

## West Sussex County Council – Written Questions

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**26 May 2023**

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

### **Question**

The recent Ofsted Report on Children's Services recognised both the pressure we face in recruiting sufficient social workers, and the success we have had in recruiting from abroad.

However, we know that across the South East, the cost of living is making the retention of staff as serious an issue as recruitment.

Given the critical importance to our continued improvement journey of retaining these vital staff, can the Cabinet Member give us information on the progress and results of the recruitment drive since it began in September 2022, the measures we have in place to ensure we retain these staff and any early information relating to their retention?

### **Answer**

We have had offers of employment accepted by 52 social workers as a direct result of this focused recruitment drive. The new workers started to arrive in late January and as of 19 May we have had 29 of the social workers join us. The 29 are all still with us and current retention rate is 100%.

All the social workers who have joined us are being supported with an enhanced induction plan which includes support from our Professional Practice Team, bespoke training plans overseen with team managers and a small team of additional experienced workers. These additional workers are supporting the new starters in practical terms for example accompanying them on visits. Frequent supervision is being undertaken with team managers and also group and peer supervisions are happening. More formal on-going training sessions are also taking place. The new social workers are supported to gradually build the number and the complexity of children and families they are working with.

The other 23 workers are having their onboarding checks completed. One of the things required is Social Work England registration and there are currently delays being experienced with this. We have escalated our concerns to Social Work England and continue to work with them. In the meantime, we are actively keeping engaged and in touch with those waiting to arrive and in the second week of May hosted a 'Meet your Manager' Teams call to ensure they are all reassured that we are looking forward to welcoming them and to answer any questions they may have.

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

**Question**

Following the announcement of secondary school places in West Sussex on 1 March 2023, could you please advise the following:

- (a) How many children did not receive a secondary school placement of either their first, second or third choices across West Sussex?
- (b) Could you please advise us geographically if areas or cohorts have been especially affected by the allocation process and, if so, which areas and schools/cohorts have been affected?
- (c) How many pupils are going through the appeals process?
- (d) When is the latest date they can expect a decision to be made by?
- (e) Finally, could you please confirm that all children being allocated a school placement more than three miles from their home will receive school transport by West Sussex?

**Answer**

The answers to the questions are as follows:

- (a) 9,072 (96.1%) received either their first, second or third preference secondary school place and 372 (3.9%) had no preference met.
- (b) The 372 are spread across the county although two areas (Horsham and Shoreham/Lancing) have seen a higher level of no preferences being met than elsewhere.
- (c) We have currently received 712 secondary school appeals to be heard independently, although requests are still being made. It should be noted that this figure is based on appeals received as pupils may have appeals lodged at more than one school.
- (d) Independent appeals are scheduled to be heard between May and July depending on the dates agreed with the schools and also panel members' availability. Once the independent appeal panel has made its decisions parents are usually informed within a week.
- (e) All school transport arrangements are made in accordance with the County Council's Home to School Transport policy. Where a secondary aged pupil has been placed at the next nearest suitable school to their home address where places are available and it is beyond the statutory three miles walking distance from the child's home, transport provision, usually by way of a train or bus pass, will be made.

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

**Question**

Emergency roadworks cause significant disruption to communities, economic loss to local businesses, and reputational damage to the Council. The increasing frequency of emergency roadworks in some locations suggests that the utility providers are relying on them to cover maintenance deficits.

Separately for each West Sussex district and for Imberdown division alone:

- (a) How many of each type of Permit for street, road or highways works (i.e. Major, Standard, Minor and Immediate) have been issued in each of the last two years?
- (b) How many of each type of Permit has each of the utility providers requested in each of the last two years?

**Answer**

It is the case that any works on the highway have the potential to cause congestion and disruption for local communities and businesses. It is also the case that a failure in essential services such as gas, electricity, communications or water supply will also cause significant disruption for local communities and this is especially the case for an emergency such as a leak. Utility companies therefore have a legal right to maintain or upgrade their apparatus and the county council has a legal duty to permit this activity.

Data relating to total streetworks permits for the last two financial years are shown below. Unfortunately it is not possible to present the data by district or ward boundary without considerable effort (manual sorting) or commissioning a special report. Data is therefore presented in an [Appendix \(PDF, 505KB\)](#) (available online) by financial year as permits relating to utility companies and towns.

In summary, during 2021/22, 1,340 emergency permits were granted. This figure rises to 1,476 during 2022/23.

**Table 1: 2021/22 Permit Totals**

<b>Permit Type</b>	<b>Number of Permits</b>
Minor	22,093
Immediate (Urgent)	6,001
Standard	3,824
Major	2,546
Immediate (Emergency)	1,340
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>35,804</b>

**Table 2: 2022/23 Permit Totals**

<b>Permit Type</b>	<b>Number of Permits</b>
Minor	20,910
Immediate (Urgent)	7,245
Standard	3,386
Major	2,632

<b>Permit Type</b>	<b>Number of Permits</b>
Immediate (Emergency)	1,476
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>35,649</b>

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

**Question**

The A264 junctions with the A22 and the B2028.

- (a) What progress has been made on the joint feasibility study of the Felbridge A264/A22 junction with Surrey County Council, Tandridge District Council and Mid Sussex District Council?
- (b) When will the feasibility study scope be published and will it be subject to public consultation?
- (c) With regard to the [West Sussex Transport Plan 2022-36](#); how will the feasibility study align with other work to address:
  - (i) the medium-term priorities set out in paragraph 7.131;
  - (ii) the issues set out in paragraph 7.124; and
  - (iii) the need for safety related interventions at the B2028/Wallage Lane junction set out in paragraph 7.123.
- (d) Does the Council consider that the carriageway surface of the A264/B2028 Dukes Head Roundabout is acceptable and safe for all users? What plans, including dates, are there for upgrading the carriageway including adding a westbound left turn only lane?

**Answer**

- (a) The consultancy brief has been discussed with the local planning authorities and finalised. Project managers at the County Council and Surrey County Council have been identified. Once a consultant has been appointed, technical work and engagement with key stakeholders including county councillors can commence.
- (b) There is no intention to publish the consultancy brief, although the pertinent information can be shared with key stakeholders, including county councillors. It is not appropriate for public consultation to take place on the brief as the brief draws on policies and strategies that have previously been consulted on.
- (c) The study will consider the issues, challenges and priorities set out in the West Sussex Transport Plan that are relevant to the study area, alongside those in the Surrey Local Transport Plan and other relevant plans and strategies such as local plans and neighbourhood plans. The plans and strategies will be taken into account to develop a set of study objectives against which options can be assessed. The evidence base that supports these plans and strategies will be reviewed and used by the project team. Although the B2028 junction with Wallage Lane is outside the study area, it is a route used by traffic seeking to

avoid congestion on the A22 and A264. The need for a safety scheme at this location will be revisited once the impacts of the preferred scheme are understood.

- (d) The County Council is aware of the condition of A264/B2028 Dukes Head junction. In the immediate term, the safety inspection regime monitors local defective areas and arranges repairs to defects and potholes in line with the County Council's Highway Inspection Manual. The Land West of Copthorne Development (13/04127/OUTES) includes a condition that requires the developer to deliver small-scale widening improvements in advance of the occupation of the 250th dwelling. The start of works for this scheme is dependent on the availability of road space but the County Council expects these works to commence towards the end of 2023. As the developer-led improvements only include partial resurfacing of the junction, the County Council are also in the process of designing a scheme to resurface the remainder of the roundabout and approaches/departures for inclusion in the 2024/25 Carriageway Resurfacing Programme, subject to budget and overall priority need.

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

**Question**

Following the tragic death of cyclist Pathushan Sutharsan at the A281 Downs Link crossing, there has been a further serious collision between a horse and a car.

Pathushan's Coroner wrote a Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths stating:

"In my opinion there is a risk that future deaths will occur unless action is taken. I believe your organisation have the power to take such action. It appears that at this stage there are no definitive plans in place to take this forward. Therefore the significant risk to the users of this junction remains".

Two years ago the Council identified a bridge as its preferred solution. Now that the Council has established that their fallback option of a Pegasus crossing is impractical because of cost and loss of trees, will the Cabinet Member agree to bring forward a bridge as a major scheme funded over a number of years?

**Answer**

Following the release of the coroner's report into the incident in 2020, the County Council completed a series of remedial works to improve safety, including the erection of signs, clearance of vegetation and the installation of wooden barriers on the Downslink path.

An options report looked at the costs associated with a bridge and we have worked with Sustrans on this and potential bids to Department of Transport for funding. Full funding for this scheme is not available and any solution will require significant investment from the County Council's own funds.

For the County Council, Horsham District Council and Sustrans a bridge is the preferred option. However, the estimated cost of a bridge is approximately £2m with rising materials and constructions costs. Neither the County Council nor Sustrans

have been able to make an economic case for the bridge in comparison to other priorities.

Until there is some prospect of funding being available to progress with a significant improvement at this site, our current position is for the scheme to remain in our pipeline until appropriate funding becomes available.