left at 2.45 pm and 3.30 pm respectively.

21 Members' Interests

21.1 Members declared interests as set out at Appendix 1.

22 Minutes

22.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the County Council held on 26 May 2023 (pages 5 to 26) be approved as a correct record.

23 Appointments

23.1 The Council approved appointments as set out below.

Committee	Change
Governance Committee substitutes	Cllr Montyn and Cllr Sparkes in place of Cllr Hunt and Cllr Urquhart

24 Governance Committee: Severance Payments Procedures

24.1 The Council considered changes to the terms of reference of the Governance Committee and to Standing Orders in line with government guidance on severance payments to staff, in the light of the report by the Governance Committee (pages 27 to 32).

24.2 In response to a comment from Cllr Oxlade about whether the new procedure would have been triggered in previous years had it been in place, the Chairman said officers would respond to the member's request for information should he wish it.

24.3 Resolved –

That the proposed changes to the Governance Committee's terms of reference in the Scheme of Delegation and to Standing Orders, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

25 Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee: Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23

25.1 The Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee asked the Council to note the Scrutiny Annual Report which summarises the main activities of scrutiny, lessons learnt and any development issues identified during 2022/23 (pages 33 to 42).

25.2 Resolved –

That the Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

26 Standards Committee: Annual Report 2022/23

26.1 The Council noted a report from the Standards Committee on its activities for the period from April 2022 to March 2023 (pages 43 to 46).

26.2 Resolved -

That the report be noted.

27 Question Time

27.1 Members asked questions of members of the Cabinet on matters relevant to their portfolios, as set out at Appendix 3. This included questions on those matters contained within the Cabinet report (pages 47 to 52) and a supplementary report (supplement pages 7 and 8) and written questions and answers pursuant to Standing Order 2.38 (set out at Appendix 2).

28 Notice of Motion on Infrastructure Levy

28.1 The following motion was moved by Cllr Dabell and seconded by Cllr Baldwin.

'This Council notes that the County Councils Network has joined 29 other signatories in signing a letter to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, calling on him not to implement the proposed Infrastructure Levy, warning that it could result in less infrastructure being delivered, fewer affordable homes being built, and could impact negatively on housing delivery.

The Council shares these concerns, and believes that the proposed Levy will have an impact on securing much-needed community infrastructure, such as schools, roads and health facilities amongst others, with the required funding from housing developments not being secured as a result. The Council is also concerned that the detail of how the proposed Levy is expected to work could have unintended consequences which could actually lead to fewer new affordable homes being built.

The Council also notes that under the Government's proposals, county councils would no longer be statutory consultees with regard to future planning developments in their counties, meaning that local district and borough planning authorities would be able to ignore county council requests for developer contributions towards the vital infrastructure which new and existing communities will need as a direct result of those developments, including new schools, roads, public transport and active travel schemes, and new

community facilities such as doctors' surgeries and other health facilities.

The Council believes strongly that county councils should be statutory stakeholders in any future Infrastructure Levy scheme designed to respond to new infrastructure needs generated by housing development, to enable them to lobby, negotiate and advocate effectively on behalf of the communities they represent, to ensure that the needs of those communities are met in full in response to new development.

The Council therefore asks the Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities reiterating these concerns on behalf of the whole Council, and asking that the Infrastructure Levy is not implemented in its current proposed format.'

28.2 The motion was carried.

29 Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs

29.1 The following motion was moved by Cllr Lord and seconded by Cllr Condie.

'County and district and borough councillors across West Sussex are regularly approached by residents, parish, neighbourhood and town councils about potholes and the state of the highways locally. The transparency of priorities, intervention levels and programming is poor leading to residents believing that their roads are forgotten at the expense of other parts of the county.

The cold and wet weather of the past winter has caused huge damage to our roads which West Sussex County Council has struggled to fix in a timely manner. This has led to significant frustration amongst residents and occasional regrettable and unacceptable behaviour towards our hardworking highways officers and the Council's contractors.

Therefore, this Council:

- (1) Expresses its thanks to all officers who have worked diligently throughout the winter and spring to repair our roads and deal with resident frustration.
- (2) Asks residents to be mindful that the individuals on the frontline are not responsible for the policies that have caused the problems.
- (3) Declares that it no longer has confidence in the current model for highways repairs and therefore asks the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to:

- (a) Urgently review the contract, oversight and response to emergency repairs to ensure this Council is better able to manage winter pressures and the impacts of climate change.
- (b) Ensure that there is no perception of geographical preference in the prioritisation of repairs through greater transparency of data shared with councillors and residents.
- (c) Improve engagement with district, borough, town and parish councils on highway matters to aid knowledge sharing and transparency.
- (d) Explore how the Council could fund an alternative approach to repairs and pilot this with district, borough, town and parish councils who are willing to work together on this.'

29.2 An amendment was moved by Cllr Boram and seconded by Cllr Elkins.

~~'County and district and borough~~ councillors across West Sussex are regularly approached by residents, parish, neighbourhood, ~~and~~ town, **district and borough** councils about potholes and the state of the highways locally. ~~The transparency of~~ **Priorities**, intervention levels and programming **are misunderstood** ~~is poor~~ leading to **some** residents believing that their roads are forgotten at the expense of other parts of the county.

The cold and wet weather of the past winter has caused huge damage to our roads which West Sussex County Council, **as with all highway authorities**, has struggled to fix in a timely manner. This has led to significant frustration amongst residents and occasional regrettable and unacceptable behaviour towards our hardworking highways officers and the Council's contractors.

Therefore, this Council:

- (1) Expresses its thanks to all officers **and contractors** who have worked diligently throughout the winter and spring to repair our roads and deal with resident frustration.
- (2) Asks residents to be mindful that the individuals on the frontline are not responsible for the **complex set of factors** ~~policies~~ that have caused the problems.
- (3) ~~Declares that it no longer has confidence in the current model for highways repairs and therefore~~ **Asks** the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to:
 - (a) **Continue to** Urgently review the contract, oversight and response to emergency repairs to ensure this Council is

better able to manage winter pressures and the impacts of climate change.

- (b) **Maintain and enhance the current approach to data sharing with councillors and residents** to ensure that there is no perception of geographical preference in the prioritisation of repairs ~~through greater transparency of data shared with councillors and residents.~~
- (c) **Continue** ~~improve~~ engagement with district, borough, town and parish councils on highway matters to aid knowledge sharing and transparency.
- (d) Explore how the Council could **work** ~~fund an alternative approach to repairs and pilot this~~ with district, borough, town and parish councils who are willing to work together on **alternative practical value for money approaches which meet legislative requirements and our statutory responsibilities across the whole of the county** ~~this.~~

29.3 The amendment was put to a recorded vote under Standing Order 35.5.

- (a) For the amendment – 36

Cllr Albury, Cllr Ali, Cllr Atkins, Cllr Baldwin, Cllr Boram, Cllr Bradbury, Cllr Burrett, Cllr Cooper, Cllr Dabell, Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Duncton, Cllr Dunn, Cllr Elkins, Cllr Forbes, Cllr Greenway, Cllr Hall, Cllr Hillier, Cllr Hunt, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr N Jupp, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Linehan, 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.

- (b) Against the amendment - 15

Cllr Cherry, Cllr Condie, Cllr Cornell, Cllr N Dennis, Cllr Johnson, Cllr Joy, Cllr Lord, Cllr McKnight, Cllr Mercer, Cllr Milne, Cllr O’Kelly, Cllr Oxlade, Cllr Quinn, Cllr Sharp and Cllr Walsh.

- (c) Abstentions – 1

Cllr Gibson

29.4 The amendment was carried.

29.5 The motion, as amended, was put to a recorded vote under Standing Order 35.5.

- (a) For the motion – 36

Cllr Albury, Cllr Ali, Cllr Atkins, Cllr Baldwin, Cllr Boram, Cllr Bradbury, Cllr Burrett, Cllr Cooper, Cllr Dabell, Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Duncton, Cllr Dunn, Cllr Elkins, Cllr Forbes, Cllr Greenway, Cllr Hall, Cllr Hillier, Cllr Hunt, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr N Jupp, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Linehan, 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.

(b) Against the motion - 2

Cllr Johnson and Cllr Sharp.

(c) Abstentions - 14

Cllr Cherry, Cllr Condie, Cllr Cornell, Cllr N Dennis, Cllr Gibson, Cllr Joy, Cllr Lord, Cllr McKnight, Cllr Mercer, Cllr Milne, Cllr O'Kelly, Cllr Oxlade, Cllr Quinn and Cllr Walsh.

29.6 The motion, as amended and set out below, was carried.

'County councillors across West Sussex are regularly approached by residents, parish, neighbourhood, town, district and borough councils about potholes and the state of the highways locally. Priorities, intervention levels and programming are misunderstood leading to some residents believing that their roads are forgotten at the expense of other parts of the county.

The cold and wet weather of the past winter has caused huge damage to our roads which West Sussex County Council, as with all highway authorities, has struggled to fix in a timely manner. This has led to significant frustration amongst residents and occasional regrettable and unacceptable behaviour towards our hardworking highways officers and the Council's contractors.

Therefore, this Council:

- (1) Expresses its thanks to all officers and contractors who have worked diligently throughout the winter and spring to repair our roads and deal with resident frustration.
- (2) Asks residents to be mindful that the individuals on the frontline are not responsible for the complex set of factors that have caused the problems.
- (3) Asks the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to:
 - (a) Continue to review the contract, oversight and response to emergency repairs to ensure this Council is able to manage winter pressures and the impacts of climate change.

- (b) Maintain and enhance the current approach to data sharing with councillors and residents to ensure that there is no perception of geographical preference in the prioritisation of repairs.
- (c) Continue engagement with district, borough, town and parish councils on highway matters to aid knowledge sharing and transparency.
- (d) Explore how the Council could work with district, borough, town and parish councils who are willing to work together on alternative practical value for money approaches which meet legislative requirements and our statutory responsibilities across the whole of the county.'

Chairman

The Council rose at 3.33 pm

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
9 – Question Time	Cllr Ali	Member of Crawley Borough Council
9 – Question Time	Cllr Boram	Cabinet Member for Community & Wellbeing at Adur District Council
9 – Question Time	Cllr Condie	Member of Burgess Hill Town Council
9 – Question Time	Cllr Elkins	Member of Arun District Council
9 – Question Time	Cllr Lanzer	Member of Crawley Borough Council
9 – Question Time	Cllr Mercer	Member of Horsham District Council and Chair of Orchard Hill College Academy Trust
9 – Question Time	Cllr Sharp	Member of Chichester District Council
10(a) – Notice of Motion on Infrastructure Levy	Cllr Ali	Member of Crawley Borough Council
10(a) – Notice of Motion on Infrastructure Levy	Cllr Atkins	Member of Worthing Borough Council
10(a) – Notice of Motion on Infrastructure Levy	Cllr Boram	Member of Adur District Council
10(a) – Notice of Motion on Infrastructure Levy	Cllr Condie	Member of Burgess Hill Town Council
10(a) – Notice of Motion on Infrastructure Levy	Cllr Elkins	Member of Arun District Council
10(a) – Notice of Motion on Infrastructure Levy	Cllr Gibson	Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy and Housing at Mid Sussex District Council, Member of East Grinstead Town Council, Worth Parish Council and Turners Hill Parish Council
10(a) – Notice of Motion on Infrastructure Levy	Cllr Johnson	Member of Chichester District Council
10(a) – Notice of Motion on Infrastructure Levy	Cllr Milne	Cabinet Member for Planning at Horsham District Council

Item	Member	Nature of Interest
10(a) – Notice of Motion on Infrastructure Levy	Cllr Oakley	Member of Tangmere Parish Council
10(a) – Notice of Motion on Infrastructure Levy	Cllr Sharp	Member of Chichester District Council
10(b) – Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs	Cllr Ali	Member of Crawley Borough Council
10(b) – Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs	Cllr Atkins	Member of Worthing Borough Council
10(b) – Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs	Cllr Boram	Member of Adur District Council
10(b) – Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs	Cllr Condie	Member of Burgess Hill Town Council
10(b) – Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs	Cllr Elkins	Member of Arun District Council
10(b) – Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs	Cllr Johnson	Member of Chichester District Council
10(b) – Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs	Cllr Lanzer	Member of Crawley Borough Council
10(b) – Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs	Cllr Mercer	Member of Horsham District Council
10(b) – Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs	Cllr Milne	Cabinet Member for Planning at Horsham District Council
10(b) – Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs	Cllr Sharp	Member of Chichester District Council
10(b) – Notice of Motion on Highways Repairs	Cllr Waight	Member of Worthing Borough Council

Written Questions: 17 July 2023

1. Written question from **Cllr Cornell** for reply by **Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills**

Question

The recent scrutiny of the 2021 re-design of early help services highlighted the lack of available funding for a pre-school outreach worker to identify need.

Given a key aim of the new service model is to 'Improve early identification; taking action to respond to problems before they are more difficult to reverse' and that a major re-design impact was the closure of 31 out of 43 Sure Start Centres across the county, can we look again at priorities and resources to ensure that pre-school children are not doubly disadvantaged in this way?

Answer

Early identification of pre-school children is a priority area of work for Early Help and supported by the work undertaken in Education and Skills.

There are a number of approaches taken to ensure there are strong links with other early years providers. Early Help is co-located in Family Hubs with midwives and health visitors which provides immediate opportunities to raise concerns and share resources. Health and early years providers are represented at the six locality partnership groups. In addition to this the senior advisors from the Standards and Effectiveness team, responsible for early years, also attend the groups. This ensures that issues relating to this cohort are visible, addressed and provide an additional link to Early Help, Social Care and Education and Skills.

In addition, there is further cross over with Early Help and Education and Skills in the provision of follow up for Free Entitlement. This work provides contact with families who are struggling through the direct follow up process.

The number of early years settings across the county are significant at over 500 meaning it is not possible to provide each setting with a named link worker within the resource available. However, the Early Years Childcare Advisors and SEND Early Years team both provide regular contact with settings.

2. Written question from **Cllr Gibson** for reply by **Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

Question

Speeding on 'rat-runs' is a key concern for residents in rural areas. This has been recognised through the commitment to tackle 'inappropriate use of unsuitable routes using behavioural initiatives' in the area transport strategies of the West Sussex Transport Plan 2022-36.

- (a) What form will these behavioural initiatives take and what progress has been made in their implementation?
- (b) How will the effectiveness of these behavioural initiatives be quantified?

- (c) Has the Council held discussions with Sussex Police regarding the use of Speed Indicator Displays with Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) capability and are these one of the initiatives being considered?
- (d) How is the 'inappropriate use of unsuitable routes' represented in the transport models used by the Council to assess the impact of traffic generated by new developments on the road network?

Answer

- (a) The scope of these initiatives is still being determined. The West Sussex Transport Plan (WSTP) is a 15-year plan and some initiatives, such as the one to tackle 'inappropriate use of unsuitable routes', need to be developed before they can be implemented. Initiatives will be progressed subject to funding and availability of resources.
- (b) The WSTP includes a range of measures and indicators that will be monitored and reported in the Annual Monitoring Report. These include the National Highways & Transport Public Satisfaction Survey, which includes overall satisfaction with highways and transport services benchmarked against other authorities. This can be supplemented with specific measures and indicators that will be identified at the scoping stage of projects to develop behavioural initiatives.
- (c) The Sussex Safer Roads Partnership (partners include the County Council and the police) has a recently convened an Innovations Group whose purpose is to identify and trial new ways of reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured. Although no decisions have been made at this stage, the use of speed indicator devices with number plate recognition is being considered alongside other competing interventions.
- (d) There is no single up-to-date transport model with county-wide coverage. Instead, a range of transport models are used to assess the impact of new developments on the road network. The area of coverage and capabilities of the transport models depend on their intended purpose. If the transport model is capable of assessing impacts on roads with lower classifications, which may be considered to be 'unsuitable' depending on the proposed development, they will typically be reported in a transport assessment or study.

3. Written question from Cllr Oxlade for reply by Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Question

Residents are concerned about the Council's approach to pothole repairs; many would consider criteria of no intervention until a pothole measures 40 mm by 10 mm as unacceptable. Can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- (a) How the parameters for pothole repair have changed in the county over the last 15 years (how many changes, what they were and when they occurred) and are any changes planned at present?
- (b) How do the Council's pothole repair parameters compare with those of neighbouring councils?

- (c) Surrey County Council has a five-year investment programme which will see £188m invested in improving and maintaining roads and pavements over five years. To what extent does the level of investment by West Sussex County Council for repairing potholes, improving and maintaining roads and pavements (over and above funding provided by central government) compare with other local authorities in the South East on a per kilometre of road basis?

Answer

- (a) Over the last 15 years West Sussex County Council (WSSC) has operated under two key approaches to the response and treatment of safety defects. The Safety Plus Regime was introduced in 1997 and was replaced with the current Highway Inspection Manual in May 2021, to align with the change in Code of Practice to 'Well Managed Highways'. The criteria in both regimes are largely the same. The more significant amendments were the introduction of a risk-based approach, which is an approach that aligns with the latest Code of Practice, as well as the introduction of a new 24-hour response which gives more flexibility and agility to the response to safety defects. No changes are planned but the approach is periodically reviewed.
- (b) The majority of Highway Authorities have a minimum intervention level of 40mm in depth for potholes in the carriageway, with a minimum width of between 150mm and 300mm. WSSC operates a minimum width of 150mm and, for contrast, Hampshire County Council and East Sussex County Council (ESSC) have a minimum width of 300mm before they intervene and raise a pothole for repair.

For the most urgent repairs, neighbouring local authorities and WSSC all have a two-hour response. For their lowest risk safety defects, WSSC and ESSC have a 28-day response time. In comparison, Surrey has a 20-day response time, with caveats that this will extend to six months if the area of concern will be rectified by a larger permanent solution. Hampshire County Council has a 14-day response time but similar to Surrey, this can be extended to two months, depending on the type of defect and risk to the highway user.

- (c) The level of funding for highways maintenance inevitably varies from one authority to another, as does the level of need. WSSC has spent approximately £146m of capital on highway maintenance activities over the past five years. Historical funding covers all highways maintenance activities i.e. resurfacing roads and pavements, bridge repairs and maintenance of other highway assets.

4. Written question from Cllr Pudaloff for reply by Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Question

Does the Cabinet Member take the view that existing legislation governing transport accessibility, such as the 2010 Equality Act, is adequate?

- (a) What steps is the Council taking to improve accessibility in the transport sector specifically for disabled people who are adults of working age and children and those with long-term health conditions?

- (b) What steps are the Council taking to work with health and social care providers to ensure that public transport is co-ordinated with other services?
- (c) What is the Council's timeline for implementing the 20's Plenty (20mph speed limit) broader implementation to reduce social and health inequalities?
- (d) What are the Council's plans to educate the public about the importance of accessible transportation?

Answer

National legislation is a matter for the Government. However, legislation affecting buses has ensured that local buses have been fully accessible for years, though coaches have proven more challenging due the nature of their construction and use. The County Council has sought to use accessible minibuses across most of its fleet to ensure they can be used by all passengers. Across the wide range of publicly available transport which is not within the Council's influence such as taxi, rail or air, the Cabinet Member recognises that users' experiences can vary depending on the type of transport used and location where it is accessed.

- (a) The County Council has a statutory duty to provide off peak free bus travel for entitled disabled people. However, the County Council does more than this and provides free travel 24/7.

Some of the Bus Services Improvement Programme funding is being used to launch new fully accessible digital demand responsive transport services allowing fully inclusive services in hard-to-reach areas in July 2023. These will complement the conventional bus services, many supported financially by the County Council, which also works closely with local bus operators through the Enhanced Partnership. Local buses must meet accessibility standards.

The BusIt campaign is encouraging older and disabled people to use buses again following the pandemic. Numbers of free bus passes have increased.

- (b) Through the Enhanced Partnership, bus services are being promoted to health and social care providers offering cost-effective or free transport solutions for staff, patients and carers, a sustainable alternative to the car where appropriate. In addition, community transport providers are supported through the County Council's Service Level Agreement with Community Transport Sussex who develop, support and deliver community transport services across the county, sometimes in partnership with key organisations such as Age UK to tackle social isolation.

We work with bus companies to co-ordinate buses with key destinations such as hospitals to aide staff and visitors have services when they are most needed.

- (c) There is not currently a programme for widespread implementation of 20mph speed limits in West Sussex. All applications submitted from the community will be carefully considered.
- (d) The County Council works with a number of organisations, including Passenger Focus, in the delivery of information and promotions by the County Council and partners, emphasising the importance of transport solutions being accessible to all.

5. Written question from **Cllr Quinn** for reply by **Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

Question

In an answer to my written question at December 2022 full Council, I understood the pothole repairs backlog was cleared and that between 2018 and 2022 the County Council had paid out on just 14% of claims, an amount over £274,800 for damage to vehicles/persons. A recent Highways email highlighted a significant rise in such claims being received. Could the Cabinet Member tell me:

- (a) What assessment has been made of the cost impact this increase will have on Council finances?
- (b) And confirm, between April 2022 to April 2023:
 - The number of claims made
 - The number of claims settled by payment
 - The percentage of claims settled by payment
 - The number and percentage of claims that were unsuccessful
 - The total amount paid out
- (c) Does the Cabinet Member believe it reasonable for claimants to wait at least 24 weeks, or six months, for their claim to be processed given that in some cases motorists may be without transport?

Answer

- (a) The increase in claims is likely to lead to an increase in the level of compensation paid but this will still be manageable within allocated budget provision.
- (b) Between April 2022 to April 2023:
 - **the number of claims made:** total claims received between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 is 2,475. However, these have not all been processed
 - **the number of claims settled by payment:** 78. However, not all claims have been processed
 - **the percentage of claims settled by payment:** of the claims processed, 60%
 - **the number and percentage of claims that were unsuccessful:** 31 and 40%. These figures will change as claims are processed
 - **the total amount paid out:** £30,219. This figure is likely to increase once all claims have been processed
- (c) The County Council has not been able to increase the staffing resources to process claims and this has led to an increase in the time taken to process

them. In most, if not all, cases claims are based on repairs having been carried out, the claim being for the cost incurred.

6. Written question from Cllr Sharp for reply by Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Question

Concerning the Draft Active Travel Strategy:

- (a) What methods will be used to assess and evidence to Active Travel England, and the public, that attitudes towards Active Travel have changed? Have before and after surveys taken place?
- (b) Walking levels have been static for several years. Urban sprawl means residents make fewer journeys on foot. Fewer journeys are made on foot in rural areas. How will the Cabinet Member replace medium (two to five-mile) car journeys by walking and measure success?
- (c) Research has shown most people are reluctant to walk more than 20 minutes for everyday journeys. Is this concentration on walking limiting modal shift by failing to provide for safe (electric) bike journeys?
- (d) Have people with disabilities, different ages and users of cargo bikes and bikes used as mobility aids been involved in co-producing the Strategy? If not, why not?
- (e) What contingencies have been built into the Strategy if it does not fulfil its aims?

Answer

- (a) The draft Active Travel Strategy consultation planned for September will give insight into public views regarding active travel priorities. In addition, on-street sensors have been installed at new active travel schemes and School Street sites that will provide valuable before and after data. In relation to School Streets, there is also travel data from schools that will continue to be monitored.
- (b) Whilst levels of walking have been static at a national level, the Department for Transport reports that the number of people who walk at least once a week for any purpose has increased in recent years. The figure for West Sussex is higher than the national average and neighbouring counties. The County Council continues to develop significant numbers of longer distance active travel schemes e.g. the Strategic Transport Investment Programme schemes, three Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan schemes, and Arundel/Ford and Chemroute. Beyond this, shorter distance walking naturally feeds into public transport therefore medium/longer trips may be met and improved via the County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan work. All schemes will be monitored for their effectiveness. In addition, consideration will be given to replacing the county plan length of cycleway implementation target with one which measures usage more directly.

- (c) This is unlikely to be the case. Active Travel England suggest that 90% of the Government's target will be achieved via walking and wheeling. The Government's objectives relate to short distance (less than 20 minutes) journeys in towns and cities. These include a target in relation to increasing the proportion of children aged five to 10 who walk to school and encouraging people who already walk to walk more, or people who do not walk to walk. This is likely to result in greater modal shift than increasing cycling levels for longer journeys where part of the issue is that e-bikes, whilst excellent, remain unaffordable for many people.
- (d) The forthcoming public consultation will give an opportunity to input into the draft Active Travel Strategy. All suggested amendments will be considered. In addition, the Local Transport Note 1/20 design guidance upon which the strategy is based was produced with people with different needs and types of bike.
- (e) This is to be confirmed given the strategy is currently draft and subject to consultation. An action plan and strategy governance are to be agreed following formal adoption of the strategy post consultation.

7. Written question from Cllr Wild for reply by Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Question

The County Council currently uses glyphosate as a weed killer. However, it is known to harm wildlife and bees in particular, and bees especially are needed for helping in our food production.

Could the Cabinet Member advise me when the County Council will be removing this toxic poison from use?

Answer

The product used to control weed growth in the county is a glyphosate-based herbicide called Trustee Amenity. It is applied at a concentration of 3.5% (in water) and is considered to be a low risk to bees when used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

There are currently no other cost-effective alternatives available to treat such significant areas of network. However, the situation is being continually monitored as officers are working with other local authorities with a view to considering any alternative methods of weed control should they become available.

Last year, hot-foam removal of weeds was trialled. Whilst this method of removal contains no herbicide, the hot water/foam is likely to kill insects it comes into contact with. It takes considerably longer to apply, and the foam system uses significantly more fuel and water than conventional treatment. It is estimated that it could cost around 37 times more than conventional treatment.

Glyphosate is currently licenced for use in the UK until December 2025.

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Question Time: 17 July 2023

Members asked questions of members of the Cabinet. In instances where a Cabinet Member or the Leader undertook to take follow-up action, this is noted.

Leader

The Leader answered questions on the following matters:

Sussex Visitor Economy Initiative, from Cllr Chowdhury, Cllr Lord and Cllr Payne.

Let's Go! Net Zero, from Cllr Albury and Cllr Lord.

In response to a question from Cllr Lord, about how many businesses will be involved over the year of the initiative, the Leader agreed to respond on the scope of involvement.

Supporting the aviation ecosystem, from Cllr Boram and Cllr N Dennis.

Cabinet Member for Adults Services

The Cabinet Member answered questions on Learning Disability Week, from Cllr Patel.

The Cabinet Member agreed to send details of day services and activities for those with learning disabilities to all members.

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills

The Cabinet Member answered questions on the following matters:

6.5% uplift for school staff, from Cllr Johnson and Cllr O'Kelly.

In relation to the recently announced uplift, 3.5% of which will need to be found from underspends in schools' existing budgets, Cllr O'Kelly asked for details of those underspends and the Cabinet Member agreed to let her know.

School bursaries, from Cllr Condie.

In response to a question about whether bursaries, used to assist with transport costs, have been withdrawn from specialist schools, the Cabinet Member said she would find out and respond.

Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue

The Cabinet Member answered questions on the following matters:

The new Training Centre and Fire Station for Horsham, from Cllr Burrett, Cllr Montyn and Cllr Pendleton.

Community Risk Management Plan and the risk of wild fires near domestic properties, from Cllr Oakley.

Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

The Cabinet Member answered questions on the following matters.

Let's scrap fly-tipping campaign, from Cllr Burrett, Cllr Greenway and Cllr Lord.

Drainage problems after heavy rain and impact on highways, from Cllr Chowdhury and Cllr Oakley.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies, from Cllr Cherry, Cllr Hillier and Cllr Lord.

Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

The Cabinet Member, answered questions on the following matters:

Drainage problems after heavy rain and impact on highways, from Cllr Chowdhury and Cllr Oakley.

Written question 3, pothole repairs, from Cllr Ali, Cllr Condie, Cllr Oxlade and Cllr Walsh.

In relation to paragraph (a) of the written answer, the Cabinet Member agreed to let Cllr Oxlade have details of when the current depth criterion of 40 mm for pothole repairs was introduced and the changes in criteria over the last 15 years.

In relation to a comment from Cllr Condie that the depth criterion for pothole repairs on cycle ways is 30 mm compared to 40 mm for roads, the Cabinet Member said she would review the situation.

In response to a comment by Cllr Walsh about a road in his division (Norfolk Road, Littlehampton) with defects in an area where tarmac is laid over concrete being evident for two years, the Cabinet Member agreed to look into it.

Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group, from Cllr Greenway and Cllr Sparkes.

Active Travel Strategy – Cycling and Walking Task and Finish Group and written question 6, from Cllr Condie, Cllr O’Kelly and Cllr Sharp.

Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing

The Cabinet Member answered questions on the following matters.

Disposable vapes, from Cllr Ali, Cllr Boram, Cllr Lord and Cllr McKnight.

NHS long-term manpower plan, from Cllr Walsh.

In response to a question about the Government’s plans to introduce a second tier of medical qualifications, the Cabinet Member said he would respond to Cllr Walsh’s request for a view of the likely impact on residents from a public health perspective.

Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development

The Cabinet Member answered questions on the following matters.

Digital infrastructure in the horticultural sector tour, from Cllr Atkins, Cllr Gibson and Cllr Lord.

Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group, from Cllr Greenway.

Governance Committee: Changes to the Constitution

County Council February Budget meeting

Background and context

- 1 Each February, the County Council considers the Council Plan and budget to deliver it for the forthcoming year. This is a major debate each year and all members have the opportunity to speak without time limits. This is the only full County Council meeting debate with no time limits on speeches.
- 2 It is recognised in the Constitution that the plan and budget proposals will generate a lengthy debate and that there will be little time for other business. Standing Order 2.49 states that there is a presumption that notices of motion will not be considered at the February meeting. Question Time has not taken place at the last two budget meetings due to a lack of time.
- 3 The annual budget meeting typically lasts from 10.30 am to 4.30 pm (based on the average between 2017 and 2022). However, in February 2023, the meeting was unusually long, not finishing until 5.23 pm. The Committee has therefore reviewed how well the rules for this debate serve the interests of the Council and those with an interest in following the Council's business and has considered options for managing the length of time of the meeting and is proposing a minor change to Standing Orders.

Proposal details

- 4 Given the importance of the annual budget debate and the need to ensure an opportunity for as many members as possible to participate, it is proposed that Standing Orders be changed to remove non-urgent business from the agenda, to include Question Time, petitions, annual reports and scrutiny debates. The proposed amendments to Standing Orders are **set out at Appendix 1**. Officers will continue to try to avoid including any other items for decision on the agenda.
- 5 The Committee also considered options for managing timings at the budget meeting such as setting an overall time limit for the budget debate or an end time or setting individual time limits on speeches. However, it was felt that it would be wrong to artificially limit speeches and that members with points to make should be able to make them.
- 6 The Chairman and the Leader will encourage cabinet members to make sure their contributions are as succinct and relevant as possible but they should be given the opportunity to say what they want to achieve in the coming year. Leaders of opposition groups also need the opportunity to say what they would do differently and should have the same time available as those proposing the plan and budget.
- 7 The Committee therefore recommends that the current arrangements should be maintained where the Chairman manages the meeting through using his discretion to direct speakers to avoid overly lengthy, repetitive speeches and ensure the content is relevant to the debate.

Recommended

- (1) That Standing Orders be amended to limit non-urgent business at the annual budget meeting, as set out in Appendix 1;

- (2) That the current arrangements where the Chairman manages the meeting using his discretion to direct speakers to avoid overly lengthy, repetitive speeches and ensure content is relevant to the debate, be maintained;

Corporate Parenting Panel terms of reference

Background and context

- 8** The County Council's Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) is a multi-agency advisory Panel that meets at least four times a year to ensure the voice of the child is at the centre of services for children looked after and care leavers.
- 9** Following the updated terms of reference that were agreed by the County Council in December 2021, some further minor amendments are proposed to the membership to ensure the Panel is focused and effective. The revised terms of reference are **set out at Appendix 2**.

Proposal

- 10** The proposed changes to the Corporate Parenting Panel terms of reference, as set out at Appendix 2, are summarised below:
- (a) **Membership:** It is proposed that it is no longer required that a Foster Panel member be a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel, but that there is regular liaison with the Chairman of the CPP and all Foster Panel members so that any relevant feedback can be passed to the Panel. Foster Panel members will also be invited to attend Panel meetings for relevant agenda items. Seven councillors sit on the CPP, which must include the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, two representatives from the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee and at least one minority group member.
- (b) **The Promise:** The Promise is a partnership commitment to support young people and care leavers added to the terms of reference in 2021 given the key role of CPP to monitor its delivery. The Promise has since been reviewed by children and young people to ensure it is relevant and influences the Service provision. As part of this the name has been updated to 'Our Aspiration' and the terms of reference updated to include this new version.
- 11** The Corporate Parenting Panel Chairman and the Assistant Director (Corporate Parenting) support the proposal. The four Foster Panel members were invited to comment on the proposal. The proposed terms of reference have also been shared with the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Recommended

- (3) That the revised terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel, as set out in the Constitution, as set out at Appendix 2, be approved; and

Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee terms of reference

Background and context

- 12** The Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee (RAAC) is proposing changes to its terms of reference to:

-
- Formalise a referral process within its terms of reference so that matters of concern identified by the Committee can be referred to the relevant forum within the Council;
 - Update out-of-date references to legislation and reword some paragraphs to better reflect the work of the Committee; and
 - Ensure that the Committee follows the latest Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA) guidance on independent co-opted members and on the description of the role of an audit committee.

Proposal details

- 13** The proposed changes to RAAC's terms of reference in the Scheme of Delegation are **set out at Appendix 3**. The proposals do not change the role of the Committee, nor add any new areas of responsibility.
- 14** The changes reflect advice of senior County Council officers to ensure the terms of reference reflect the duties of the Committee and comply with legislation. They should provide greater transparency of the role of the Committee to elected members, officers and the public.
- 15** RAAC also wishes to increase the provision for independent co-opted members following advice from CIPFA that at least two such appointments should be made where possible, to build continuity and broaden the range of experience brought by independent co-opted members.

Recommended

- (4) That the proposed changes to the terms of reference of the Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee, as set out at Appendix 3, be approved.

Pete Bradbury

Chairman of Governance Committee

Contact Officer: Tony Kershaw, Director of Law and Assurance, Tel: 033 022 22662, tony.kershaw@westsussex.gov.uk

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Change to Standing Orders re Council budget debate
- Appendix 2 – Proposed changes to Corporate Parenting Panel terms of reference
- Appendix 3 - Proposed changes to the Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee terms of reference

Background papers:

None

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Change to Standing Orders re Council Budget debate

(Addition shown in bold, italic text)

Reports to Council

- 2.27 Subject to the waiver in Standing Order 4.12, a printed copy of the plans and strategies which are proposed to that meeting for inclusion within the Policy Framework or any proposed amendments or variations to them, shall be sent to every member and, so far as possible, shall be forwarded with the summons to attend such meeting. The papers shall include any recommendations on the plan or strategy made by the Cabinet, and by a scrutiny or non-executive committee, where the recommendation has not been accepted by the Executive in whole or in part, and any recommendations made by the Governance Committee on the Constitution.
- 2.28 All recommendations which are to be submitted to the County Council, so far as practicable, shall be set out clearly in the form of resolutions to be considered by the County Council.
- 2.29 The agenda shall include:
- (a) a report from members of the Cabinet, in accordance with Standing Order 2.35.
 - (b) any reports from a scrutiny committee for debate.
 - (c) a report from a non-executive committee on any matter where officers' recommendations have not been accepted, except where the chairman of the relevant committee considers that the non-acceptance or variation of an officer's recommendations does not warrant a report to the County Council.
- 2.30 No minutes or reports which have not been circulated shall be considered at the meeting.
- 2.30a At the meeting of the County Council where the annual budget is considered, non-urgent business will not usually be included on the agenda. This includes Question Time, petitions, annual reports and scrutiny committee debates.***

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Proposed changes to the Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference

(Changes shown in bold, italic text with deletions struck through)

Corporate Parenting Panel

Our Vision:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of our children and young people.
- To encourage our children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings and to challenge each other if their voices are not actively listened to and acted on.
- To listen, hear and do something when our children and young people tell us things.
- To make sure our children and young people know how to access, and make the best use of, services provided by us as a local authority and partners.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for our children and young people.
- For our children and young people to be safe, and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and to prepare our children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- This will make sure that our children and young people are not placed at significant disadvantage when compared with the support any child or young person may receive from their family.

Our Aspiration Promise

OUR ASPIRATION
FOR CHILDREN WE CARE FOR AND CARE LEAVERS LOOKED AFTER BY WEST SUSSEX

This work is a partnership commitment to support young people in care and care leavers.
It has been written by young people in care, care leavers, professionals who work with them and the West Sussex Corporate Parenting Panel.

INVOLVING YOU
OUR ASPIRATION IS...

- to ask your views, listen and act on what you tell us;
- to give you information you need at the right time, to help you make the right decisions;
- to be a good friend; and
- to support you to access facilities, organisations and opportunities.

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS
OUR ASPIRATION IS...

- that you will have somewhere safe to live;
- to help you stay in touch with people who are important to you, and
- to support you to be happy and healthy.

SUPPORT AND ADVICE
OUR ASPIRATION IS...

- to avoid unnecessary changes;
- to make sure you know who will support you and that important people keep in touch with each other to help you;
- to provide access to the relevant services and resources for you;
- You will have a social worker and have access to other professionals you might need; and
- to support you to the best of our abilities, even when times are tough.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK
OUR ASPIRATION IS...

- we will help you develop skills for life and work;
- to celebrate your successes with you;
- to champion your education; and
- to help you get the qualifications, interview skills, training and opportunities you want.

PREPARING YOU FOR LIFE
OUR ASPIRATION IS...

- to put in place what you need when you leave care;
- to help you make a clear plan for your life ahead after care;
- to support you with your housing needs and preferences;
- to support you with your education and independence; and
- to support you in becoming a self-sufficient adult.

west sussex county council
Children first

Constitution

A multi-agency advisory panel to the Council with seven members of the County Council appointed from those with the most relevant experience but including the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills **and** at least one minority group member ~~and one from the foster panels~~. At least two County Council members of the Panel will also be members of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee. ***The Chairman of the Panel will liaise with the members on the Foster Panel at least every six months to receive any feedback that is relevant to the Panel. The Chairman may also invite a Foster Panel representative/s to a Corporate Parenting Panel meeting for relevant agenda items.***

The core membership of the Panel is set out below. The Panel can decide to invite representatives from across the Council and partner agencies as required, depending on agenda items.

Core Membership:

- Seven elected members including Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills
- Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leavers Advisory Board (CLAB) representatives – at least three from across the two groups
- Foster Carer
- Adopter
- WSCC Director of Children's Services
- WSCC Assistant Director (Corporate Parenting)
- Strategic leads for Health (WSCC & NHS – designated nurse)
- WSCC Strategic lead – Voice and Participation
- WSCC Strategic lead for Education (Head of Virtual School)
- WSCC Area team representation (Service lead for Corporate Parenting, ***Children with Disabilities, Children's Services Commissioning*** and other area service leads as required)
- WSCC Quality Assurance Service Manager
- WSCC ***Conference and*** Independent Reviewing Officer
- District and Borough Officer representative

The Chairman of the Panel is the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills, the Vice-Chairman to be appointed by the Leader. The Chairmean of the CiCC **and** of CLAB will be Co-Chairmean of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The quorum is four elected members (including the Chairman or Vice-Chairman), three CiCC/CLAB members and one Director or Assistant Director.

The Panel shall meet no less often than four times a year, with thematic workshops to be held between main Panel meetings if required.

Meetings will be held in private. Reports and minutes for the Panel will be reported in a confidential manner. A summary of the work of the Panel will be available to elected members and an Annual Report will be reported to full Council each year.

The agenda and supporting papers for the Panel meetings will be circulated to Panel members two weeks in advance of each meeting.

The Panel will set up sub-groups to carry out work on specific areas in relation to outcomes for our children and young people including, but not limited to, journey to

independence, education, health and wellbeing, **children with disabilities and children seeking asylum** and children we care for. These groups will report on their work to each Panel meeting. Each sub-group will include lead officers, an elected member and a representative from CiCC/CLAB. Each elected member will be assigned to a special interest area, based on their area of expertise, and attend the sub-groups relating to that area. Special Interest areas **include** are:

- Adoption and Fostering
- Education, Employment and Training
- Health (physical and mental wellbeing)
- Children placed out of county
- Children we care for and asylum-seeking children
- Care experienced young people
- Edge of care and residential

Purpose

- To act as a consultative panel for the Council and other professionals, to raise awareness of the Council's universal corporate parenting responsibilities and duties.
- To oversee the progress of our children and young people including all health and wellbeing needs (education, physical and mental health).
- To monitor the delivery of our '**Aspiration Promise**' and how we are ensuring our children and young people have the power to develop and influence the service.
- To ensure that all children, young people have a positive experience and that the strategy enhances their outcomes.
- To encourage all partners to work together (support and challenge each other) in the best interests of our children and young people.
- For frontline teams to be active members of the panel.
- To lead cultural and behavioural change to promote better outcomes for our children and young people, ensuring everyone is on a level playing field and is approached openly and honestly.
- To engage and hold all agencies to account (including; Children in Care Council (CiCC), County Council, District and Borough Councils, Education, Health, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Children's Social Care and voluntary organisations) for their role in the delivery of services to our children and young people.

Remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel

The Panel will:

1. Take responsibility for exploring the quality of services for our children and young people and produce an annual report.
2. To have a clear line communication with the full council and scrutiny (via the chairmen of the Panel) on matters of interest or those that require escalation.
3. Explore the priority needs for services for our children and young people, as a panel and make recommendations to the appropriate forums as required.
4. Celebrate successes of what has been achieved between panel meetings, what this has led to and the impact this has had on the lived experiences of our children and young people.
5. Maintain high values, treating all children and young people as if they were your own family, and make a positive difference, improving the outcomes for our

children and young people and those who use our services (both statutory and non-statutory responsibilities).

6. Produce a blog/newsletter with our children and young people after each meeting and share this with all other professionals and elected members.
7. Hold thematic workshops when required to focus on specific priorities/issues.
8. Ensure that the Panel maintains oversight of the County Council's placement strategy, understands placements and resources availability for children (both in and out of county) and how they are being used.
9. When actions are identified, these will be assigned to a specific person(s) to take forward and then reported back to the panel.
10. Receive feedback on the learning from children safeguarding practice reviews.

The Panel won't:

- Oversee specific pieces of work for individual children, acknowledging that area teams are responsible for this. However, the Panel will take responsibility for any themes that are identified and act on these immediately for a child.
- Be the main vehicle for the voice of our children and young people, this will be the responsibility of the Children in Care Council **and Care Leavers Advisory Board**. The Panel will however regularly listen, respect and act on the views of children and young people.

Proposed changes to the Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee terms of reference

(changes shown in bold, italic text with deletions struck through)

Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee

Constitution

Seven members of the County Council and ~~one~~ **up to two** non-voting co-opted independent members. Quorum is three members of the Council. The Chairman will be a minority group member in accordance with Standing Order 2.13.

~~**Note:** The purpose of the audit function of the Committee is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the County Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Council's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process.~~

The non-voting co-opted independent members should have experience of audit and financial management, preferably with knowledge of local authorities and will be appointed by the Committee on the recommendation of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee. The term of office is four years, renewable twice with the agreement of the Committee.

Role

The Committee's purpose is to provide oversight of the Council's systems of governance and risk management and its arrangements for financial control and compliance. Its role is to ensure there is sufficient assurance for governance, risk and control to provide confidence that arrangements are effective.

The Committee has oversight of internal and external audit helping to ensure there are adequate arrangements in place for internal and external challenge and public accountability.

CIPFA provides guidance on the role and work of Audit Committees which can be made available to County Councillors on request.

Terms of Reference

Audit Functions

1. To undertake the County Council's responsibilities to provide **ensure** an adequate and effective system of internal audit under the Accounts and Audit Regulations **2015** ~~2011~~.
2. To consider the Head of Internal Audit's annual report and opinion, and a summary of internal audit activity (actual and proposed) and the level of assurance it can give over the council's corporate governance arrangements.
3. To approve the internal audit ~~annual~~ work programme.
4. To monitor the effectiveness of the County Council's external audit

arrangements, including liaison between internal and external audit.

5. To monitor the implementation of recommendations **and actions** arising from the findings of ~~significant~~ audit work.
6. To consider the external auditor's letter, relevant reports, and ~~the reports~~ to those charged with governance. To maintain an overview of reports to the County Council from other external ~~inspection~~ agencies to see that these are considered and acted upon by the appropriate body within the County Council so far as necessary.
7. To commission work from internal and external audit **in line with the Committee's role.**
8. **To recommend to the County Council the approach, in line with legal requirements, for the appointment of the external auditor for the Council and, in consultation with the Chairman of the Pensions Committee, for the West Sussex Pension Fund** Liaise with the Independent Audit Appointment Panel as necessary over the appointment of the County Council's.

Accounts Functions

9. To consider and approve the annual statement of accounts, income and expenditure and balance sheet, or record of payments and receipts as required under the Accounts and Audit Regulations **2015** ~~2011~~ and the Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations 2008 as amended.

Treasury Management Functions

10. To receive quarterly compliance reports on treasury management performance against planned parameters.
11. To consider the wider issues of managing treasury risk including borrowing in the context of interest rate forecasts and the needs of the capital programme.

Corporate Functions

12. To agree revisions to the County Council's Standing Orders on Procurement and Contracts, Financial Regulations and Risk Management Procedures.
13. To oversee the production of the County Council's Annual Governance Statement, and to recommend its adoption **and to monitor the delivery of its action plan.**
14. To monitor the effective development of risk management, including annually agreeing the Council's risk approach as detailed in the Risk Management Strategy.
15. To monitor and approve any changes to the County Council's anti-fraud and corruption strategy **and Anti-Money Laundering Policy.**

Regulatory Functions

16. **To oversee and consider reports on the discharge of the County Council's regulatory functions and related statutory responsibilities in so far as these may fall outside the responsibility of the County**

Council's Executive.

- ~~1716.~~ To exercise the powers and duties of the County Council in relation to the approval of premises for the solemnisation of marriages and formation of civil partnerships under the Marriages (Approved Premises) Regulations 1995 as amended (delegated to the Assistant Director (Communities)).
- ~~1817.~~ To exercise the requirement under Regulation 9 of the Marriages and Civil Partnership (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 to hear and determine formal representations from applicants who have had an application refused or revoked and have requested a review to the Proper Officer for Registration. This power to be exercised by any three members of the Committee appointed by the Director of Law and Assurance after consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.
- ~~1918.~~ To make, amend, revoke or re-enact byelaws under any provision of any enactment (including a local Act), whenever passed, and Section 14 of the Interpretation Act 1978 (c.30).
- ~~2019.~~ To exercise the powers and duties of the County Council in relation to Petroleum Storage Certificates (delegated to the Assistant Director (Environment and Public Protection)).
- ~~2120.~~ To exercise the powers and duties of the County Council in relation to the Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations 2014 (delegated to the Assistant Director (Environment and Public Protection), including for any public hearing required).
- ~~2221.~~ To issue permits for operation of mini-buses under Section 19 Transport Act 1985 (delegated to the Assistant Director (Highways, Transport and Planning)).
- ~~2322.~~ To license the employment of children under Part II of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (c.33), byelaws made under that Part and Part II of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c.37) (delegated to the Assistant Director (Education and Skills)).
- ~~2423.~~ To issue, cancel, amend or replace safety certificates for regulated stands at sports grounds under Part III of the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 (c.27) (delegated to the Chief Fire Officer).
- ~~2524.~~ To issue, cancel or amend or replace safety certificates (whether general or special) for sports grounds under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (delegated to the Chief Fire Officer).
- 26. To receive and consider reports on the County Council's exercise of the powers available under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.**

Other

- 27. To refer matters of concern to the appropriate forum for consideration, such as another committee of the County Council.**
- ~~2825.~~ To review and adjust delegations to officers within the functions delegated to the Committee.

2926. To delegate powers, when appropriate and on the ***advice or*** recommendation of the Director of Law and Assurance, to another local authority including a borough or district council and to be able, subsequently, to review, amend or withdraw that delegation.

3027. To consider a petition in accordance with the Petitions Scheme in accordance with Standing Order 3.43(b).

Corporate Parenting Report for the Children We Care For and Care Leavers: September 2023

Background and Context

- 1** The County Council's Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) is a multi-agency Panel that meets at least four times a year to ensure the voice of the child is at the centre of services for Children We Care For and Care Leavers.
- 2** At the County Council meeting on 22 October 2021 a refreshed terms of reference for the CPP was agreed which updated the remit and purpose of the Panel and reviewed the membership to ensure it is focused and effective. The terms of reference have since been reviewed annually by the Panel and presented to County Council for agreement, with the latest update being considered as part of the agenda for this meeting.
- 3** In addition to the above, the terms of reference agreed to present a Corporate Parenting Report to the County Council on a yearly basis, to highlight the work of the Panel and the services to our Children We Care For and Care Leavers. This also recognises the collective responsibility of the Council and all members in their role as Corporate Parents.
- 4** The Corporate Parenting Report for Children We Care For and Care Leavers September 2023 is **set out at Appendix 1**. The report outlines the range of activities and impact of the Corporate Parenting Panel over the last year. It also provides a position statement on the development of the service over the last year, what progress has been made and the areas of focus for the next 12 months.

Recommended

That the Corporate Parenting Report for Children we Care for, as set out at Appendix 1, be noted.

Jacquie Russell

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills

Contact Officer: Daniel Ruaux, Assistant Director (Children's Social Care Corporate Parenting & Commissioning) – daniel.ruaux@westsussex.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Report for Children we Care For and Care Leavers September 2023

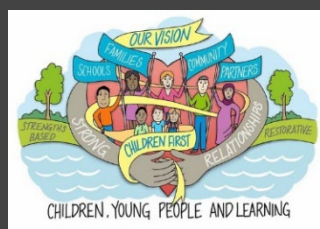
Background papers

None

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West Sussex Children, Young People & Learning Corporate Parenting Report for the Children we Care for & Care Leavers September 2023



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West Sussex Children, Young People & Learning Corporate Parenting Report for the Children we Care for & Care Leavers September 2023

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Corporate Parenting Annual Report, which details the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel and our services provided to our Children we Care for and our Care Leavers.

During the past year our Corporate Parenting Panel has continued to be mindful of the impact of Covid-19 pandemic in addition to the cost-of-living crisis, and the significance this has had on all local authority services and activities nationally. The role of 'Corporate Parent' is a collective responsibility of the council that we all have a duty to deliver. Many of our Children we Care for and Care Leavers have faced unique adversities and trauma that places them amongst the most vulnerable in our communities. We must continue to be bold, aspirant, and ambitious in our plans, ensuring we provide our children and young people with the nurture, love, care, stability, and support they need to help them achieve their ambitions.

Contributions from our children through the work of our Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Advisory board and Voice and Participation Service form an integral part of panel meetings and have significantly influenced West Sussex County Council's improvement journey. Our Children we Care for and Care Leavers voices keep us focussed on our children's real and lived experiences and influence the development of the council's services positively.

As corporate parents we all want the best for our children, we are proud of their achievements and remain focussed on providing them with the opportunities that will enable them to reach their potential and together we celebrate their successes. As a corporate parent I am proud of all our children and young people, and it has been one of my greatest privileges to have worked and to continue to work alongside them.

As a council it's so important that we take the necessary actions to be the best corporate parents we can and provide for our family in the most effective way possible. I am completely committed to doing everything I can to support our children and young people so that they can benefit from the many opportunities our council, communities and partners have to offer as we continue to build on the foundations formed across our improvement journey.

However, we cannot do this in isolation. We must all be united in this endeavour, from local business, District and Borough councils and statutory partners to our voluntary sector colleagues, and the families who can offer a foster home to our children who need one.

This annual report is a summary of the work presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel across 2022-2023, it is a celebration of the success and achievements of both our children and young people and staff. I would like to take this opportunity to thank panel members both past and present for their contributions to our continuing evolutionary journey.



Cllr Jacquie Russell
Co-Chairman of Corporate Parenting Panel and Cabinet Member for
Children and Young People, Learning and Skills, West Sussex County
Council

Directorate Summary

This report draws together the range of activities and impact of the Corporate Parenting Panel over the past year.

It has been an extraordinary period for all of us, particularly our children and young people. The challenges we have all faced during and following the pandemic and more recently due to the additional pressures of the cost-of-living crisis and national industrial action, have provided a sharpened focus for us as we have adapted to the impact of these and how we deliver services to the Children we Care for and our Care Leavers.

Since joining the council some 3 years ago, the centrality and importance of listening, hearing, and acting on the voices of our children and young people with board members has been one of the areas that has not only developed but is now embedding into all areas of work within our council.

Panel members have welcomed the opportunity to have both informal, formal, and themed discussions to support planned agendas as well as adhoc conversations as they occur in real time. We have ensured that local and national pressures have not prevented the improvement of services, and our leadership team remain committed to the promises and ambitions we have made to our Children we Care for and our Care Leavers.

Daniel Ruaux

Assistant Director, Children's Social Care Corporate Parenting & Commissioning
Children, Young People and Learning

Our Children First Vision & Principles



- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of our children and young people.
- To encourage our children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings a to challenge each other if their voices are not activity listened to and acted on.
- To listen, hear and do something when our children and young people tell us things.
- To make sure our children and young people know how to access, and make the best use of, services provided by us as a local authority and partners.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for our children and young people.
- For our children and young people to be safe, and have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and to prepare our children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- This will make sure that our children and young people are not placed at significant disadvantage when compared with the support any child or young person may receive from their family.

Our Aspirations

OUR ASPIRATION
FOR CHILDREN WE CARE FOR AND CARE LEAVERS LOOKED AFTER BY WEST SUSSEX

This work is a partnership commitment to support young people in care and care leavers.

It has been written by young people in care, care leavers, professionals who work with them and the West Sussex Corporate Parenting Panel.

INVOLVING YOU OUR ASPIRATION IS...

- to ask your views, listen and act on what you tell us;
- tell you what you need to know;
- to give you information you need at the right time, to help you make the right decisions;
- to be a good friend; and
- to support you to access facilities, organisations and opportunities.



HEALTH AND HAPPINESS OUR ASPIRATION IS...

- that you will have somewhere safe to live;
- to help you stay in touch with people who are important to you; and
- to support you to be happy and healthy.



SUPPORT AND ADVICE OUR ASPIRATION IS...

- to avoid unnecessary changes;
- to make sure you know who will support you and that important people keep in touch with each other to help you;
- to provide access to the relevant services and resources for you;
- You will have a social worker and have access to other professionals you might need; and
- to support you to the best of our abilities, even when times are tough.



EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK OUR ASPIRATION IS...

- we will help you develop skills for life and work ;
- to celebrate your successes with you;
- to champion your education; and
- to help you get the qualifications, interview skills, training and opportunities you want.

....



PREPARING YOU FOR LIFE OUR ASPIRATION IS...

- to put in place what you need when you leave care;
- to help you make a clear plan for your life ahead after care;
- to support you with your housing needs and preferences;
- to support you with your education and independence; and
- to support you in becoming a self-sufficient adult.



Corporate Parenting Roles and Functions

The Lead Member of Children's Services has a statutory role that was established in the Children Act 2004. The role has political responsibility for the leadership, strategy, and effectiveness of Children's Services, and is responsible for ensuring that the needs of all our children and young people and their families and carers, are addressed.

The Lead Member is not involved or responsible for operational management of Children's Services and Education, however, the role provides strategic leadership, support, and challenge to both the Director of Children's Services and their Senior Management Team, as appropriate. It is a requirement for the Lead Member to provide an annual update to other elected members on how we are meeting our Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

Corporate Parenting Panel

As of 2022 the council's Corporate Parenting Panel is chaired by not only our Lead Member for Children and Young People, but also by the chair of our Children in Care Council and chair of our Care Leavers Advisory Board. This refresh to the leadership and governance of the panel provides a 360-degree lens through co-production, ensuring robust assurance of the whole corporate parenting system, maintaining that children and young people in West Sussex receive outstanding corporate parenting; and that our Children we Care for and Care Leavers can achieve their potential.

Members of our Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Advisory Board sit on the panel as equal members and have a standing item on the agenda to report on their priorities, challenges, any activities, updates, or issues they would like to bring to the panel's attention. All reports submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel have a children and young person first approach and methodology, which is considered by the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Advisory Board members prior to the panel meeting so that they can prepare questions and challenges in advance.

The voices, views, wishes and feelings of our Children we Care for and Care Leavers are central to the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel. Over the last 12 months a review of our Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference has been undertaken to ensure it provides appropriate overview and scrutiny of the council's corporate parenting work and priorities.

The panel champions and monitors the corporate parenting strategy and helps to drive its implementation. The panel of children, cross-party members, officers, foster carers, adopters, and senior managers meets at least four times a year, receiving reports, including performance reports, undertaking strategic and thematic enquiry into specific elements of the strategy, and seeking ways of resolving barriers to its success. Collectively and individually, panel members engage regularly with children, young people, staff, and carers

to help to further develop their understanding of issues affecting our Children we Care for and Care Leavers.

Across the past 12 months the panel has met on 6 occasions considering reports on the following themes:

- Education progress and outcomes
- Children access and support to remain in educational employment and training (EET)
- Children Social care performance to improve care planning for our children
- Criminal Exploitation and Missing
- Care Leaver pathway planning and our local offer
- Progress and outcomes for Children we Care for and Children Seeking Asylum
- Permanency & Adoption
- Placement Sufficiency
- Primary and mental health need
- Physical Health and Wellbeing
- Placement Stability for Children we Care for
- Residential children homes development programme and quality assurance reporting
- Fostering service redesign and quality assurance reporting
- Conference and Reviewing Officer Overview

Corporate Parenting Panel Subgroups

Over the past 12 months, we have continued to strengthen our corporate parenting subgroups which sit below the main panel and are responsible for driving the corporate parenting strategy, the subgroups focus on:

- Health and wellbeing
- Children we Care for and Children Seeking Asylum
- Education
- Journey to Independence (Care Leavers)
- Children we Care for with Disabilities

Although only in their second year, the subgroups are developing and gaining momentum. The subgroups are co-chaired by our children and young people, as well as having a nominated special interest elected member and officers as part of the membership; thus, maintaining the 360-degree authenticity to co-production as modelled by the main panel. The subgroups have a key role in reporting on progress as well as identifying and addressing barriers to effective change, making recommendations on how issues can be resolved to improve the lived experiences of our Children we Care for and Care Leavers. There are a variety of tasks and finish groups that focus on the work identified within the strategy and their work reports into the respective subgroup.

An Induction to Corporate Parenting

We are keen to ensure that all elected members across the council exercise their responsibilities as corporate parents to our Children we Care for and our Care Leavers. A corporate parenting induction programme has been developed for all members which is mandatory being held twice yearly following an election. The training has supported our Elected Members in their respective roles on the panel, scrutiny committee and within the constituencies to keep the needs of Children we Care for and our Care Leavers as a priority to and to understand how to practically exercise their role as a corporate parent.

Position Statement for Corporate Parenting (July 2022 – Sept 2023)

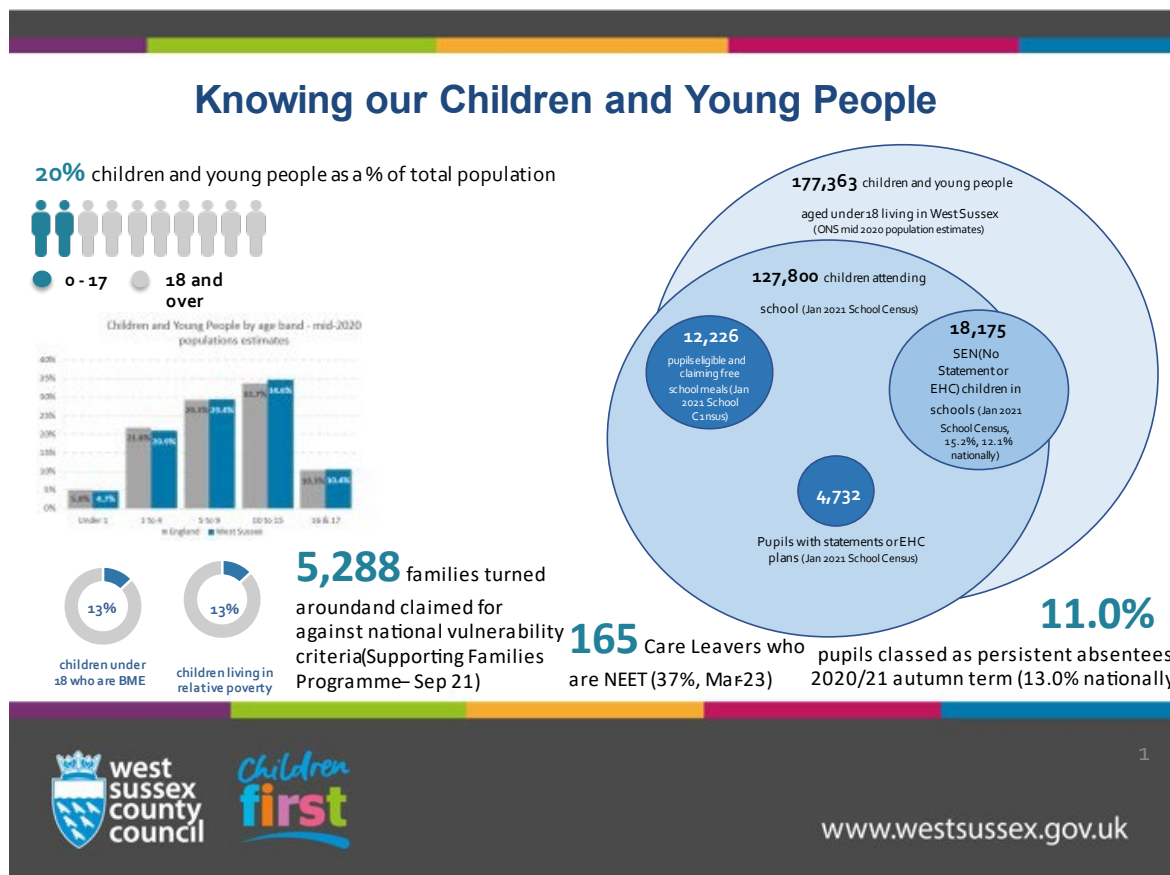
This position statement provides an update as of 31 August 2023, it summarises and evidences the impact and progress of our improvement activity over the past 12 months. The statement highlights practice, performance, and sustained improvements across all key performance indicators within the service:

- As published by Ofsted in May 2023 their judgment is that the **experience of our children in care** in West Sussex is **'GOOD'** the **first time** this judgment has been achieved by the council
- **Sustained improvement;** visiting, reviews, supervision, management oversight and case summaries
- **Sustained improvement;** Review Health assessments (RHA's) Dental Checks and Personal Education plans (PEPs)
- Quality assurance framework is **embedded; compliance and consistency** of audits is much **improved** and audit moderations **show improved practice for children**
- **Service focus is now on quality and sustainability;** sustaining and going beyond good
- **Significant improvement** with our participation with children and their families, Children in Care Council and Care Leaver Advisory Board
- Corporate Parenting Panel: **significant improvement, more inclusive and effective**, with scrutiny providing an increasingly effective mechanism for holding the service improvement programme constructively to account recognising that this is a long-term process
- **Consistent improvement: sustained focus** on improving permanence for children, numbers of children in permanent placements and increase and **significant improvement** in foster for adoption
- Permanence planning meetings held in last 12 months has **more than doubled**
- **Relentless focus on improving** placement sufficiency
- **A wide range of improvements** in the fostering service to improve choice and stability of fostering placements

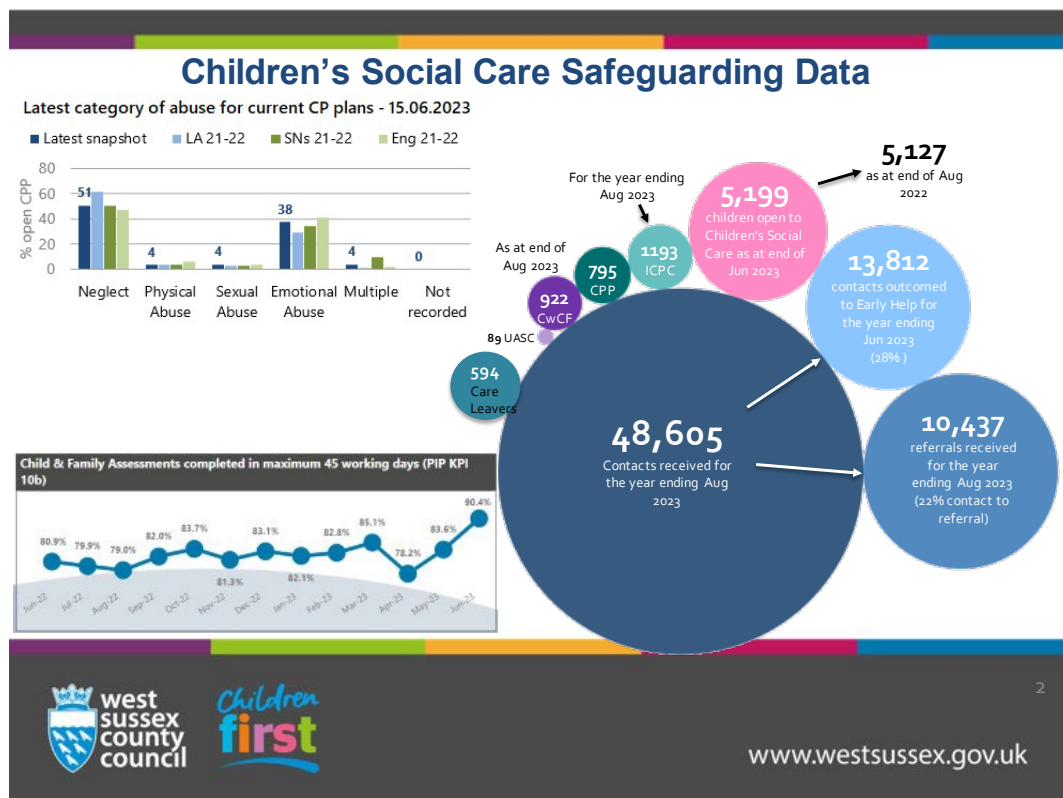
- **Significant investment** in our residential children’s homes so children can live nearer home; all of which are now either ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’
- Delivered **fully co-produced and facilitated** Care Leavers Advisory Board;
- Children co-chair of Corporate Parenting Panel
- **Co-produced Local Offer** and re-designed website supported by Care Leaders
- **Co-produced** Joint Housing Protocol, Return Home Interviews, revised Pathway Plan and Outcome STAR tool
- **Care leavers joining** our Mental Health and Housing Development Plan
- **Ringfenced apprenticeships** for care leavers in our voice and participation service
- Audit moderations show **improved practice** for children and are being completed in a timely way

Our monitoring and quality assurance activity evidence significant improvement across the service, and with compliance being sustained, focus is now on quality and sustainability. As anticipated, there is some variability in practice for our children who have recently become cared for due to the inevitable staff disruption caused by the launch of the Family Safeguarding Model in February 2022.

Background & Context



West Sussex County Council is currently caring for 922 children. We have seen an increase over the past 12 months in line with local and national modelling. We did see a sharper increase across the summer of 2023, and this is attributed to an increase in the number of children seeking asylum we are caring for. This is in line with both the local and national picture and following additional support the council provided for the National Transfer Scheme. For our wider children looked after population, we have seen our numbers remain stable in line with the continued focus on proportionate and consistent application of our safeguarding and entry to care thresholds.



Improvement activity & Service Development

In line with our Children, Young People and Learning Business Plan and Corporate Priorities, the service has a detailed service plan which outlines our key areas of improvement and our progression. We have worked comprehensively across all areas of our practice, in conjunction with relevant partners, to improve sustainable outcomes for Children We Care For as follows:

- Voice, Engagement & Participation
- Improving Care Planning
- Improving Health, Wellbeing & Partnership Working
- Management Oversight & Supervision
- Leadership and Governance

- Placement Sufficiency
- Quality Assurance & Audit
- Permanence Planning
- Transitions

Alongside this, we are undertaking work with Hertfordshire County Council to progress reunification work with children and their families using the Family Safeguarding Model and strengthening family approach. The delivery of our new practice model remains on track and is already embedding and evidencing the benefits to our families in practice.

Current Performance

The service has a range of key performance indicators which are closely monitored to ensure that children are having regular updated planning that reflects their needs and wishes and that they are seen regularly. Our current performance (as of August 2023) indicates that our Children We Care For are seen regularly (recording of statutory visits 92%) and recording of care plans are up to date (97%). For the very small number of children with out of time visits for any reason (all visits are completed), these are tracked at performance meetings held by Team and Service Managers and management oversight is recorded on our child's record. These improvements have been maintained and any decreases are minimal, evidencing sustained improvement as outlined in our most recent Ofsted ILACS inspection published in May 2023. The key performance indicators are monitored via regular performance meetings between the Heads of Service and operational teams. We also use our auditing process alongside management oversight on plans to monitor and oversee quality and effectiveness of planning. The evidence from our quality assurance audits is that plans are becoming more effective and improving in quality.

Voice, Engagement & Participation

In keeping with our Children First vision, our children co-chair our Corporate Parenting Panel; informing service planning, delivery, and scrutiny. This has been achieved by the development of our Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leavers advisory board (CLAB), for which there are now appointed chairs, vice chairs and ambassadors.

The CiCC and CLAB have completed a review of our 'new into care pack' following feedback from our children and young people, meaning it is now very much written from a child's and young person's perspective to support children when they first enter care.

We have integrated the Chairs of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Advisory Board into the chairing roles of the Corporate Parenting Panel, and young people from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Advisory Board are assisting in the delivery of service reports, ensuring these are delivered in a 'Children First' way. This has been supported by more young people attending the Corporate Parenting Panel meetings. Young people being more active and present in the meetings has ensured that officers and

members are more aware of the language they use, and young people are able to challenge unknown initialisms and other technical terminology. The successful model of these meetings has resulted in the restructure of the Children First Board meeting, which now has a split form of business and workshop format.

Our Youth Charter now forms part of the induction process for Children's Social Care, it clearly outlines our children's and young people's expectations of us as their Corporate Parents and recently refreshed 'Our Aspirations' which can be found on page 5 of this report. This was launched in May 2023 following a review of the promises we make as Corporate Parents to our children and young people, and now forms part of our mandatory induction for all our staff and elected members. We are working closely with our Early Help colleagues to improve the training in voice they receive, both at induction and mandatory annual level.

The Corporate Parenting Panel holds officers and members to account on key issues. The areas of focus to date have been changes of social worker for Children We Care For, family time and addressing wider areas of service provision required for Children Seeking Asylum as this cohort of young people increases. Through these discussions specific challenges and reflection from our children and young people have influenced service delivery. This includes dentist provision; scrutinising the activity and impact of the chairman of the Council's Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee on the access of dentistry for Children we Care for and Care Leavers, Adoption practice (Adopt South East); with regards to letterbox, as well as the refresh of our Care Leavers Pathway Plan and Local Offer.

We have various mechanisms to ensure the voices of our children in care are heard and their concerns are addressed appropriately the main framework for this is our BrightSpots survey regarding children in our care evidenced:

- 96% always felt safe where they lived
- 97% of all our children liked their bedroom
- 95% of our 11–18-year-olds said they trusted their social worker
- 81% of all our children surveyed said life was getting better
- On average more of our 11–18-year-old reported that they liked school compared to other cared for children in other local authorities (93% vs National avg. 78%)
- 98% of our 8–18-year-old reported the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education all or most of the time (this is higher than the general population)
- 97% of our 8-11 and 92% of 11-18 spent time outdoors in the last week (this is higher than the general population)

This survey is undertaken every 24 months and the results of our latest survey will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in the latter part of 2023 once completed. Our children (CiCC and CLAB) we will be working with CoramVoice to be part of the BrightSpots national survey to gauge subjective wellbeing of young people in care. We have previously participated in this and used the findings to inform service development so it will be helpful to participate again and compare from previous findings and further contribute to service development.

The Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Advisory Board have been working hard on their workplans for the year. We have done extensive work with supporting the voice of our unaccompanied children seeking asylum with action days, especially for those children arriving from Sudan. Young people continue to co-chair our Corporate Parenting Panel subgroups and particular successes from these have seen the development of a joint housing protocol and better planning for independence as part of the Journey to Independence sub-group.

At the beginning of 2023 we recruited to two Apprenticeship roles within the Voice and Participation Service (ring-fenced to our Care Leavers). We are now working with our colleagues in HR to create a package of support that can be offered to care leavers and delivered across the organisation to meet our Corporate Parenting promise, both in relation to apprenticeships and a wider offer for those who may find the academic demands of an apprenticeship difficult. Taking good practice from other local authorities, we are looking at how we can also utilise reasonable adjustments to give care leavers the support they need.

Our most successful Exceptional Young People In Care awards took place in July 2023 and saw over 500 people attend to celebrate the achievements and talents of young people in care, care leavers, and the adults who support them.

Improving Care Planning

At the end of August 2023 98% of children had an up-to-date Care Plan in place, 100% within the Children we Care for Service. The impact of care and permanence planning is also manifested in the statistics around permanence referred to above.

The percentage of children participating in their reviews has increased to 97%. The child's voice remains a key part of the current improvement agenda for our Service. The expectation is that every child must have the right support and preparation in place to attend and participate meaningfully in their review meeting and that children (age appropriate), are supported and encouraged to chair their own reviews. It is also a clear expectation that a child's views will be represented in their review and that it will be child focused. Review reports are written as a letter to the child and work is planned to review and update the routes by which we can capture feedback from our children and families.

The timeliness of statutory reviews has also improved further over this year to 97%. Priority work is continuing to mitigate and resolve identified errors in the completion of performance data, or late notifications to the service, to ensure our service performance on children's reviews being held within timeframes is accurately reflected. The child's next review date is set at their previous review meeting and our Conference and Reviewing Officers are directed to undertake early preparation ahead of a child's subsequent review to ensure that all the right arrangements are in place. This also allows time to change a review within timeframe, for example if a key person in a child's network or the child or a family member cannot attend, and a change of date would benefit the child.

We have now established 2 subgroups of the Corporate Parenting Panel relating to Children we Care for - the Health and Wellbeing and Asylum-Seeking Children subgroups. The Health and Wellbeing subgroup which is chaired by a young person has led to initiatives around language, visiting templates and the ways in which health assessments are convened; the Asylum-Seeking Children subgroup has set in motion work around independence preparation and the creation of a discrete Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children voice and participation group.

In terms of quality of planning, audit has evidenced that this is an area of improvement where they are now more consistently child focused and up to date, though we still need to drive through the consistency of SMART planning. To this end, we have undertaken a review of documentation to facilitate this within our processes, but importantly including a focus on plans being 'outcome-focused' to ensure congruence across the system.

Our Children's Asylum team provides specialist support to promote the welfare of and safeguard Asylum-Seeking Children who need care and support, as well as working with other unaccompanied minors. The Social Work team is skilled at working with and meeting the needs of a complex cohort of children with varying legal rights to receive support, who have significantly suffered in their recent years, and due to their lived experiences, are highly vulnerable. The complexity of their needs is exacerbated by cultural and language differences. Fortunately, we have a very stable team of permanent workers, who are passionate about their children and young people and aspirational in their vision of what they wish to achieve with them. A long-tenured team manager has developed strong links with neighbouring local authorities, the Home Office, Border Force and community resources and the service has continued to fully support the National Transfer Scheme.

As part of the improvement work post-Ofsted, the service is working on the recommendation to clarify and make more accessible the language, guidance and information in respect of triple planning for asylum-seeking young people approaching independence. This is to help ensure their transitions following receiving an asylum decision are well planned and positive, and a discrete action plan is in place to this effect which will be reviewed via the Improvement Board.

An Entry to Care Panel was initiated in 2022. This Panel ensures there is Assistant Director oversight of the children who enter care as well as requests and reviews of placement changes, to ensure we are seeking and providing the right placements for our children to meet their needs from the earliest point. We have also reviewed our placement planning processes in response to audit and have now made it mandatory that children's placement plans are reviewed and updated for every review so that changing needs are responded to.

Improving Health, Wellbeing & Partnership Working (internal & external)

This is an area that was highlighted in our Ofsted ILACS inspection published in May 2023 as requiring further improvement and we have targeted activity to achieve this. Performance in respect of Initial Health Assessment (IHA) is now an area of improvement. This has resulted in specific, measurable, realistic, and timely actions for both health and children's social care to progress improvements at pace. This is included as part of our service plan and will continue to be monitored to track progress.

We have continued to offer a substance misuse intervention to children identified as requiring one at an increased rate in comparison to our statistical neighbours and nationally. Currently our conversion rate to engage our children is above the regional and national % figures. As reported last year this continues to indicate that either there is more effective identification, treatment and disruption of substance abuse networks, or better educational work with our children and young people.

A bi-monthly operation meeting is held between children's social care and health partners in respect of the health of our Children We Care For and Care Leavers; this has led to improvement in terms of creating new processes for the referral of Initial Health Assessments and Review Health assessments and supported access for a number of children to dentistry services.

Extra business support resource has been provided to the permanence team since February 2022. This support is primarily focused on ensuring we make improvements in the timely completion of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ), which has moved from an area of challenge to one of improvement but remains an area of focus for us.

We have been persistent in our efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of the ongoing partnership with the NHS. Although the initial s75 agreement has expired, an extension has been mutually agreed upon until March 2024. In the realm of governance, the Joint Commissioning Strategy Group, comprising representatives from West Sussex County Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB), collaboratively shoulders the responsibility of making decisions to ensure that the system of inter-agency cooperation functions effectively. Their shared ownership ensures that decisions are reached with a collective focus on supporting and enhancing the lives of children and young people. The overarching

goal is to achieve common outcomes that positively impact the well-being of the younger population.

In addition to our (WSCC and ICB) Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service and Blended Counselling, uniquely in West Sussex, eight voluntary sector providers are commissioned for Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing (MHEWB) work with 18-25s, LGBTQ+, bereavement, children who have experienced an unwanted sexual contact, and children whose parents have drug or alcohol addictions. These service provided key 'early intervention' to support our families in their community.

We work closely with our colleagues within our assessment and family safeguarding teams to support the timely transition of children to ensure they are in the right part of the service to avoid unnecessary changes of social worker. We continue track the data for changes of social worker for Children we Care For so we can mitigate against changes if possible.

Our Principle Social Worker is leading work to identify children who would benefit from an earlier move to the Children We Care For teams in line with their care planning. Further resources options will be explored for our Children we Care for teams to progress this once completed.

Education

In working together with education, monthly meetings are held between the Virtual School and Children's social care, with the Virtual School providing quality assurance of every Personal Education Plan (PEP). PEP compliance has now been over 95% for the past 3 years year and over 98% for the last year. There is also increased prioritisation of the education of children in care through the inclusion of the Virtual School at the Entry to Care panel held weekly.

Management Oversight & Supervision

This has been an area of significant improvement which is reflected within our data showing 93% of Children We Care For having had supervision recorded within the past 8 weeks and 98% of Children We Care For having had management oversight in the past 8 weeks. This is evidencing that almost all our children's case files have regular management oversight and that the rationale for decisions is clearer. Supervision is taking place to support care planning, and feedback from audits is that the quality is also improving. A focus on more outcome-based planning will continue moving forward across 2023/24.

Leadership & Governance

All members and officers of the County Council hold a shared responsibility as corporate parents, and all our members now receive training for this role as a compulsory part of their induction or continued training.

There is a permanent, stable leadership team in place committed to driving the service forward and motivating the workforce to make this journey with the required communication and support mechanisms in place.

The service joined together as one and is delivered as a Children we Care for and Care Leavers Service; with our updated service name informed and designed by our children and young people via our Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Advisory Board. This has supported our improvement work in transitions and service development.

Placement Sufficiency

The service published a Sufficiency Strategy and market position statement in March 2023, which will be further refined by the end of 2023/24 with a relaunch and publication planned for January 2024, which will incorporate significant investment and development in our fostering, residential, and supported housing pathway. The fostering and residential placements market remains challenging, particularly for our children and young people with complex contextual safeguarding concerns. Immediate actions are underway to address pressing issues like short-term crisis placements. The revised strategy and position statement will tackle current provision shortfalls and aim to establish strong partnerships with existing providers while actively supporting potential new providers to increase capacity in West Sussex.

Consistently, children in our care express a strong preference for staying close to their homes. Our primary goal is to accommodate all children and young people in or near to West Sussex considering specific needs of each child. We strive to ensure that they have access to high quality education, care and support, with the aim of facilitating safe and timely return to their homes or extended family placements. To achieve this, our commissioning team is actively collaborating with selected providers and the voluntary sector to explore block contract arrangements and exclusivity contract arrangements, thereby securing more placements in West Sussex and enabling us to keep our children in close proximity to their homes.

Our ongoing efforts are focused on increasing the number of children placed in family-based care, ensuring it aligns with their needs and best interests in addition to supporting the value base of our family safeguarding model. To achieve this, we aim to enhance the support available to families by offering structured wrap-around services in collaboration with Health and Education colleagues. To advance this mission we are establishing a working group dedicated to driving the initiative forward.

The commissioning team remain committed to placing children in residential care facilities that have received good or outstanding ratings from Ofsted. Moreover, to ensure direct oversight of residential provision, we are currently developing a new rag-rated approach for monitoring and quality assurance of homes. This scheme is scheduled for implementation by January 2024.

Our use of parent and child foster placements has strengthened and remained consistent throughout this year. These placements continue to be predominantly in-house placements, with several carers transferring to West Sussex from other Local Authorities or Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs).

The trend of increased use of external residential care continues, and as a local authority our percentage use per capita is about 4% greater than comparable regional neighbours. Our ability to secure sufficiency of foster placements is driving this, with children unable to be fostered being placed in residential homes. This remains an area of focus with other critical key performance indicators for the commissioning service. Given this, a specific placement and commissioning recovery plan has been implemented in partnership with all areas of management across the Directorate; this is reported into and monitored monthly by the service's leadership team.

To attract and retain further foster carers, the Fostering Allowance scheme has been comprehensively reviewed and the changes implemented. The Fostering team has further development plans aimed at improving recruitment and retention. This has already produced significant interest in carers wishing to transfer from independent agencies. Supported Lodgings was out of scope for the development of fostering, but this area will also now be subject to review with the aim of growing this provision in-house.

Our new 16+ years Framework is now fully implemented, and is:

- Helping to stabilise and increase market capacity to provide more choice for young people.
- Broadening the scope of the Council's offer to meet future demand and changing needs.
- Increasing the efficiency of arrangements by using the Framework to call off new block contracts that will reduce reliance on spot-purchasing and expensive out-of-county placements.
- Ensuring the Council is compliant with all aspects of statutory legislation and strategically aligned to its local partners.

All 16+ years supported accommodation providers are required to register with Ofsted by October 2023. This includes our in-house Supported Lodgings service and our local House Project. A project team has been formed to support providers to apply for registration and this will build on our already strong position in this sector. Indeed, WSCC has been identified as a beacon county by Ofsted to support the national and regional roll-out of the new requirements.

We continue our dedicated efforts to establish a robust Housing pathway in collaboration with our seven district and borough councils. This pathway aims to facilitate timely and sustainable exit planning from care for young people while proactively preventing future homelessness. A crucial part of this initiative is both developing and implementing The

House Project in West Sussex (a DfE Innovation Programme project), which empowers our care leavers to prepare for independence, take responsibility for their accommodation, and improve their overall outcomes. Launched in January 2023, the first cohort is now concluding, and we are currently accepting referrals for the second cohort. Additionally, we are exploring the possibility of launching a second House Project on the south coast around mid-2024. The lead of the National House Project recently described our House Project as whilst in its fledging days, one of the embedded examples they have seen nationally.

A stand-alone website for [Fostering West Sussex](#) went live in April 2023 and is proving very effective. The website views to date have seen a 72% increase compared with last year, which has resulted in record number of enquires and conversation to assessment, all being equal these will progress to panel for consideration and approval.

Our redefined Fostering Charter has been launched and we are now embedding this charter into key milestones within a carer's journey with a child to ensure they feel respected and heard in the professional group.

We have stabilised our Foster Panel and have embedded our new Foster Panel Chair and we continue to increase Panel diversity. Panel members have attended training on Kinship/Connected Persons Care from Coram BAAF which has helped them to understand the experience of these carers and allowed them to feel more confident in making positive recommendations at Panel.

Our first Mockingbird constellation which launched in October 2022 continues to be strong and effective. Seven families are part of the constellation, including three kinship families. A total of ten children and young people between age 4 and 15 years are supported by the constellation. The hub carers and liaison worker act together to ensure smooth running of the constellation, with regular social events, training and adult time to come together and support each other. We are now searching for our next hub carers and the fostering teams are invested in promoting Mockingbird to support the setup of the next constellation in the South of the county.

We are furthering the development of our Therapeutic Fostering Service, 'Reach' which will work intensively with a small group of children who step down from Residential. The carers will benefit from an enhanced rate of payment and intensive support from a team of support staff and a psychologist. The programme will also provide wrap-around support to other foster families who are struggling. Potential carers to take part in the programme are currently being explored to enable the first step down.

Quality Assurance & Audit

Through increased oversight as evidenced in our data for management oversight and supervision at all management levels, our quality assurance has improved and our work moving forward is to increase the consistency across the service. To support this, we have

been reviewing and updating our practice guidance for Children we Care For and this will continue across 2023/24. Alongside this, quarterly service days and regular group supervision within teams and service areas sharing good practice examples to both celebrate and share the learning.

Audits continue to support our practice in identifying themes and areas for development. This has been key around our transitions work and resulting work included within our service plan. Moving forward, we will be including the voice of the child within audits. This being explored by the Principle Social Worker now that our Review Officers and managers are becoming part of the auditing work, which is assisting the process and service improvements by having first line managers directly involved in the auditing process.

Permanency Planning

This has remained a focus for the service with a monthly Permanence Oversight Board with full cross service representation, including legal contributing to joint permanence plans and improving the pace and consistency of permanence outcomes. A dedicated permanence team is established which is promoting and monitoring all aspects of permanence service wide, including updating procedures and practice guidance which also includes life story work. A focus on an increase in the pace of adoption, including early permanence with foster for adopt placements, has led to an increase in the use of this option for early permanence.

Our permanence practice in respect of adoption is stronger and more consistent as a result of significant change to our process, which is now well embedded as reflected in our recent inspection. Child Permanence Reports are now being completed by the social workers who have enduring relationships with the children and guidance and quality assurance is provided by an experienced Local Authority Agency Advisor. The quality of the Child Permanence Report (CPR) itself has significantly improved, as validated by Adoption South East (ASE) and adoption panel colleagues, with our review officers now engaged with the support offered which is consistently producing comprehensive and analytical views in respect of adoption care planning. Whilst we have faced challenges in respect of timeliness against the adoption scorecard measures, this has primarily been in relation to delays in the court process (a local and national issue) and positively we have seen our numbers continue to improve.

We continue to monitor any children who are residing in unregulated arrangements, understanding the rationale for this position, and acting as needed to rectify this position.

For the small group of children under 12yrs residing in residential placements, there are regular reviews, with Head of Service oversight to ensure planning is robust and exit planning is kept under review to ensure it is in the child's best interest. Further work continues to determine and deliver timely exit planning and permanence for this group of children.

Specialist training for staff at all levels on achieving permanence is supported through Adoption South East and all agency decision makers and panel advisors have completed specialist training through CoramBAAF.

The above work and focus on permanence have been significantly scaffolded by the introduction of the Permanence Service as part of our improvement activity.

Transitions

Transitions for our children as they get older and move into adulthood is key. The move to make Children We Care For and Care Leavers one service has supported improvements in our work on transitions, as set out within our service plan. We have increased resources for our care leavers service to ensure going forward Personal Advisors come on board at 17yrs, and caseloads for personal advisors are reduced to support this area of work. We have embedded a process of joint supervision as children approach their 18th birthday.

Where we have identified an ongoing need for our young people, as they move into adulthood, we have a multi-agency transitions panel to consider this, and progress Care Act assessments as required.

In response to feedback from the Care Leavers Advisory Board we have a number of current initiatives in place. We are currently working with young people and a professional group to devise an independence preparation programme, with the idea that this is then consistently used across supported accommodation providers, residential homes and foster carers. This would mean a consistent approach to the issue for young people and ensure they do not have to 'start again' if they move to a new home.

Work has continued in refining and improving our Local Offer for Care Leavers, and we have added aspects such as a '5 for 5' offer in respect of driving lessons and along with the nationally expected £1,000 uplift to the Setting Up Home Allowance, we have also increased our university bursary offer to £3,000.

The feedback from Ofsted published in May 2023 was generally positive in respect of our work with Care Leavers, with achievable improvements required to get to 'Good' (although we aspire to 'Outstanding'). In terms of specific Ofsted feedback, we have devised a Practice Action Plan around two specific areas, the accessibility and clarity of our work in Triple Planning and transition for asylum-seeking young people; and ensuring consistency, clarity, and universality of our offer to Care Leavers up to 25, with a focus in ensuring young people who are appropriately closed are aware of their entitlements to further service in the future. In respect of the first issue, we are initiating work to start a Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Young People Voice and Participation group to co-design the language and support around Triple Planning; and for the latter are adding clarity to pathway planning and closure records to ensure all young people closed to the service are aware of their right to future support.

Care Leavers in Employment or Training

The number of our care leavers in employment or training is improving. The care leavers service is recruiting more personal advisors who will soon be able to support Children We Care For at an earlier age and increase our support alongside social workers and the virtual school. The care leavers service is striving hard to build relationships with providers, Department for Work and Pensions, in-house services, and educational establishments to provide greater levels of support for our care leavers, with the aim of creating and promoting a greater level of opportunities.

Nine of our young people received funding this year to attend the Bridging the Gap Course with Chichester University. Two of these young people have successfully secured places on our 2023 Social Work apprenticeship programme and the University is keen to continue this work with our service and provide similar opportunities. We now have a guaranteed interview scheme for care leavers and a working group to increase wrap around support and opportunities for apprenticeships with us.

We are continuing explore how we can use media platforms to notify our care leavers of opportunities that become available, including courses, apprenticeships, internships, and job fairs.

Care Leavers in Higher Education

There continues to be an increase in the number of our care leavers attending university and higher education. We have a rising number over the age 18-25 years being supported at university (31 young people currently in 2023 compared with 25 in 2022). Some of our older care leavers are doing their master's degree and returning for extended duties to support them with their education. Our Local Offer is providing additional financial support, if needed, for those completing their master's degree as well as those undertaking graduate courses. We have also ensured all of our eligible care leavers benefitted from the Department for Education and XMA project funded laptops and iPads via our virtual school.

Local Offer for our Care Leavers

Our care leavers service has been instrumental and supportive in developing the refreshed Care Leavers Local Offer, since we recognised that our previous Offer contained gaps and was not communicated in a way that was easily understandable or accessible. Our young people, particularly via the Care Leavers Advisory Board and Care Leavers Executive Group, have set out priorities for the service and the Offer, and have been instrumental in its completion. This is alongside the development of some significant partnerships with varied agencies including Housing, Health, the Department for Work and Pensions, local Universities, and others.

The Offer is reviewed and added to via the Journey to Independence subgroup, with recent additions including a 'Five by Five' offer in respect of driving lessons, uplifting the University Bursary, and a yearly clothing allowance. Alongside the planned action plan in relation to Ofsted Feedback, we are also going to provide more clarity in respect of our Offer to young parents and young people in custody.

We now have strategic oversight and planning in place to fully understand the whole +16 years pathway across Children's, Adult and Housing services, to ensure all housing issues are identified, and the financial and commissioning implications are known for the next two-to-five years. The aim is to clearly define how we work in partnership: by working together, Children's Services and Housing partners will ensure that as corporate parents, appropriate accommodation, and support are available to our care experienced children and young people. We have revised the revised Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers to present to the Districts and Boroughs; this draft has been co-produced by officers of the local authority and care leavers.

Our performance data shows that we see our young people within timescales, and they have timely pathway plans. Whilst notably not all local authorities keep data in respect of their timeliness of visits to care leavers, we know that we outperform our local and statistical neighbours whom we have been able to ask, and this has been in the context of high caseloads. We have good systems to support managers and staff to ensure the oversight of visits and the timeliness and impact of the plans. There has been a significant and sustained improvement since mid-2022 in respect of performance in the areas of case summaries, chronologies, management oversight and supervision, which have moved from 50-60% to 80-90% consistently, with all four of those indicators being over 90% in June 2023. The service operates a monthly high-risk referral meeting where young people of concern over 18 years are reviewed, risks understood, and safety plans put in place. We also have a transitional safeguarding protocol to escalate concerns and attend the local Multi-Agency Child Exploitation meeting to ensure that where appropriate care leavers are considered. We have also reached an agreement to be able to refer to the Child Exploitation Team for advice and guidance in respect of our young people.

The care leavers service is now an integral part of the Children's Services quality assurance system. The service has its own monthly improvement and performance meeting which looks at impact and aligns with the Children's Services Performance Board. The new learning audit model 'closes the loop' on the audit, making a real difference through influencing practice learning and the quality of services provided to our young people. Feedback from recent audit activity and from the last Ofsted inspection has identified that our work is improving, with some good examples of practice. We know we have work to do in respect of the use of aspirational language, clarity of the Triple Planning arrangements for care leavers, and robustness of the clarity of the post-21 offer; however, we are also aware that Ofsted also considered the service to be on the right track in terms of 'getting to good'.

Joint supervision between the service and Children We Care For social workers is now routinely happening and improving the quality of transition at 18 years. We have recently set up a tracking process for some cohorts of young people (initially those 16 ½yrs + residing in children's homes) to ensure early consideration is being given to post 18 yrs planning, since young people have clearly told us they want the 'reality' of independence to be given to them and to be prepared in advance, and they need plans which reflect this. We are also working on a new independence preparation pack which we would want to see used by foster carers, children's homes and supported accommodation providers which would be 'portable' from one setting to the next and ensure clarity on the independence skills learned and required.

Conclusion

We have worked hard to improve the **consistency** and **quality** of our practice for our children, demonstrated by:

- Improved participation and engagement, including feedback and influence in practice from our children and young people
- Stronger and more effective Corporate Parenting Panel, with subgroups in place, responding to 'challenges' set by children
- Feedback from Ofsted that rated the experience of children in care in West Sussex as 'good'
- Sustained performance in visiting, reviews, supervision, management oversight
- Further improvement in permanence arrangements
- Health Assessment performance and Dentistry continue to outperform statistical neighbours and national comparators in respect of health surveillance checks and immunisations
- Improving and strengthening performance in completing Initial Health Assessments and Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires
- Improved performance in Personal Education Plans around quality, and sustained performance in respect of timeliness, at over 95% for 3 years
- The Quality Assurance Framework has become embedded, with Service Managers undertaking audits, with no inadequate audits in Q1 2023
- Compliance and consistency of audits is significantly improved, as is the timely completion of audit actions

- Audit moderations show improved practice for children and are being completed in a timely way.

Our Priorities

Following the positive Ofsted inspection outcome, the service has developed a new Service Plan, based upon the Ofsted ILASC recommendations and the overarching Continuous Practice Improvement Plan, this service plan then informs individual team plans. The aim of the plan includes:

- Voice, Engagement & Participation
- Ensuring high levels of fundamental performance
- Improving the SMART-ness of care and pathway planning
- Improving Health, Wellbeing & Partnership Working
- Management Oversight & Supervision
- Leadership and Governance
- Placement Sufficiency
- Quality Assurance & Audit
- Permanence Planning
- Transitions
- Enhancing our Care Leavers Local Offer
- Embedding consistent high quality life story work

Our Service Plan will continue to be underpinned by the guiding principles we developed in response to our children's views and needs:

- You will know why you are in our care and what people are doing to help you.
- We will support you to be safe, settled, and happy.
- We will continue to support you as you move into adulthood. We will give you the tools to help you thrive and achieve your goals.
- We will listen to the things you are happy with so we can do more. We will take action when things are not going well.

Closing Reflections

As set out within this position statement, there are many areas where we have seen significant improvements for Children We Care For and Care Leavers as a service we are proud of improving the outcomes for our children and retaining a stable workforce. This progress has been evidenced despite the residual impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and more recent cost of living crisis, which demonstrates the level of commitment and tenacity that the service must achieve and deliver higher aspirations for our children and young people.

Our Continuous Improvement activity and Service Plan clearly sets out the areas which require improvement and the actions to deliver these at pace to ensure continuity and consistency for all our children which we care for irrelevant of where they sit in the service. The ownership and aspiration of our leaders, managers and staff will ensure we continue to drive forward the necessary actions and activity to further improve outcomes for the children we care for and care leavers.

Appendix 1 – Membership of Corporate Parenting Panel

The core membership of the Panel is set out below. The Panel can decide to invite representatives from across the Council and partner agencies as required, depending on the agenda items.

Current Core Membership:

Name	Role
Cllr Jacquie Russell	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills (Co-Chair of CPP)
Cllr Chris Oxlade	Vice Chairman of CPP
A	Chairman of Children in Care Council (Co-Chair of CPP)
J	Chairman of Care Leavers Advisory Board (Co-Chair of CPP)
Cllr Brenda Burgess	County Councillor
Cllr Alison Cooper	County Councillor
Cllr Nigel Jupp	County Councillor
Cllr Paul Linehan	County Councillor
Cllr Kirsty Lord	County Councillor
K	Children in Care Council Ambassador
L	Children in Care Council Ambassador
C	Care Leavers Advisory Board Ambassador
Lucy Butler	Director of Children, Young People and Learning, WSCC
Dan Ruaux	Assistant Director (Corporate Parenting and Commissioning), WSCC
Janine Peach	Designated Nurse – Children and Young People in Care, NHS Sussex
Sarah Roper-Brooks	Designated Nurse and Assistant Heald for Children in Care, NHS Sussex
Angela Putland	Named Nurse for Children and Young People in Care in West Sussex, Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust

Name	Role
Vacancy	District and Borough Officer representative
Sue Hollowell	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Foster Carer
Chris Day	Adopter
Melanie Spencer	Service Lead – Voice and Participation, WSCC
Toby Wilson	Team Manager- Voice and Participation Team, WSCC
Claire Tooke	Voice and Participation Team, WSCC
Adrian Dyka	Head of Service – Children We Care for and Care Leavers, WSCC
Sarah Clark	Head of Virtual School, WSCC
Laura Mallinson	Head of Service – Reviewing and Conferencing, WSCC
Kelly Wilkes	Head of Service – Fostering and Kinship, WSCC
Stephen Humphries	Head of Commissioning- Children, Young People and Learning, WSCC
Katherine De La Mora	Senior Advisor - Democratic Services
Ann Little	Assistant Democratic Services Officer (note taker)

Appendix 2: Ofsted Monitoring Visit Report March 2023 (Published
May 2023)

(see next page)

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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West Sussex County Council's Armed Forces Covenant 2022/23

Background

- 1** West Sussex County Council first signed the Covenant in 2012 as its commitment to the armed forces community. The Council achieved Gold Award status in August 2020 on the South East Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (SERFCA) Employer Award Programme.
- 2** The County Council hosts the West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board, a stakeholder group including borough and district councils, armed forces organisations, charities and business and employment representatives. It works to improve service provision for the armed forces community. The Board is chaired by Cllr Pendleton, the County Council's Armed Forces Champion.
- 3** The County Council agreed an Armed Forces Strategy in March 2021, committing to developing its support further in a joined-up approach across Council services and held an inaugural partnership conference in June 2023.

Update

- 4** An officer Armed Forces Panel drives the delivery of the Strategy ambitions and seeks to ensure that the Council provides a consistent, high-quality service for the armed forces family. The Panel is chaired by Emily King, Assistant Director (Communities) and comprises staff veterans and forces family members, working alongside representatives from Human Resources & Organisational Development and Communications & Engagement and colleagues from customer-facing services. The focus of the Panel has been to further develop connections both internally across Directorates and Services as well as with external partners supporting the wider armed forces family and veterans. Activity over the past year has included a review of the current website content and developing a comprehensive suite of new web pages which will undergo user testing before going live. Following the scheduled release of census results the Data & Insight Team have assisted the Armed Forces Panel to develop a stronger understanding of the distribution and demography of veterans, reservists and those currently serving across West Sussex.
- 5** The Armed Forces Panel has sought to increase awareness across the wider organisation by promoting participation in events designed to generate interest and understanding elements of military training. The South-East Challenge Days hosted regularly by the Army at Longmoor Training Camp are increasingly popular with around 20 staff expected to attend the event on Friday, 13 October. This opportunity to take part in a series of team challenges delivered by the Army allows participants to develop teamwork and leadership skills, building individual self-awareness whilst taking part in fun, interactive activities that simulate an authentic training environment.
- 6** In June the County Council hosted an inaugural conference combining a development session for members of the West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board with an opportunity for a wider group of partnership organisation representatives to receive presentations on key themes and engage in discussion to develop a series of delivery priorities. The conference welcomed statutory partners and attendance from a diverse range of voluntary, community sector organisations who provide valuable support, friendship and signposting to those

currently serving, veterans and the wider forces family. A series of marketplace stands, and structured discussion sessions blended data and insight with the first-hand experiences illustrating the needs of individuals and families engaging with services/charities to formulate shared development ambitions. The Council will look to host a similar event next year to continue to strengthen the countywide partnership approach.

- 7** October will see the County Council participate in the Careers Transition Partnership job fair held annually in Southampton. This regional event routinely attracts more than 50 organisations actively looking to recruit individuals about to finish their military service and considering their employment options. Attendance at this event is part of a concerted effort to promote hard to recruit positions and showcase the diversity of roles available within the County Council. Such events are well attended by prospective Service leavers and direct engagement offers the chance to de-mystify local authority recruitment processes, share experiences and encourage applications which may provide a stepping-stone from military life and an opportunity to utilise knowledge, skills and experience in a new organisational setting. The Civilian Military Partnership Board has also increased its focus on workforce including exploring opportunities to attract spouses and family members into employment.
- 8** The Leader of the Council has raised the Armed Forces Covenant in his meetings with leaders of borough and district councils and, following the recent local elections, the Military Champion has started a programme of introductory meetings with newly nominated Champions from within each district and borough as they start their term of office.
- 9** The archives and library of the Royal Sussex Regiment are held at the County Council's Record Office and the Record Office is working with the Royal Sussex Regimental Association Trust and the Sussex Yeomanry Museum Trust to preserve and promote the military heritage of the county whilst exploring options to increase archive and display space.
- 10** The County Council has many positive links with other organisations and prides itself on strong partnership working. An example is the relationship with the University of Chichester who have now delivered three 12-week bridging courses to a total of 60 Afghan refugees, including some who worked in roles alongside British and allied armed forces. Students who pass the assignments are awarded 20 academic credits which can serve as a non-traditional and inclusive pathway to higher education or add value to the student's resume. This innovative course provides participants with the knowledge and skills to access higher education and was originally designed for British service veterans but has been expanded to support those awaiting permanent resettlement.

Moving Forward

- 11** The officer Panel referred to in paragraph 4 will continue to review the content of training material for frontline customer-facing staff within the County Council to ensure it reflects the current policy position on the Armed Forces Covenant and provides good quality signposting and guidance.
- 12** The University is currently working towards launching an online version of the Bridging Course in conjunction with the County Council. As part of a blended format this will complement in-person classes in a new development providing a

much desired flexible learning model suitable for serving military personnel as well as those from Afghanistan and Ukraine who have worked alongside or served their own country. Once completed the course will be widely promoted.

Recommended

That the report be noted.

Jacky Pendleton

West Sussex County Council Armed Forces Champion

Contact Officer: Emily King, Assistant Director (Communities), Tel: 033 022 23876

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 decisions which have been taken by the appropriate decision-maker, in consultation with the relevant members.

Award of Contingency Accommodation Contracts

- 4** The County Council had been supporting family groups in bridging (temporary) accommodation and hotels procured by the Home Office. The Home Office decided to no longer use hotels for this purpose after 31 August 2023.
- 5** The County Council has been responsible for the wrap-around support services for the families and needed to secure permanent accommodation. However, it was necessary to access temporary accommodation whilst the work to secure long term tenancies was undertaken.
- 6** The Assistant Director (Communities) with the agreement of the Director of Law and Assurance and the Chairman of the Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee, approved the direct award of multiple short-term contracts to accommodation suppliers to provide a sufficient level of contingency accommodation for participants in the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and families evacuated from Afghanistan up to the end of August 2024. The value of the contracts will be no greater than £3m. The funding has been provided to the Council from central government.
- 7** Notice of the decision did not feature in the County Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions because delay would have prejudiced the need for the Council to comply with the new requirements of the Home Office. An urgent decision was required to ensure the availability of accommodation to meet the needs of those presenting for support in situations of urgency.

Leasing arrangements and appointment of a Housing Provider

- 8** Leasing arrangements were required to house a number of individuals and households for whom the Council has responsibilities. The funding, to cover the anticipated cost of lease and the procurement of a provider, has been provided to the Council from central government.
- 9** The Assistant Director (Communities), with the agreement of the Director of Law and Assurance and the Chairman of the Communities, Highways and Environment

Scrutiny Committee, has therefore approved the leasing arrangements and the procurement and award of a contract to a housing provider.

- 10** Notice of the decision did not feature in the County Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions because delay would have prejudiced the County Council's interests in needing to comply with the new requirements of the Home Office.

Paul Marshall

Leader

Contact Officer: Helen Kenny, Head of Democratic Services, 033 022 22532, helen.kenny@westsussex.gov.uk

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 Government has confirmed that **from April 2024, many of the functions undertaken by [Local Enterprise Partnerships \(LEPs\)](#) will be transferred to county councils**, unitary councils and combined authorities, with those local authorities taking on the economic growth and business representation functions of LEPs. The move will be supported by government funding in 2024/25 with announcements in due course. The County Council is working with partners to ensure a smooth transition to this new arrangement in order to maximise the opportunities it presents for the county.
- On 1 September, a new [Careers Hub](#) covering the whole of West Sussex was launched. The Hub, which is hosted by the County Council, is working with all secondary schools and colleges, as well as a range of apprenticeship providers and businesses to improve careers education and experiences of the workplace, with the aim of helping young people find their best next step and improve employment outcomes. The team has joined the County Council from the former Coast to Capital Careers Hub. The new arrangements will help to ensure the Hub's strategic plans can be closely aligned to local businesses, employment and skills priorities. The Careers Hub is also covering Brighton & Hove and is supported by the West Sussex district and borough councils and the national Careers and Enterprise Company.

Adult Services – Amanda Jupp

- In preparation for Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance of adult social care, the County Council has prepared a [baseline self-assessment \(PDF, 14.2MB\)](#) against nine quality statements, mapped across four themes of working with people; providing support; ensuring safety; and leadership, using the CQCs draft assurance framework. Each theme is summarised by three areas to be most proud of or where there is evidence of good practice and three areas that need further improvement. The **two-year adults' improvement programme** will address most of the areas identified for improvement. Others will be addressed through business-as-usual activity, as part of the directorate's annual business planning cycle. The self-assessment is a working document and will be reviewed regularly with updates provided to members, staff, partners and stakeholders.
- Avila House in Worthing is being converted to provide an **extra care scheme for adults** who require care, support, and suitable housing. This will be the first scheme in the county to accept referrals for adults aged 18 years plus who meet the criteria. Construction at Avila House commenced in September 2022 and the first customers are expected to be able to move in in winter 2023. This will enable the service to develop in line with other commissioned extra care schemes and ensure a consistent and successful contract management of the care and support provider. On 5 September, the Director for Adults and Health approved the [award of the care and support contract](#) to Leonard Cheshire to progress this work.

- The Department for Health and Social Care announced that additional funding will be provided to local authorities through the [Market Sustainability Improvement Fund](#). West Sussex has been allocated £5m in 2023/24. A further allocation will be received in 2024/25. However, this amount is currently unknown. A spending plan is being prepared to increase social care capacity in line with the grant spend conditions, which set out that local authorities can choose to use the funding to increase fee rates paid for adult social care providers, increase adult social care workforce capacity and retention, and reduce adult social care waiting times.

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

- The achievements of children and young people in care, care leavers and children in kinship care, across West Sussex have been celebrated at the annual [Exceptional People in Care \(EPIC\) awards](#). Young people from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Advisory Board helped organise and host the ceremony which saw awards presented in a wide range of categories including Care Leaver of the Year and Best Foster Carer. Plans are already underway for the 2024 EPIC awards and Children's Services are keen to hear from potential sponsors willing to support the event.
- The [outcome of the Adult and Community learning Ofsted inspection](#) has been published with the Council's provision maintaining a rating of 'good'. The report recognised the County Council's 'clear vision for education and skills' and the focus on supporting the most vulnerable. Inspectors also highlighted that 'most learners develop new knowledge and skills quickly and effectively'. Plans are in place to implement further improvements to areas where the report suggested making changes would be beneficial.
- Work is progressing towards completion of the [rebuild of Woodlands Meed College](#) to enable the new building to open in the new year. Following a delay to the original August handover date, a new timeframe outside of term time has been set to ensure disruption is minimised for staff and students. The project will significantly improve facilities for the 100 pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities who attend the college.
- The County Council has [commissioned a physical inspection of 114 maintained schools](#) to check for any **Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete** (RAAC) materials following the new measures announced by the Government in August. The inspection is a precautionary measure as construction work took place at these schools between 1930 and 2000 when RAAC was in use in the building industry. The survey work commenced during September and is being undertaken in accordance with the [Department for Education guidance](#).

Community Support, Fire and Rescue – Duncan Crow

- Six retained firefighters have been welcomed into the West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service after completing the **first training course for new recruits at Platinum House**. Following the intensive two-week training course, a Pass Out Parade was held on 15 September. The parade is a long-standing fire service tradition which gives the recruits an opportunity to showcase a selection of their new skills. During the event, firefighters used the Service's new facilities to perform hose running and ladder climbs, as well as extinguishing a

fire in the training tower. Having the first Pass Out Parade at the Fire Service's new training centre was acknowledged as a milestone in seeing the new facilities now in action.

- **West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service is running a series of [free electric blanket testing sessions for residents](#)** in October. Faulty electric blankets are a common cause of fire in the home. Last year almost 40% of the blankets tested by the service were defective and posed a serious risk of starting a fire. Residents are being encouraged to have their blankets tested to ensure they have peace of mind that their blanket is still safe to use and can book an appointment by phoning 0345 872 9719. Regular testing is recommended for blankets over two years old to ensure they are still safe to use. Blankets over ten years old should be replaced. The Fire & Rescue Service recognises the pressures of the cost of living and provides advice on how residents can [stay warm and safe in their home](#) during the winter months.
- Community Safety Partnerships across West Sussex are [asking residents how safe they feel in their local communities](#). An [online consultation](#) is open to people of all ages to share their experiences of crime and anti-social behaviour in their local areas. The responses will allow the partnerships to further improve their understanding of local communities and see whether their current priorities reflect the experiences of the residents living there. Information from the consultation will be shared with the [Safer West Sussex Partnership](#), which brings together the six district and borough Community Safety Partnerships, along with Sussex Police, the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, West Sussex Fire and Rescue and other key agencies. For those that would prefer a paper copy survey, this can be requested by calling 01243 777100 or emailing communitysafety.wellbeing@westsussex.gov.uk. Paper copies will be supplied with a return free post envelope.
- The County Council emails out an informative [monthly newsletter called Staying Safe Online](#), which provides helpful advice and tips for helping to keep everyone safe online, including how we as adults can help keep our children safe. The [Online Safety Bill](#) passed its final Parliamentary debate on 19 September and is now ready to become law. The bill takes a zero-tolerance approach to protecting children and adults online and makes sure social media platforms are held responsible for the content they host.

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

- The County Council is contributing to [World Beyond Waste](#), a digital series with the Chartered Institute of Waste Management and Content With Purpose, a production company, which explores the resources and waste sector's role as a vital change agent for the transition to a low-carbon, resource efficient, circular economy. A [short video](#) highlights the UKHarvest Community Food Hub Programme and the contribution and support of volunteers.
- [Think Before You Throw](#) is an animated communication campaign which promotes waste reduction; it is designed and supported by the West Sussex Waste Partnership. The aim is to encourage resident behaviour change and increase recycling across the county (also look for 'West Sussex recycles' on Facebook).

Finance and Property – Jeremy Hunt

- The **audit by external auditors (Ernst and Young) of the 2022/23 Pension Fund accounts** has commenced and is expected to be completed and reported to the Council's Regulation, Accounts and Audit Committee on 1 December. Due to government pressure on the external audit sector to complete a high number of outstanding audits of other local authorities, there is no clear timeline for when the audit of the 2022/23 West Sussex County Council accounts will commence. The delay in audit completions, largely caused by the increase in audit requirements over recent years, is outside the County Council's control. The [County Council's draft accounts \(PDF, 2.4MB\)](#) were published by the statutory deadline of 31 May and the Council has no outstanding audits from previous years.
- An **update on the Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy** was noted by the Cabinet in July and discussed at the [Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee](#) on 7 September. The report highlighted a budget gap of £171m over the next five years before any Council Tax increases, of which £45m is in 2024/25. Over the summer, work has been undertaken to review the Council's service pressures and the impact from the remaining high levels of inflation and to identify opportunities to close the budget gap with a focus on 2024/25 and 2025/26. An update will be presented to the Cabinet on 17 October and further discussed at the all-member session on the Council Plan and 2024/25 Budget, which will be held at County Hall North on 18 October. This session will mark the start of the 2024/25 budget process and is an opportunity for all members to be engaged in the development of next year's budget before approval by the full Council on 16 February 2024.

Highways and Transport – Joy Dennis

- More than £5m in further funding has been secured from the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles which will enable the provision of up to **[1,000 extra Electric Vehicle chargepoints across the county](#)** at 230 locations, plus the installation of the underground electrical infrastructure needed for an additional 400 chargepoints. Working in partnership with the supplier, Connected Kerb, and borough and district council partners, it will significantly bolster the existing scheme to make on-street charging more accessible for residents who do not have off-street parking and boost efforts to enable sustainable transport options across West Sussex.
- The County Council's **[consultation on the draft Active Travel Strategy](#)** is open until 15 November and invites comments on the future of walking, wheeling and cycling in West Sussex. The strategy takes forward ideas set out in the county's Transport Plan and develops them in more detail. Comments are also invited on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan which is a companion document to the Active Travel Strategy.

Public Health and Wellbeing – Bob Lanzer

- The **[West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board \(HWB\)](#), in the new Integrated Care System (ICS) governance landscape**, is key for driving integration and continues to have an important role in instilling mechanisms for joint working across local health and care organisations and setting strategic direction to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population and reduce

health inequalities. At its recent meeting, the West Sussex HWB agreed to accept and progress the Local Government Association's) [support offer to HWBs \(PDF, 88.6KB\)](#). This process will include helpful reflection on the Board's role in supporting the local place of West Sussex.

- The Government's [Major conditions strategy: case for change and our strategic framework](#) focuses on developing a comprehensive approach to addressing six groups of conditions; cancers, cardiovascular disease (including stroke and diabetes), musculoskeletal disorders, mental ill health, dementia and chronic respiratory disease, which together account for over 60% of ill health and early death in England. It highlights that smoking directly contributes to developing all major groups of conditions and remains the biggest single cause of preventable illness and death and driver of health disparities. Throughout October, organisations in the Smokefree West Sussex Partnership, led by the County Council, are urging smokers to quit this [Stoptober](#) and seek free support from a stop smoking advisor to have the best chance of quitting for good. Research shows that smokers are three times more likely to successfully quit with support. [Free local Stop Smoking services](#) are available across West Sussex provided by participating GP practices and pharmacies, and [West Sussex Wellbeing](#).
- Led by NHS Sussex, [COVID-19 and flu vaccinations](#) are underway across the county, with those most at risk, including adult care home residents, being offered the vaccination from 11 September. Adult COVID-19 and flu vaccination programmes were due to start in October to maximise protection over the winter months. However, programmes were brought forward nationally due to the potential risks presented by the COVID-19 variant BA.2.86. The County Council is supporting both vaccination programmes, carrying out targeted work with partners to increase uptake, reduce inequalities, and improve the health of the local population. The Council is also offering a free flu vaccine voucher to staff and councillors who are currently not eligible as part of the NHS flu vaccination programme.

Support Services and Economic Development – Steve Waight

- The County Council's Digital Infrastructure Team has been working with telecoms operators and industry partners to improve mobile connectivity in line with the county-wide [Digital Infrastructure Strategy \(PDF, 2MB\)](#). The Council's new **BEACH project** has attracted funding from the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology as part of its [£88m Open Network Ecosystems programme](#). BEACH, in partnership with Worthing Borough Council, will bring improved 4G and future 5G connectivity to Worthing beachfront and town centre to address performance and capacity issues. The consortium, led by Dense Air Ltd, will work together to create a cellular network able to be shared by mobile network operators and hosted on local authority-owned assets. The network will meet connectivity demand at peak times while intelligently managing low and peak demand power consumption, saving energy and supporting the County Council's county-wide agenda to de-carbonise by 2030.

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Background papers: None

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