

West Sussex County Council – Written Questions

Officer replies to questions submitted under Standing Order 2.40 as part of the preparation for the County Council meeting on 14 October 2022

1. Written question from **Cllr Condie** for reply by **Director of Adults and Health**

Question

The County Council provides a lot of support and advice for those with addiction to tobacco and alcohol.

However the same is not true for gambling addiction - there is no reference to gambling at all on the County Council website.

It is estimated that 400 to 550 suicides are related to gambling every year nationally and more than 55,000 children are addicted to gambling. Over £1.5bn is spent on advertising.

The question is whether the County Council:

- (a) Has any data on the prevalence of gambling or gambling related suicides in West Sussex?
- (b) Has any plans to improve the advice available and start public messaging on gambling addiction?

Answer

- (a) The County Council does not currently have any data on the prevalence of gambling or gambling related suicides in West Sussex.

A 'West Sussex Suicides Audit' was published in March 2017 by the Council's Public Health and Social Research Unit. Gambling is not referenced in the audit, but issues of debt and financial difficulties are noted. Extracts are shown below; the [full report \(PDF, 452KB\)](#) is available on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) website.

'Throughout the audit, debt and financial difficulties were believed to be drivers in building stress and anxiety in some individuals in the days or weeks before their death. This ranged from benefit sanctions, to mounting business debts; from lifelong impoverishment to losing court cases.'

'A greater than average proportion of individuals were from more deprived areas of the county. Debt, financial difficulties and a perceived lack of opportunities were also cited as a driver for 7% of individuals.'

'In total, the auditing team counted 15 cases (7%) between the ages of 21 and 65 where financial burdens, loss of benefits/eviction, or a perceived lack of opportunities were described as a primary driver for their suicide.'

- (b) The [West Sussex Wellbeing website](#) provides information on problem gambling, including links to a range of support and guidance to help individuals take control back, and *self-exclusion support.

The Director of Public Health and her team will explore further opportunities to promote free information and advice to our local residents and communities on this important public health issue.

*Self-exclusion means asking a gambling provider to exclude you from gambling with them for a length of time, usually between six and 12 months but this can be for up to five years for online gambling.

2. Written question from **Cllr Pudaloff** for reply by **Director of Adults and Health**

Question

My written question to Cabinet Member in May 2022 related to service users contributing towards their social care and 9% inflation making redundant the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG), calculated in September 2021 - intended to cover their daily living during 2022/23. The Cabinet Member claimed changes to MIG, and inflation were matters for central government. The Council should follow Care Act guidance* and permit people to keep more of their income (*R v Islington LBC ex p Rixon 1998).

8.46: "local authorities should consider how to protect a person's income. The government considers that it is inconsistent with promoting independent living to assume, without further consideration, that all of a person's income above the minimum income guarantee (MIG) is available to be taken in charges." Other relevant provisions include 8.45 and 8.44.

Will the Council reconsider and permit service users to keep more of their own benefits income?

Answer

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) makes all regulations relating to the charging of social care and are responsible for any increase in the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG).

The County Council follows the Care Act legislation which again is produced by the DHSC, and financially assesses everyone on their ability to contribute to their care. The affordability protocol is used when people indicate they have difficulty contributing to their care, and we request individuals to directly contact the Council.

The Council when considering whether, anyone in receipt of benefits would retain more of their income would also have to consider, if this change was made, then how would this be applied and be sustainably funded from within the Adult Social Care budget as part of any decision.

3. Written question from **Cllr Joy** for reply by **Director of Children, Young People and Learning**

Question

Is there an update on the White Paper for new academy trust setup and how this is going to affect small failing rural schools?

Answer

The Schools White Paper has currently been paused in its passage through the House of Lords. Whilst we are currently awaiting further information regarding the content of the White Paper and current government strategy, the County Council has been engaged with all the county's maintained schools across each district and borough to explore options schools have in moving towards a partnership by 2030.

Any school that is failing and has been identified by Ofsted as such will be subject to a directed academy order and, through the Regional Schools Commissioner, will be directed to academise with a particular Trust. This will be the case for all failing schools whether they be large or small.

The County Council is working with those Multi Academy Trusts already active in West Sussex, along with a number of new Trusts being introduced into the county, to create a compendium of comparative information on each Trust to help inform school governing bodies on the Trusts available to them. Work is being done to support Governing Bodies in using this information alongside the range of partnership options available to schools which includes setting up new Trusts.

4. Written question from **Cllr Joy** for reply by **Assistant Director (Highways, Transport and Planning)**

Question

With regards to the 20mph policy writing - is there any update to this release date in draft, as it is potentially delaying some of the major road scheme design proposals by National Highways in the Chichester West division?

Answer

The County Council is currently reviewing the overall speed limit policy as a part of a wider review of the county's road safety strategy. This covers all roads and speed limits. It is not possible at this time to cite a specific date as to when the review will be complete. Any transport proposals in the county should be taken forward aligned to our existing policy which includes for the provision for 20mph speed limits where appropriate.

5. Written question from **Cllr Oxlade** for reply by **Assistant Director (Highways, Transport and Planning)**

Question

In a recent report to the Communities, Highways, Environment and Scrutiny Committee the following statement regarding future highway improvements was made:

'West Sussex County Council are working together with local authorities site promoters such as Homes England to deliver on housing needs while promoting sustainable land use development and travel patterns, promoting public transport through the provision of bus priority lanes and active travel infrastructure to major employment and commercial centres as viable alternatives to private car use.'

I have previously expressed concern about the need for the County Council to deliver the infrastructure for the proposed West of Ifield development in the district of Horsham but abutting Bewbush in Crawley.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm she is confident that sufficient funds will be available to deliver all aspects of the infrastructure required to support the occupancy of 10,000 homes to the West of Ifield including the provision of bus priority lanes and active travel infrastructure to major employment and commercial centres.

Answer

Council officers are providing pre-application advice to the site promoter, Homes England, and Horsham District and Crawley Borough Councils in their role as Local Planning Authorities. This work is taking place as part of the reviews of the Horsham and Crawley Local Plans and will be taken into account, alongside other material considerations, in decisions by the Local Planning Authorities on their preferred development strategies. Details of the proposed development are available on the [Have Your Say - West of Ifield website](#).

Various technical studies by the site promoter or the local planning authorities are still ongoing and no decision has been taken to allocate the site for development. The various technical studies on infrastructure and other issues will include viability assessments that aim to demonstrate that the proposed development and mitigation measures to address cumulative impacts with other sites are viable to come forward over the plan period. The County Council is aware that this viability work is taking place but not heavily involved and not yet aware of the outcomes. Therefore, at this point, it is too early to confirm whether or not the infrastructure is deliverable.

Delivery of infrastructure to mitigate development impacts is undoubtedly a key issue for the County Council and its stakeholders across the county. In most cases, using the traditional approach to development it is necessary under the current planning system for, at least some, development to take place before infrastructure is delivered. However, the County Council is working with Homes England to deliver the Burgess Hill Northern Arc which provides an example of how working with a central government agency can open up funding opportunities and secure earlier infrastructure delivery than the traditional approach to development. This has potential to deliver better outcomes for communities and I think is worthy of consideration by the local planning authorities.

Ultimately, it will be for the local planning authorities to decide whether or not to allocate the site for development. Their plans will be subject to an examination in public to ensure they are sound, including in relation to infrastructure delivery, before being adopted and the County Council will continue to provide technical expertise to support this process. If you have any questions on these matters, then please take them up with the lead officers who are anand.pillay@westsussex.gov.uk and caroline.west@westsussex.gov.uk.

6. Written question from **Cllr Milne** for reply by **Director of Law and Assurance**

Question

Steps have been taken by councils and other providers of social housing to reduce carbon emissions through improved insulation or sustainable energy options. However, this ambition is particularly challenging in the private rented sector, where it is complicated by the landlord-tenant relationship. Currently, district and borough councils across West Sussex are inhibited from encouraging improvements because we lack a compulsory database of landlords. We have no contact details for more than a small percentage of the total. Landlord registration is already compulsory in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as Liverpool and a number of London boroughs. Does the County Council have any plans to progress a county-wide database of private landlords, and if not, why not?

Answer

Responsibility for the oversight of private rented accommodation falls to district and borough councils as housing authorities. The County Council has no role or function to discharge and would have no reason to compile or hold a database of providers. This is something that Cllr Milne should pursue with the district and borough councils in West Sussex.