

County Council 22 March 2024

Item 16(b) - Notice of Motion on Tackling Digital Exclusion

Amendment by Cllr Pudaloff

This Council notes that there is an ever-increasing use of and reliance on the provision of services via digital media.

It is well recognised that the use of digital technology has brought many benefits. However, it also excludes those who do not have the finance, resources, skills, or devices to engage with digital services, ***or those who experience barriers to existing services to address digital exclusion.***

In June 2023 the House of Lords Communications and Digital Select Committee identified that:

- 2.4m people are still unable to complete a single basic digital task to get online;
- 1.7m households have no broadband or mobile internet access.

The Council recognises that:

- The Council ensures, through the implementation of our digital culture, the availability of non-digital alternatives to access Council services.
- The Council's libraries are helping ***some*** people engage with digital services.
- The Council has an extensive programme of work to build digital skills, including free access to public computer networks, the provision of free Wi-Fi in public spaces, and through our Digital Ambassador volunteers.

However, the Council recognises that despite this programme of support, many residents continue to be digitally excluded. Furthermore, digital exclusion goes much further than engagement with the services of West Sussex County Council. We need to be supporting our residents regarding all the effects of digital exclusion.

In recognition of this digital divide, the Council commits to increasing its work to ensure that residents are not digitally excluded within the county. The Council requests that the Chief Executive and Leader:

- (1) Ensure that the County Council is best able to identify residents and particular groups of residents who are most at risk of being digitally excluded due to lack of finance, resources, skills or devices, ***and other barriers to existing services to address digital exclusion.***
- (2) Work with those groups to find the most effective ways of improving digital inclusion, recognising those ways will be different, depending on the reasons for the lack of digital inclusion, ***which can include a lack of transport or lack of opening hours for Council facilities.***
- (3) Strengthen working with all tiers of local government and the voluntary sector to address digital exclusion ***to provide long term and***

sustainable funding for targeted schemes for those experiencing digital exclusion.

- (4) Target appropriate ***resident engagement and*** publicity measures to raise awareness of the alternatives to digital engagement with the Council, for those residents for whom using digital channels is not a viable option.
- (5) ***Ensure that, as with other aspects of equality, an assessment of digital inclusion/exclusion is an integral part of every project from the County Council.***