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## **Policy context (local and national)**

### **Introduction**

1. This section sets out the national policy context to this work and the local policy outlook for West Sussex County Council, including an early assessment of how the pandemic has impacted County Council services and financial position; and how we are planning to reset our activities and priorities and reboot our organisation in the coming months.

### **Overall Context**

#### **National COVID-19 Strategy**

2. In May, the Government published a cautious roadmap to recover from COVID-19 to 'the new normal' The plan moves the national response from phase 1 'contain, delay, research, mitigate' to phase 2 'smarter controls', with steps to reduce controls on individuals and businesses over the following two months. Phase 3 is 'reliable treatment' and will be entered when there is a viable vaccine or treatment to reduce loss of life.
3. The Government has set out that the phased lifting of lockdown is reliant on compliance with five tests, which are:
  1. Protect the NHS's ability to cope. We must be confident that we are able to provide sufficient critical care and specialist treatment right across the UK.
  2. See a sustained and consistent fall in the daily death rates from COVID-19 so we are confident that we have moved beyond the peak.
  3. Reliable data from SAGE showing that the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels across the board.
  4. Be confident that the range of operational challenges, including testing capacity and PPE, are in hand, with supply able to meet future demand.
  5. Be confident that any adjustments to the current measures will not risk a second peak of infections that overwhelms the NHS.
4. On 1 June the Government began the gradual re-opening of the economy, with the primary schools open for years reception, 1 and 6. Throughout June and July, as the Government has determined the five tests for easing lockdown continue to be met, we have seen the phased re-opening of non-essential businesses and gradual re-opening of places of worship and other community facilities. The precise timetable for further adjustments will depend on continuing to meet the five tests, and the infection risk at each point of review.
5. The strategy sets out that throughout the 'smarter controls' phase people will need to continue to minimise the spread of the disease through good hygiene practices: hand washing, social distancing and regular disinfection of surfaces and The Government has emphasised that these measures will be in place for some time. The Government is also clear that for the foreseeable future, workers should continue to work from home wherever possible. These requirements will continue to affect the way we work and deliver services, with a continued focus on working from home where possible.
6. The social care system has come under pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic, with additional central government focus. While statutory responsibility for care remains with local authorities, the Department for Health and Social Care has

established the Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Taskforce, chaired by David Pearson. The taskforce will ensure the delivery of two packages of support that the Government has put in place for the care sector, the Social Care Action Plan and the Care Home Support Package and advise on a plan to support the care sector through the next year of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will report back by the end of August, ahead of the winter.

## **Brexit**

7. The UK left the European Union (EU) on 31 January 2020 and entered a transition period which is set to end on 31 December 2020. Negotiations to agree a deal for our future trading relationship with the EU re-started in April after a pause at the start of the pandemic. There is, however, a possibility that an agreement will not be reached and the UK will exit the transition period without a trade deal.
8. If later this year it becomes likely we will not reach a trade deal with the EU, we would expect national and local government to step up planning for any impact of no trade deal on our borders, businesses, procurement, and ability to deliver public services. This may involve Local Resilience Forums, and councils undertaking new regulatory functions, at the same time as playing a core role in the COVID-19 pandemic response which would be a considerable challenge.

## **Devolution**

9. The Government remains committed to devolution, with a White Paper promised, although publication has been delayed while the Government manages the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been a great deal of speculation on which responsibilities will be devolved, and the conditions the Government will require of places to obtain devolution of powers. West Sussex County Council will continue to monitor government policy in this area and will take a pragmatic view on its approach to devolution once more information becomes available.

## **National Economic Outlook & Local Government Finance**

10. In April, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) assessed the potential impact of coronavirus on the UK economy and public finances. The OBR's analysis was based on a three-month lockdown scenario, where economic activity gradually returned to normal over the following three months. This was updated in May but before the Government announced its plans for easing lockdown, so this is not reflected in the modelling.

<b>OBR scenario</b> (updated 14 May)	<b>Q2 2020</b>	<b>Q3 2020</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2020-21</b>
Real GDP (percentage change on previous period)	-35	27	-12.8	
Unemployment rate (per cent)	10	8.5	7.3	
Public Sector Net Borrowing (£ billion)*				298.4
Public Sector Net Debt (Per cent of GDP)				95.8

\*Often referred to as the deficit

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11. The scenario projected a sharp fall in national economic output (GDP) in Q2 (April, May and June) of 2020, due to closure of businesses and requirements to stay home in the lockdown, followed by recovery in Q3 (July, August and September). For the year, however, GDP was projected to shrink by nearly 13%.
  12. The projected fall in national economic output, along with the increase in public expenditure to support incomes and businesses will undoubtedly influence the Government's plans for future public expenditure. An emergency budget is expected in July to set national fiscal policy for the immediate term, but given the Spending Review, Fair Funding Review and Review of Business Rates being undertaken by the Government have been postponed, it is unlikely we will have any certainty on government spending levels and priorities for 2021/22 and beyond soon.

### **Local Economic Outlook**

13. There is no doubt that COVID-19 is having a significant impact on the county's economy. Businesses are being hit hard, there are significant levels of business failure, residents are losing their jobs and livelihoods, and the implications of the aviation industry crisis on Gatwick airport are far-reaching and impact the local, regional and national economy. The impact on the economy has severe social consequences too. A snapshot of the data shows that:
  - around a quarter of West Sussex working residents aged 16+ have been furloughed
  - Crawley has the highest number of furloughed at 20,000 representing around 33.7% of working residents in Crawley aged 16+, and the number of furloughed in Arun is also high at 19,000 (27.7%).<sup>1</sup>
  - the take up rate for the self-employment income support scheme in West Sussex (i.e. the numbers of claims made against the total potentially eligible population) is 71% compared with 70% regionally and nationally.
  - Adur has the highest take up rate at 74%.
14. In addition, from research and estimates of impact undertaken by various organisations and from our own collation of intelligence from across the county, we are aware of the potential impact and issues. The key messages emerging:
  - The number of job vacancies plummeted - virtually overnight with the biggest hits being in the leisure, recreation, food preparation and hospitality sectors;
  - The number of business start-ups in West Sussex in March this year were down by a third compared with March last year; and the number of dissolved companies up by over 40% during the same period, though there were more start-ups than closures;

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<sup>1</sup> NB a person with several jobs could have been furloughed more than once and each 'employment' that has been furloughed is counted. The numbers of furloughed from HMRC are based on residential address HMRC holds for each employee and doesn't necessarily reflect the employee's place of work.

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- Considering those sectors that are more likely to furlough or lay off workers Centre for Cities identified hospitality, aviation and leisure as the most vulnerable and seeing an immediate negative effect. All these sectors are key to the West Sussex economy;
  - Indications are that Crawley is the most impacted area in West Sussex in terms of jobs affected, and indeed comes out as one of the most affected in the country;
  - There is also some evidence that coastal towns are likely to be more at risk, as they are often already areas that have higher levels of deprivation as well as high proportions of those sectors that are currently shut down including pubs, restaurants and tourist accommodation;
  - The care sector is fragile and under considerable pressure, including through workforce challenges;
  - The employment and skills landscape are being severely impacted, including opportunities for school leavers; funded pre-employment support and provision, particularly for the vulnerable; apprenticeship provision; the impact on further and higher education settings; graduate employment; and considerable increases in unemployment.

15. The immediate recession and potential longer-term economic downturn resulting from the pandemic will have a huge impact on the prosperity and wellbeing of our residents and also on West Sussex County Council's financial resilience. It is likely to drive increased demand for services, at a time when the County Council's resources are significantly stretched. This context will require some very difficult decisions about priorities for delivery and service provision.

### **Adults and Health**

16. We have had to adapt how we deliver existing services and quickly develop new services. Our response to COVID-19 has shown that we achieve the best outcomes for residents by working with district, borough and NHS partners in one system approach.

17. We have maintained provision of services wherever possible; have continued to meet our statutory duties and have not had to use Care Act easements.

18. Our staff are working more flexibly – and we want to build that flexibility into our reset operating model post COVID-19.

19. We have transformed how we approach discharge from hospital – working with partners to speed the process significantly.

### **Care Home Resilience Plan**

20. The West Sussex health, public health and care system has worked robustly together to plan and implement care home support within the county in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The system has a long history of partnership working including formal joint commissioning arrangements and associated governance structures. These have been built on and reinforced during this crisis and it is anticipated that the system-learning will be carried forward into sustainable and resilient longer-term integrated working. Sussex, as an entirety, has recently

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become a formal Integrated Care System which demonstrates further the local commitment to joint working.

21. West Sussex has a considerably older age profile compared to England with a higher proportion of over 65s and comparatively fewer residents aged 15-39. There is also a relatively high number of older people choosing, or being supported, to live in care homes with 10,279 registered care home beds across the County.
22. Even though we have always had regular ongoing contact with our care home market, our relationships have tended to be rather more transactional than built on a partnership approach to meeting positive outcomes for residents. This is in part due to the need to work with a large number of individual providers and homes rather than via any overarching Trade Association or consortium of providers. West Sussex Partners in Care is the only local care association in the county and their support and advice to the sector and facilitation of webinars to cascade to, and gather information from, care providers is very valuable. We know we need to create a more mature dialogue with our providers and are actively considering, together with the market and our other health and care partners, the best means of achieving this.

### **National reform**

23. The social care system remains fragile locally and nationally and will remain so until the long-term strategy for the future is set out by the Government in the much-delayed Social Care Green Paper.

### **Our Ambition**

24. Adults' Services are producing a Development Plan as a natural replacement for the previous improvement plan. It is based on the good work and the lessons learnt throughout the COVID-19 experience; best practice in relation to adult social care; and the urgent issues that should now be addressed within the County Council's adult social care services. It consists of both strategic issues, which benefit from the power of a large county authority; as well as significant operational issues.
25. The plan will include, strategically:
  - A comprehensive prevention strategy aimed at reducing the number of residential and nursing home placements through best practice and integration across health, housing and social care
  - A Memorandum of Understanding for health, housing and social care as part of our approach to prevention
  - Managing in the social care market; working closely with all independent providers of care to produce a market that can survive COVID-19 and support our service strategies
  - Building on our strong relationships with health services and developing new approaches to joint commissioning to improve outcomes for residents and reduce costs

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26. It will include, operationally:

- The delivery of a new and stronger model of working for mental health services outside of the existing section 75 arrangements
- Establishing a new arrangement for the Approved Mental Health Practitioner service
- The development of a strong audit, quality assurance and core standard programme to underpin quality across Adults' Services
- Establishing permanent arrangements to continue the successful COVID-19 hospital discharge and placement processes
- A project to reduce expenditure in lifelong services in line with prevention

27. Many aspects of this work are already underway albeit some are in early stages. The Development Plan will be in place in September.

### **Public Health**

28. COVID-19 is likely to be the most significant public health event that we are likely to see in our lifetimes.

29. During the pandemic, Public Health has and continues to be the West Sussex County Council source of technical advice around COVID-19 providing support to all parts of the council and ensuring that the County Council activity is in line with guidance, evidence and practice.

30. The Public Health Intelligence function has and continues to work with colleagues across Sussex to provide data and intelligence.

31. In response to the pandemic the Public Health Team undertook a rapid health impact assessment of the known (and unknown) impacts of COVID-19. The paper highlights a range of the known and likely negative and positive impacts of the current crisis on our population which are summarized in the table below. Priority areas for action include mental health (including children and young people, bereavement and debt), workforce and workplace health, inequalities including our BAME communities, vulnerable groups such as older people and behavioural lifestyle risk factors.

32. The recent West Sussex Annual Public Health Report 2020, on the topic of workplaces and health, provides additional information in relation to the economy in West Sussex and the opportunities to improve workplace health. The report notes our status as an 'anchor organisation' and the role we can play both as an exemplar employer and in reducing inequalities through education, skills and training, and through ensuring local residents have the opportunity to benefit from these.

33. Much of the Public Health Team's day to day work addresses the identified impacts of COVID-19, such as NHS Health Checks. The Wellbeing Programme delivered with our District and Borough partners, our workplace health activity and suicide and self-harm prevention.

34. The Public Health Team is also resourcing a number of additional posts, projects and programmes to address these including a new Consultant in Public Health post focused on inequalities and mental health and additional resource for obesity, dual diagnoses and falls prevention activity.

Summary of negative impacts	Summary of positive impacts
<p><b>Determinants of health</b></p> <p>Increase in unemployment and poverty; increase in extent and depth of need in the population, some of it unmet;            increase in pressures on housing; increased domestic abuse; potential increases in other crimes; increasing number of children experiencing adverse childhood experiences; increased children in need, children and households in poverty;</p> <p>negative impact on education and widening of educational inequalities;</p>	<p><b>Determinants of health</b></p> <p>Short term environmental improvements – opportunities to sustain these e.g. active travel, infrastructure;            greater community cohesion;</p>
<p><b>Health behaviours</b></p> <p>Increase in sedentariness, alcohol use and other negative health behaviours; increase in chronic health problems in medium to longer term</p>	<p><b>Health behaviours</b></p> <p>Novel opportunities being seized for home exercise; opportunities to promote positive health behaviours in the light of concern with the impact of the virus on those with underlying conditions</p>
<p><b>Workplaces and workplace wellbeing</b></p> <p>Increased demand on services; increasing pressure on staff leading to burn out, sickness, recruitment problems</p>	<p><b>Workplaces</b></p> <p>Respect for the role of key workers; opportunities to raise profile of public sector careers with new generation; opportunities for stronger partnership working and new ways of working</p>
<p><b>Mental health</b></p> <p>Increase in mental health problems in population; increased demand for services</p>	<p><b>Mental health</b></p> <p>Greater understanding of role of good mental health and wellbeing; opportunities to address this</p>
<p><b>Priority populations</b></p> <p>BAME            Deprived populations/low household income/zero hours            Crawley (impact of economic recession predicted to be largest)            People with existing mental health diagnoses</p>	<p>Greater knowledge of where our vulnerable populations are;</p>

Summary of negative impacts	Summary of positive impacts
Young people People living alone Older people Carers Children Children with SEN Parents of young children Pregnant women	greater community cohesion and opportunities to utilize this more
Longer term implications	Potential to have an impact
Increased mortality from COVID-19 and non COVID-19; decline in life expectancy/healthy life expectancy; increase in health inequalities	Greater awareness of (and commitment to addressing?) inequalities now that spotlight been shone on these issues

35. The Public Health Team has also led on West Sussex County Council's role in the National Test and Trace Programme
36. On 28 May, the Government launched the national test and trace programme. It is now possible for anyone in England who has symptoms to get tested for COVID-19. Those who test positive are asked for details of people they have been in close contact with and places they have visited over the last seven days, either by a contact tracer, by a text or by email. Once they have given those details, those contacts will then be alerted by phone, text or email and depending on their level of risk and will be instructed to isolate for up to 14 days, even if they do not have symptoms. This system will be complemented by the rollout of the NHS App.

### Local Outbreak Control Plans

37. In support of the national test and trace system, councils are required to develop Local Outbreak Control Plans. These will set out how local authorities will work with partners to identify localised outbreaks and support effective local responses, including plans to quickly deploy testing facilities to locations.
38. West Sussex's Public Health Team led on drafting plan, working with partners across the council and the wider system. It was published on the West Sussex County Council website on 30 June 2020.
39. £300m funding has been allocated to support the development of these plans, which will be distributed based on public health grants to local authorities and £3m has been allocated to West Sussex.
40. Public health also led on the requirement for local authorities to set up COVID-19 Health Protection Boards which oversee operational implementation of the plan and is in the process of setting up the member-led, public-facing Local Outbreak Engagement Board.

### Children and Young People

- Service recovery from COVID-19 satisfactory, with robust safeguarding in place and service resilience demonstrated

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- Children First Improvement agenda continues at pace, although Ofsted inspection and Department for Education (DfE) processes towards possible Children's Trust subject to a delay of at least 3 months – due to COVID-19
  - Improvement Boards continuing to oversee practice improvement agenda under chairmanship of John Coughlan, the DfE-appointed Commissioner for Children's Services in West Sussex
  - Service leadership team being consolidated under Lucy Butler, Executive Director of Children, Young People and Learning
  - Implement Children's Transformation Programme across Early Help, Social Care and Education
  - Service redesign to ensure that Children's Services operates the most effective service model, against high professional standards, while attracting and supporting a skilled and motivated workforce, and maintaining a strong partnership focus
  - Complete MOU for Children's Trust and maintain progress towards a Trust
  - Working closely with Hampshire County Council, our partner in practice to deliver service improvement within social care and early help
  - Implement the Commissioning Programme to improve service outcomes and demonstrate good value for money
  - Deliver new service offer to children in care and care leavers
  - Work with key partners to reduce the risk of homelessness amongst the young and vulnerable families
  - Deliver improvements across our provider services – Fostering and Residential Care

## **Education**

- Work with schools to facilitate return to school in Autumn
  - Review home to school transport
  - Review schools trading strategy
  - Place planning updated post COVID-19
  - Delivery required schools enhancements detailed in the capital programme
  - Revisit Aspire – outcomes
41. Despite the current challenging circumstances, the service continues to robustly address improvement work as a priority, with its partner in practice (Hampshire County Council) and through regular meetings report on our performance. Our performance is steadily improving, and we can fully discharge our statutory responsibilities towards the most vulnerable children and young people.
42. Despite the easing of duties imposed by regulations regarding the care and protection of vulnerable children and young people, we have, after careful consideration, decided not to adopt these permissions. We have done so to ensure that the highest standards of care and protection remain consistently in place.
43. We have put in place a full set of COVID-19 arrangements to ensure our staff are working to keep our children safe and they have been innovative in their use of digital technology to provide this. Interestingly, we have had feedback from young people that they prefer keeping in touch with their social worker or

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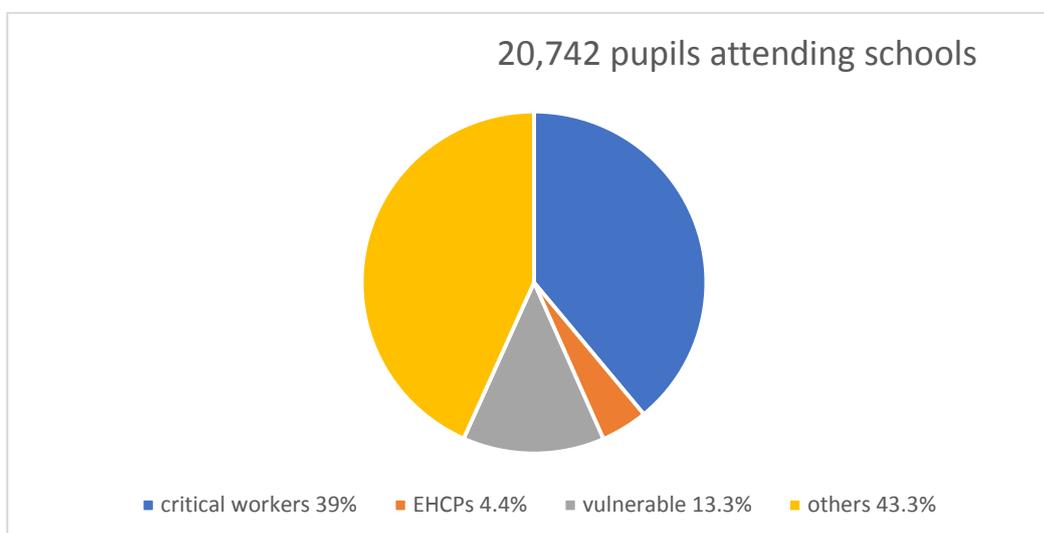
personal advisor by text, WhatsApp, or video calls. We have noticed that many young people are much more responsive to this approach, so that visits are more productive and are able to be held more frequently, with many of our staff able to keep in touch between formal visits. Equally, we have been able to use video technology to maintain contact visits for families whose children are looked after by the local authority. We are also finding that some families have been able to better engage with staff using virtual contact and appreciate shorter more frequent contacts.

44. This approach is not suitable for all children (particularly younger children) or families, all the time, but as part of our recovery plan we are carefully considering how we can take this learning into our new normal.
45. Like most local authorities, we have seen referrals into the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) decrease sharply from an average of 235 contacts per day to an average of 92 contacts per day during the first week of lockdown, (a 60% reduction). However, we are pleased to see that this is an improving picture; in the week ending 15 May there were an average of 148 contacts a day (a 37% decrease on pre-lockdown contacts). Together with our partners we are now planning for a surge in activity once lockdown begins to ease, so ensuring that we have the right capacity in place to meet likely demand.
46. We have also maintained good levels of contact with other vulnerable groups and our overall performance in this area remains on target to ensure that the most vulnerable receive the appropriate levels of support and care during the COVID-19 crisis. One example would be our good levels of service and support to those children and young people who go missing. 100% of those eligible for a Return Home Interview (RHI) were contacted by the Missing RHI Team, 88% of which were within 72 hours.

### **Education and Skills**

47. Following the onset of lockdown and an initial decline in attendance, numbers began to increase towards the end of the May half term and reached similar numbers to those in late March (circa 5,000). However, the proportion of those attending who were deemed vulnerable had risen from 17% in late March to 28% in late May, reflecting increased joint working between schools, social workers and the local authority's School Effectiveness Team.
48. Attendance at schools during May was above the national average with pupil attendance in West Sussex average 3.6% compared with a national average of 2%. Also, the proportion of vulnerable children attending school over the same period was above the national average of vulnerable pupil attendance nationally.
49. Since the phased return of schools, the number of pupils attending schools has increased daily. Data is collected daily but, due to issues relating to the DfE's recording and reporting tool which have yet to be addressed, data is only available for 93% of schools rather than a previous return of 99%. However, figures for the 16 June in our schools were as follows:
50. Overall attendance was 20,742 pupils (18% against the January 2020 census data). This was broken down as follows:

Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 6	Year 10*	Year 12*	others
29%	42%	35%	45%	13.3%	8.5%	9.3%



\*Secondary schools are still in the early stages of a phased return

51. The numbers of children returning to schools and the way schools are managing this return in relation to their own individual circumstances and risk assessments means that there is not a standardised approach across West Sussex. This is inevitable as the return is based on the schools' own risk assessments based upon buildings, facilities, staffing and context.
52. In some schools, there are significant greater numbers of children of key workers than in others. Buildings, capacity and local staffing equally do vary. It is therefore the case that where some schools are able to cater for all their core year groups, vulnerable and children of key workers and also allows for some measured return for children from other year groups, other schools are unable to meet the demand they have from parents in the core year groups identified nationally.
53. Our focus is on supporting schools fully reopen in September, including ensuring home to school transport is in place.
54. We continue to work to ensure that there are adequate school places in West Sussex, and support school improvement.

## **Fire and Rescue and Communities**

### **Fire and Rescue Service**

55. West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service is proud to serve.

### **Our ambition**

56. We work with our communities and partners to identify those at most risk from fire and other emergencies. Through our comprehensive understanding of the risks within the county, we will proactively work to prevent emergencies, helping people and business to become safer. When incidents do happen, we will respond

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as quickly as possible to help and save lives. To do this, we will empower and support our people to be the best they can be.

57. We set out how we will do this in our Integrated Risk Management Plan.

58. We will measure our success through the following:

- Businesses will be safer for employees and visitors as a result of our fire safety inspections.
- The community will be safer through home fire safety visits and education.
- 999 calls to critical fires where the first fire engine met our emergency response standard.

59. Investment into the service through our improvement activity has improved our overall resilience, enabling us to play a crucial role in the response to COVID-19 both locally and regionally through the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF). We have been coordinating and delivering emergency food and PPE supplies across Sussex. Fire crews have been supporting the most vulnerable in our communities by delivering medication and urgent food parcels and have been carrying out welfare checks, making onward referrals when necessary. We have also supported South East Coast Ambulance with logistical support, mechanical support and trained firefighters to crew ambulances with paramedics where required.

60. The service implemented strict infection control measures at the start of the COVID-19 crisis, and staff levels have not been detrimentally affected throughout. We saw an increase in the number of Retained Duty System firefighters being available, and as such, have had more fire engines available and ready to respond when needed than pre-crisis.

61. There are areas of the service that have been affected by COVID-19 as a result of lockdown and social distancing measures. Our ability to deliver some elements of practical training has been affected. Training in risk-critical firefighting skills is safety critical for our staff and we have risk assessed all scheduled training courses, and where we can, we have provided additional training online. This includes some innovative approaches to delivering incident command training remotely through webinars which has attracted national attention as good practice.

62. Fire safety activity was prioritised throughout and statutory activities such as building regulations consultations have continued unaffected. We have also maintained the ability to respond to fire safety concerns in businesses throughout which may require enforcement action to be undertaken because the risk from fire is too great, with officers receiving additional PPE and training. However, our standard risk-based inspection programme of fire safety audits required reprofiling as many of the premises due to be audited were closed during lockdown, and restrictions meant it was unfeasible to visit in person. Wherever possible, telephone audits were carried out, and as restrictions eased, we are working through the pent-up demand. The additional capacity created through the recent investment under the improvement plan have made this possible.

63. Our prevention activity has been affected by COVID-19 as most of the residents that we normally visit are either self-isolating or shielding. To ensure we could still help those at risk of fire, we offered safe and well visits in three ways; in person

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with staff social distancing and wearing PPE (for those at highest risk), by phone and by skype. We have plans to meet the pent-up demand from lockdown by temporarily redirecting resources. The improvements already made mean that we are able to address the pent-up demand in a more effective, more efficient – and speedier way than we were able to address our previous backlog. This is because we have increased our specialist resources in the prevention team, the reliability of our data has improved, and we have a more effective system to manage the completion of visits.

64. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) re-visited West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (WSFRS) on 19 February 2020 and found that the Service had made tangible improvements to mitigate the risk to public safety. They noted an accelerated pace in improvement activity since October 2019 and that staff reported that they felt supported. The investment made into the service has set a clear path for improvement and it is important that progress is maintained.
65. Much progress has been made into prevention and protection activity. Capacity has been increased in both areas which has included seeing backlogs of fire safety audits and safe and well visits being cleared. New strategies have been set which prioritise resource against the greatest risk and the systems that we use to deliver and monitor activity have been improved, enabling us to be more efficient and more effective. Although there is still much work to do, the service is much improved in these areas. These areas are important to make businesses safer for employees and visitors as a result of our fire safety inspections and making our community safer through home fire safety visits and education.
66. A service priority is improving operational resilience to ensure that our fire engines reach critical calls quickly and within the emergency response standards the Fire Authority have committed to. This has been difficult for us in recent years, primarily because of difficulties with having enough Retained Duty Firefighters available to crew fire engines. Under our improvement plans, we have introduced a number of measures to address this, including plans to address recruitment and retention, additional resource to coordinate our available resources and a flexible system to use retained firefighters who are not crewing their allocated fire engines in other parts of the county. The impact of these measures has been difficult to separate from the impact of COVID-19, and we will continue to monitor these as restrictions ease. Improving operational resilience remains a core priority for the service.
67. A key requirement on the service is to prepare firefighters for dealing with each of the risks we have assessed in the IRMP and therefore reasonably foresee. Investing in the training of staff is crucial to meeting our statutory obligations and ensuring that we respond effectively when emergencies happen. The current IRMP has already identified key areas for improvement including live fire training, fire fighter safety, adequate training of firefighters and development of their specialist skills in addition to a lack of provision for an inclusive and diverse workforce. These concerns were echoed by the recent inspection report and is a key focus of our improvement activity. The proposal for a new training facility at Horsham is capable of addressing these issues, providing leading edge technology which will set it apart as a centre of excellence in live fire training in the south of the country.

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68. The service has a programme of improvement activity focused around our people, which aims to make the service an employer of choice, offering a fantastic work culture and environment that attracts and retains dedicated employees, championing inclusion and supporting continuous development through creative and innovative learning solutions. The plans aim to build effective leadership at all levels, and to improve the employee experience and wellbeing from the first day of service through to retirement. Plans are in place to improve performance and development ensuring staff have the knowledge and skills to perform well, and access to development activities. We aim to retain and nurture talent by ensuring that all employees are given the opportunity to progress in their career, talent is developed and supported, there are clearly defined career pathways, and our processes around promotions are transparent and consistent.
69. West Sussex County Council, as the Fire and Rescue Authority has a statutory duty to identify the risks within West Sussex and to outline how it plans to meet those risks. This is discharged through the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2018-22 is a statutory document which is owned by the Fire Authority and delivered by the Fire and Rescue Service. The service has commenced the development of the new IRMP, which will take account of the impact of the pandemic in line with a comprehensive profile of the risks within West Sussex and will set out the future direction of the service post 2022.

## **Communities**

70. West Sussex County Council makes a huge contribution to making West Sussex a great place. In particular we know that residents want us to do more to promote behaviours that are more sensitive to climate change and we have a comprehensive plan to do this through our Climate Change Strategy and emerging Action Plan. They include setting positive examples through our energy saving and generating work.
71. Many businesses and residents have been hit hard by the economic downturn caused by COVID-19 and we have worked with partners to do all we can to support them and to ensure the Government knows the hardship that is being experienced in West Sussex. We have developed a draft Economy Reset Plan to set out what we believe needs to be done.
72. We provide much of the highway and transport infrastructure in the County that enables people and goods to move around West Sussex. We know our network has suffered from lack of investment and is under enormous pressure through the development of new housing right across the county. We have used the opportunity provided by the COVID-19 lockdown to promote and invest in walking and cycling. We have also sustained our investment in digital infrastructure that should improve the capability and resilience of the network and also reduce the need to travel.
73. We dispose of household waste and we know that we need to continue to encourage residents to reduce the amount of waste and, through recycling and composting, to dispose of it in a more environmentally sustainable way. That is why we are, with the support of our District and Borough partners, working up proposals to collect and treat food waste separately to generate clean, green energy.

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74. During COVID-19 we worked hard to set up a new community hub service to support the most vulnerable people in West Sussex and our 36 libraries provide a safe and welcoming physical presence across the county. During COVID-19 of course they provided a virtual presence and we have invested in the digital capability.
75. Finally, the County Council has land and buildings in across the county and we are reviewing our estate and looking to release underused, largely brownfield sites for redevelopment.

## **Highways and Infrastructure**

### **Our ambition**

- Progress programmes in the capital programme to improve the highway condition
  - Review parking audits/income from parking
  - Implement walking and cycling schemes
  - Support rural transport
76. Work continued on highways maintenance during the lockdown with a near-normal service delivered, whilst maintaining safe-distancing and ensuring the safety of the workforce and public.
77. The Government announced the bringing forward of previously announced funding for measures to encourage cycling and walking in May.
78. The changes in the amount of travel people undertake and the modes of transport used, arising from the pandemic, will need to be considered as part of Local Transport Planning.
79. Local bus companies received some support as part of the Government's emergency response to the pandemic, but there remain questions about longer-term viability in a context where people are being discouraged from using public transport. Whilst walking and cycling will be important in towns, consideration will need to be given to how access to services is supported in rural areas.
80. The County Council has continued to pay its suppliers during the COVID-19 period in line with Cabinet Office guidance, but at the time of writing this report it is uncertain how much longer these payments will need to be maintained, and when full services can be resumed. This is particularly relevant to buses where patronage remains low.

### **Transport for the South East**

81. Work on the Transport for the South East Transport Strategy and the proposal to the Government have continued during this period with a successful Board meeting held virtually in April where Board members agreed the draft version of the Strategy.
82. A further Board meeting in July will finalise both the strategy and proposal which will then be submitted to the Government. A decision on this year's Department

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for Transport grant funding allocation for the technical programme is expected soon.

## **Environment**

### **Our ambition**

- Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan – West Sussex County Council to be carbon neutral by 2030, recognising the significant shifts in behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Develop and deliver viable renewable energy initiatives
- Implement initiatives to reduce waste to landfill
- Separate Food waste collection and processing
- Electric vehicle strategy
- Walking and cycling

## **Economy**

83. The vision for the economy reset is focused on the future of West Sussex, and West Sussex County Council's priority outcomes. The priorities within the adopted Economic Growth Plan 2018-2023 and the associated activities are still relevant and will provide much of the focus. However, it is recognised the economy will not be the same as it was before and there will need to be a review and in some cases a reset of the pre COVID-19 activities to reflect the changed landscape.
84. In addition, there will be new areas of focus, to address where the economy has been particularly adversely affected or where there are opportunities – these include the implications of the aviation crisis on Gatwick airport and the wider area including the large numbers of people who have lost their jobs; the challenges faced by young people transitioning through academic and vocational provision and seeking to enter the labour market; the needs of particular sectors including tourism; the potential to sustain the unintended gains of the lockdown on the environment, including through maximising a digital technology led approach; the potential to build more inclusive and sustainable economies; and the need for a renewed focus on the adult social care market.
85. We need to be mindful of resourcing the economy Reset Plan, and ensure our ambition and approach are realistic. The plan will support the case for additional resources should they become available from the Government. The seven priority themes are underpinned by principles that emphasise digital technology and Clean and Green:
- Theme 1: Protecting and reviving Crawley and the Gatwick Diamond economy
  - Theme 2: Protecting and reviving the coastal towns
  - Theme 3: Protecting and reviving the rural economy
  - Theme 4: Enabling business start-ups, business survival and business adaptation

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- Theme 5: Enabling an employment and skills reset
  - Theme 6: Protecting and reviving tourism and the visitor economy
  - Theme 7: Enabling a health and social care market for the future
  - Theme 8: Enabling a digital technology focussed reset
  - Theme 9: Embedding climate change and the environment into the reset

86. We will work with partners, including districts and boroughs and the Local Enterprise Partnership to develop and agree our economic reset proposals further over the summer.