

## West Sussex County Council – Written Questions

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**22 March 2024**

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

### Question

The 2024 edition of Planning School Places shows that demand for secondary places in East Grinstead exceeded capacity in four of the last five years.

Published Admission Number (PAN). A school planning area is deemed full when capacity in use exceeds 95%.

<b>Year</b>	<b>PAN Year 7</b>	<b>Pupils in Year 7</b>	<b>Surplus places</b>	<b>% of Capacity in use</b>
2017	540	522	18	97%
2018	540	526	14	97%
2019	540	549	-9	102%
2020	540	532	8	99%
2021	540	539	1	100%
2022	540	557	-17	103%
2023	540	554	-14	103%

The report states that the current provision of places is insufficient to meet the demand within the planning area when in-year admissions are factored in and announces the intention to introduce bulge classes at both Imberhorne and Sackville schools.

<b>School</b>	<b>Year project commenced/ proposed implementation date</b>	<b>Project Type</b>	<b>Additional provision provided/ proposed</b>	<b>New PAN</b>	<b>New Capacity</b>
Imberhorne Secondary School	2024	Bulge class	Additional cohort of 30 for 5 years	n/a	n/a
Sackville Secondary School	2024	Bulge class	Additional cohort of 30 for 5 years	n/a	n/a

The recently announced secondary school place allocations for September 2024 includes a waiting list for places at Imberhorne, confirming the pressures outlined in the report.

On 29 February the Council removed the key decision for the allocation of funding for the bulge classes from the Forward Plan.

- (a) What evidence supports the decision not to proceed with the provision of bulge classes?
- (b) What is the estimated demand for places in future years and how will in-year allocations be handled?

### **Answer**

- (a) When secondary transfer applications were received and assessed in January and February 2024 there were 12 vacancies (one at Imberhorne and 11 at Sackville on the existing combined Published Admission Number of 540). It therefore seemed unnecessary to add extra accommodation. After allocation, there are still 10 places available at Sackville which remain unfilled and can cater for expected in-year admissions. All in-area, on time applications for Imberhorne received a place at allocation. A number of on time, out-of-area children with a sibling at the school also received a place. There is a waiting list for Imberhorne; the majority of children on this live out of county.
- (b) Demand for secondary places is anticipated to peak in 2027/28 although numbers for 2024/25 are lower than anticipated; fresh forecasts for pupil numbers are due to be received in June 2024. It may be necessary to mobilise temporary accommodation in January/February 2025 to manage demand for September 25 entry, but only if it is required.

## **2. Written question from Cllr Pudaloff for reply by Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Education and Skills**

### **Question**

Following the West Sussex Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection's findings of inconsistent support for young people transitioning to adult services, 18 to 25, how can the Council and NHS collaborate for smoother transitions, especially regarding mental health needs?

The inspection highlighted long wait times for diagnosis and treatment, impacting those with poor attendance most. Additionally, fragmented occupational/physiotherapy services were identified.

- (a) Can dynamic support registers be improved for smoother council-NHS handoffs, considering mental health needs?
- (b) How can integrated key worker support, including mental health specialists, be expanded to minimise disruption?
- (c) How will wait times, access thresholds, specialist provision gaps (speech & language), and fragmented therapy services in relation to these transitions be addressed?
- (d) What joint efforts can strengthen preparation for adulthood and ensure ongoing support for mental health and additional needs?

## Answer

In response to questions (a) to (c), as these relate to services provided by NHS Sussex, the County Council can advise that these matters will be addressed by NHS Sussex as part of their response to the SEND inspection.

(d) A range of measures are in place including:

- As part of the Adults Improvement Programme, a transitions programme has produced two joint transition protocols setting out the roles and responsibilities of multiple services that support young people as they approach adulthood, which were published in January 2024. The next stage of this project is to improve further the advice and information for young people with mental health support needs. The Transitions Programme will work collaboratively with the Education and Learning Transformation Programme to jointly support the strategic approach to preparation for adulthood so that young people consistently receive the right help and support to lead successful lives.
- A multi-disciplinary transitions panel, which will shortly include representation from the Parent Carer Forum, meets regularly to ensure a smooth transition for those moving from Children's to Adult Services and any ongoing support for mental health and additional needs that may be required.
- In addition, the skills and expertise of Children with Disability (CWD) workers has been developed in preparing young people to transition to adult social care and this is evidenced by 80% of CWD workers reporting better knowledge and capability. Bespoke information and guidance for staff is improving transition specific practice and processes, which includes a focus for mental health and additional needs.
- Thought-Full (Mental Health Support Teams) work in schools attended by over 50% of children and young people aged 5 to 18.
- Development of pathways for Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) so that children and young people can access education and achieve their potential.
- WOWSI (Working on Worries Support and Intervention) parent-led CBT approach for parents of primary school aged children to reduce anxiety.
- Web-based Thriving in Education tool to improve access to mental health and emotional wellbeing advice and information, primarily for schools but also parents and other professionals.
- District and borough-based forums exist in some localities between GPs, practice managers and schools to discuss attendance, EBSA, mental health and emotional wellbeing, building understanding between professional groups.

### 3. Written question from **Cllr Smith** for reply by **Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue**

#### Question

With the Household Support Fund ending in September 2024, as announced by The Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Budget, could you please advise:

- (a) How West Sussex County Council will financially support our most vulnerable residents after this time? Will there be any other local or centrally funded

initiative made available to residents once the Household Support Fund ceases to help them access funds for essential items?

- (b) Will the removal of the Household Support Fund result in any job losses or a need for restructuring within the Communities team?

### **Answer**

- (a) Following the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 6 March 2024 regarding the continuation of the Household Support Fund for the period 1 April to 30 September 2024 we are awaiting guidance and fund criteria to be published by the Department of Work & Pensions. This will set out the scope of the approach to be delivered during the next six-month period and may indicate a direction of travel in respect of future policy and subsequent budget allocations.

Future funding by way of dedicated grant allocation is still uncertain. However, the County Council will continue to lobby the Government in collaboration with other local authorities, for the continued provision of support for the most vulnerable residents.

The Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee (CHESC) is scheduled to receive a paper on the Household Support Fund (HSF) at its 14 June 2024 meeting. This will set out the activity delivered in the current full year of HSF Round 4 (2023/24), reflect on outcomes achieved, and consider the approach for HSF Round 5 (1 April to 30 September 2024).

The agenda item will provide CHESC members with the opportunity to contribute as to the future approach to be taken by the County Council.

- (b) No - the County Council has not drawn any administration costs from the Household Support Fund and therefore there are no staff directly paid from these grant funds.

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

#### **Question**

- (a) The joint Surrey County Council/West Sussex County Council A22/A264 Corridor Study missed its announced deadline of the end 2023 for its initial report providing a summary of previous transport studies and options considered for alleviating the traffic congestion at the Felbridge junction and along the A22 London Road. What is the new date for the initial report to be issued?
- (b) The final report for the Corridor Study, including the recommended options, is due to be published at the end of this year. Is this date likely to slip and, if so, what is the new date for its publication?
- (c) The Dukes Head roundabout is a key junction on the A264. The road surface has attracted considerable adverse comment from road users and the need to resurface the carriageway has been accepted by the County Council. Can the

Council confirm that the roundabout will be resurfaced this year and is it able to announce a firm date?

**Answer**

The West Sussex Transport Plan (WSTP) includes improvements to the A22 and A264 corridor as a medium term (2027-32) priority.

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) has been working jointly with Surrey County Council (SCC) on the A22-A264 East Grinstead to Godstone area corridor feasibility study, which is expected to identify a set of improvements for delivery subject to demonstrating deliverability and value for money. The study is being led by SCC and transport consultants were commissioned to support the study in early autumn 2023.

To date, work has taken place to review previous studies and establish a set of objectives against which options can be appraised. Unfortunately, the study has been delayed due to the departure of the previous project manager. However, a new SCC project lead will begin at the start of April 2024. At the present time, the overall programme for the study is being revised with the aim of minimising any future delays and, if possible, bringing the project back to the original timetable for publication of the final report.

The resurfacing of the A264 Dukes Head roundabout has a permitted programme date of 17 and 18 July and should be completed over two nights. This will of course be subject to operational influences such as weather, resource and materials.