

West Sussex County Council – Written Questions

19 March 2021

1. Written question from Cllr Kirsty Lord for reply by Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Question

For each of the 11 youth Find It Out centres proposed for closure, can the Cabinet Member please provide:

- (a) The number and age breakdown of visits and unique users for each of 2017, 2018 and 2019;
- (b) The number and age breakdown of visits and unique users accessing equivalent County Council services online or by phone for each of 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020;
- (c) Statistics on how users travel to the centre (including walking, cycling, bus, train and car) with a breakdown by age, if available;
- (d) The distance travelled by users (less than one mile, 1 to 2 miles, 2 to 3 miles, over 3 miles) with a breakdown by age, if available;
- (e) A map showing the postcodes of users, or by postcode sector (e.g. BN6 9) if full postcode cannot be used to protect confidentiality; and
- (f) If a map is not available, a list of the number of users from each postcode or postcode sector (an Excel spreadsheet format would be preferred for this, if available).

Answer

It is not proposed that the eight Find It Out centres will close. It is proposed that they are relocated and the offer extended to 11 delivery points. In addition to this, the opening hours will also be increased from part-time to full-time.

- (a) The number of unique users are shown in Table 1 below.

The visits have been split into Drop-in Visits and Other Visits. These are based on the 11 substantive intervention types, as defined below Table 3. It is not possible to break down this information by age.

The database does not have the option to record whether a 'visit' was in person or virtually. However, for this purpose, we have assumed that all substantive interventions were visits to a physical building. However, the option to record 'Drop-in visit' is specific to Find It Out centres, so this is the key section for Find It Out centre activity. We are unable to break down the 'unique users' by intervention type.

Table 1 - Find It Out Centres - Unique Users, 2017 to 2019

Find It Out Centre	2017	2018	2019
Bognor Regis	339	250	204
Crawley	399	476	658
Mid Sussex	325	217	117
Worthing	665	511	423
Adur	237	78	18
Chichester	263	210	121
Horsham	356	357	353
Littlehampton	229	37	120

Table 2 - Find It Out Centres – Drop-in Visits, 2017 to 2019

Find It Out Centre	2017	2018	2019
Bognor Regis	811	569	317
Crawley	458	939	1077
Mid Sussex	313	284	142
Worthing	1558	1656	1284
Adur	315	86	23
Chichester	353	303	160
Horsham	389	457	562
Littlehampton	346	49	287

Table 3 - Find It Out Centres - Other Visits, 2017 to 2019

Find It Out Centre	2017	2018	2019
Bognor Regis	315	20	33
Crawley	395	51	58
Mid Sussex	678	80	61
Worthing	545	49	31
Adur	492	7	0
Chichester	242	12	1
Horsham	346	104	91
Littlehampton	240	3	5

* Other visits: as well as Drop-in Visits, the Substantive Intervention Types (visits) are:

- Accompanying a Client
- Annual Review
- Emergency Placement Review Meeting (Youth Homelessness Prevention Team)
- Interview - Client
- Interview - Client/Parent/Carer
- Multi-Agency Meeting (With Young Person Present)
- School Meeting (With Young Person Present)
- Single Agency Meeting (with Young Person Present)
- Youth Emotional Support Group Drop-in

- Youth Emotional Support Workshop

Table 4 - Find It Out Centres - All Visits, 2017 to 2019

Find It Out Centre	2017	2018	2019
Bognor Regis	1126	589	350
Crawley	853	990	1135
Mid Sussex	991	364	203
Worthing	2103	1705	1315
Adur	807	93	23
Chichester	595	315	161
Horsham	735	561	653
Littlehampton	586	52	292

- (b) The database captures other contact out to (sent) and from an individual (received). Contact may be by email, letter, text or phone. Contact may be with the young person and/or their family/carers. These contacts out and received are shown in the tables below.

This data is only available as a contact count and not by individual unique user.

Table 5 - Find It Out Centres - Contact Received, 2017 to 2020

Find It Out Centre	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bognor Regis	315	97	45	427
Crawley	739	197	202	93
Mid Sussex	545	178	3	4
Worthing	376	80	71	620
Adur	326	32	1	2
Chichester	243	107	32	1
Horsham	485	225	55	225
Littlehampton	110	7	3	5
Total	3139	923	412	1377

Table 6 - Find It Out Centres - Contact Sent, 2017 to 2020

Find It Out Centre	2017	2018	2019	2020
Bognor Regis	232	19	22	86
Crawley	684	66	76	41
Mid Sussex	609	72	1	0
Worthing	252	18	3	219
Adur	175	11	1	0
Chichester	125	17	12	0
Horsham	359	131	31	268
Littlehampton	71	0	0	2
Total	2507	334	146	616

- (c) This information is not captured on the database and is therefore not reportable.

- (d) Our reporting tool does not allow us to report the postcode of the individual at the visit date. It is only possible to report on current postcode, which may have changed since the visit. We are therefore unable to report accurately on this.
- (e) For the reasons described in (d) above it is not possible to provide this.
- (f) For the reasons described in (d) above it is not possible to provide this.

2. Written question from Cllr Brenda Smith for reply by Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Question

I understand the Children and Family Centre in Langley Green, Crawley currently accommodates an amazing sensory room which was built in 2010 at some considerable cost. The Cabinet recently agreed to consult on a proposal that would see the Langley Green Children and Family Centre close along with 31 others around the County and I understand a decision as to whether they will close or not will be taken in July.

If it is ultimately decided that the Langley Green Children and Family Centre is to be closed next autumn, can I please have a commitment from the Cabinet Member, communicated to officers, that an alternative sensory room should be maintained in the locality and, as far as possible, the equipment and installations in the current sensory room re-utilised.

Answer

Early Help are proposing withdrawing Early Help specific services from the centre. Langley Green is a shared-use centre with Crawley Borough Council and has a dual-use agreement in place. The withdrawal of Early Help at this stage is a proposal and does not indicate that the centre will close. Future use of the building will be addressed as part of the asset planning following a decision by the Cabinet. This will include legal due diligence and an options appraisal.

3. Written question from Cllr Michael Jones for reply by Cabinet Member for Economy and Corporate Resources

Question

The pandemic has had a profound economic impact across the county, but indications suggest that Crawley is the most impacted area in West Sussex in terms of jobs and indeed it comes out as one of the most affected in the country primarily because of the presence of Gatwick Airport.

BBC Radio Sussex recently launched a new campaign called #CrawleyTogether, which will shine a spotlight on stories from the town and stand shoulder to shoulder with the local community.

Can the Cabinet Member tell me whether he agrees with me that there is a need for a specific focus on Crawley such as this?

Furthermore, can he update me on what steps have been taken by West Sussex County Council since the publication of the [Economy Reset Plan](#) in November 2020 to boost the economic recovery in Crawley and what progress he anticipates will occur over the remainder of this year.

Answer

Although all parts of the county have been hard hit, the data supports the view that of the West Sussex boroughs and districts Crawley's economy has been the most adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, for example:

- Local Universal Credit claimant count in January 2021 is 8.3% (6,020 claimants). Crawley remains the worst affected within the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area and ranks 35th out of 380 local authorities in the UK.
- There are 25,800 Crawley residents remaining on furlough.
- 18 per cent of all Crawley's workforce (17,000 residents) work in aviation with many thousands having already lost, or in the process of losing, their jobs.

The County Council has supported the Crawley Economic Recovery Taskforce with both the Cabinet Member and officers supporting the task force and its sub-groups. These groups will be critical to developing business cases and progressing interventions that support Crawley's recovery.

The County Council is also actively investing in Crawley. The Crawley growth programme of more than £60m, has completed a number of schemes in recent years and is commencing construction of key infrastructure projects led by the County Council. The Eastern Gateway £8.35m scheme will start construction in summer 2021, as will the Manor Royal highways scheme, a £3m investment in the business district area of Crawley.

The Council is also undertaking redevelopment of a key town centre site in Crawley. Demolition works are live now and show the County Council's commitment to the town centre redevelopment in clearing the way for a longer-term regeneration of the site which will unlock key economic outputs for the area.

In addition, it is the County Council's intention to refresh the Crawley growth deal. A detailed review of the Crawley growth programme is currently being undertaken to ensure that projects in delivery until 2025 will best support Crawley's economic recovery and will further renew the Council's commitment to investment in the Crawley area.

Other priority activities within the Economy Reset Plan 2020-24 will support Crawley's economic recovery. These include:

- Support for enterprises and businesses affected by the pandemic, including through the recent Recover and Rise support programme with many Crawley businesses participating.
- Promoting to businesses the opportunity to secure funding for apprenticeship training through transfer of the Council's apprenticeship levy, with approval to support 15 apprenticeships in Crawley businesses during 2020/21 to date, with a value just under £70,000.

- County-wide partnership working with all the districts and boroughs to initiate a programme of support for businesses focussed on resilience and recovery through use of digital technologies and skills.
- The Experience West Sussex Destination Partnership working with Gatwick Airport to prepare to support the re-start of international tourism promotion when the time is right, supporting airport jobs and local businesses.
- Continuing digital infrastructure activities. These include working in partnership to deliver the Converged Fibre Connectivity project, an innovative project building a new duct and fibre route linking Crawley to the regional fibre network at Brighton Digital Exchange. This will provide greater fibre resilience and increased opportunity for commercial suppliers of gigabit-capable broadband to provide new connectivity to businesses along its route, including at Manor Royal Business District.

4. Written question from Cllr Brian Quinn for reply by Cabinet Member for Economy and Corporate Resources

Question

The former Prime Minister David Cameron previously asked Mary Portas (self-styled Queen of Shops) to investigate how to revive high streets.

One of the recommendations in her report published in December 2011 was for new powers to be given to councils to enter and upgrade strategic properties when landlords are negligent, using 'Empty Shop Management Orders'.

Under such arrangements there could be scope for councils to re-vamp shops, bring them back into use and charge rent to recover their costs with subsequent rent collected being passed to the property owner.

Besides relying on local growth plans and the active travel fund to revive high streets and town centres, can the Cabinet Member outline any other action he is aware of that will revive high streets and town centres across the county.

Answer

The world has moved on considerably in the ten years since the Portas Report and the decline of high street retail and the threats posed to town centres have accelerated rapidly during the pandemic.

The County Council's Economy Reset Plan 2020-24 sets out the Council's priorities for supporting economic recovery. These include activities that will assist the borough and district councils in reviving high streets and town centres across the county.

The County Council is working with the districts and boroughs through the Growth Deals, supporting the wide-ranging work they are progressing on the future of town centres and high streets. Some Growth Deals have an emphasis on town centre regeneration and public realm, for example, Chichester, Crawley and Worthing, and in Burgess Hill where there is a new library. As the country emerges from the pandemic the County Council will be working with partners to assess whether the approach being taken provides the best platform for recovery.

The Council is also keen to support and help revive collaborative workspaces in town centres, including through The Track Creative Digital Hub in Bognor Regis, and by providing support for enterprises who work in these hubs to recover through the recent Recover and Rise programme with more than 600 participants.

The Council is working with the district and borough councils and the Coast to Capital LEP, to further support business resilience and recovery through digital technologies and skills, with some focus on those sectors hit hardest by COVID-19 including the retail sector.

The Experience West Sussex Destination Partnership's marketing activities will feature spotlights on town centres to help attract visitors (in accordance with public health guidance), including a campaign focused on autumn and winter to encourage visitors throughout the year.

The Council is also progressing digital infrastructure plans to help create opportunities for digital technology and services to support the future of town centres.

5. Written question from Cllr Noel Atkins for reply by Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Question

I declare a personal interest as a local authority governor of Durrington Infant and Junior Federated Schools.

While I appreciate the excellent and difficult work the schools place planning and admissions team do, it is naturally not always possible to satisfy every parent. Can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- (a) What is the percentage success rate of successful admissions – a successful admission being any one of the three choices of school made by parents/carers;
- (b) How many parents did not get one of their three preferences for their children;
- (c) How many days have been set aside for appeals; and
- (d) What percentage of appeals are normally successful?

Answer

- (a) In the secondary school admissions round for 2021, 97.3% of parents received one of their three preferences. There were 9,079 applications in the round.
- (b) The Admissions Team were not able to meet one of three preferences for 2.7% of applicants. This equates to 251 children across the whole county.
- (c) Currently there are 73 days set aside for appeals, this could be subject to change. It is important to note that parents may appeal when one of their preferences have been met, but also where they wish to appeal for a higher preference school.
- (d) The success rate from last year for all secondary main admission appeals was 7%.

6. Written question from Cllr Noel Atkins for reply by Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Question

I declare a personal interest as a local authority governor of Durrington Infant and Junior Federated Schools.

Regarding the transition of St Andrew's School in Worthing to a co-educational school, can the Cabinet tell me:

- (a) Is St Andrew's bringing in staff that have experience in teaching girls;
- (b) As St Andrew's is a faith school where pupils normally take a GCSE in RE, can parents who are not religious request their child take an alternative GCSE;
- (c) Has sufficient investment been made in the school for this transition; and
- (d) Are adequate facilities in place for girls sports for example a net ball pitch?

Answer

- (a) County Council officers have been working closely with the headteacher, governing body and the Church of England Diocese to support the transition of the school from all boys to a co-educational establishment. Preparations to welcome girls into the school have been made since the decision was taken in regard to the school's change of status.
- (b) Whilst parents have the right to withdraw their child from religious education, we would recommend any parents who have specific questions about the education of their child including curriculum options approach the school directly, to seek further information.

(c) and (d)

Officers are working to support the need for a phased capital investment programme in the facilities of the school to provide for the entry of girls in September 2021. Investment in excess of £500,000 is being undertaken over this summer and further investment will be programmed when funds allow.

7. Written question from Cllr Chris Oxlade for reply by Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Question

I note from the Forward Plan that a number of schools are due to have their all-weather pitches replaced. As many of these types of pitches were installed around the same time, I am sure that there will be more schools needing to have these replaced in the not too distant future.

All-weather pitches enable schools to ensure that sport is played outside all year round, whether that is because schools do not have access to their own playing fields because their playing fields are unusable due to bad weather or because sports halls are in use in the summer for exams. Undoubtedly, access to outside space and exercise will be a priority for children returning to schools for their health and

wellbeing. Furthermore, all-weather pitches can provide an excellent resource within a local community and potentially provide schools with a much needed source of income through hire arrangements.

I understand there are different types of pitches depending on the priority of sport it is intended for. Can the Cabinet Member provide me:

- (a) With an assurance that when decisions regarding the replacement of all-weather pitches are to be taken that he will take account of both the schools preference and the potential wider community use of the pitch; and
- (b) Where this would result in additional costs, that he will do all he can to fund this, including exploring partnership funding and opportunities for additional grant funding where this is possible.

Answer

(a) and (b)

Ifield Community College and Oriel Community College are part of the Crawley Schools Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Their existing artificial grass pitches were due life cycle renewal. The schools approached the PFI company to adapt them to be suitable for football and rugby which is part of the curriculum, unlike hockey. As a gesture of goodwill, the PFI company agreed to pay the additional costs to make them 3G all-weather rugby pitches. The surfaces and fitting have already been procured at cost to BAM (the PFI facilities management company) and should be replaced before September 2021. Hockey will continue to be played on grass pitches locally at the third of the PFI schools, Thomas Bennett Community College.

Horley Hockey Club, based in Surrey, has historically used the artificial grass pitch at Ifield for training. It is used for hockey for less than 8% of the week. Hazlewick School is the designated facility for hockey in Horley and we understand has recently been enhanced.

We would expect any replacement of an artificial grass pitch on a PFI school site to have considered the views of the school and the broader community usage wherever possible. For County Council-funded projects at non-PFI schools, I would expect officers to ensure they have taken account of both the individual school's preference and the potential wider community use of the pitch.

8. Written question from Cllr Pete Bradbury for reply by Cabinet Member for Environment

Question

There are unprecedented threats to the natural environment of West Sussex resulting from climate change and development. Current government ambitions on house building and infrastructure are likely to accelerate land use change, with implications for habitat and the wider environment.

I understand that the Government's Environment Bill proposes a number of measures to address such matters. Could the Cabinet Member please advise:

- (a) What is the County Council currently doing to address the threats to the county's precious environment;
- (b) What other actions does the County Council propose to take to safeguard our natural environment; and
- (c) What are the implications of the Bill for the County Council, including taking on new duties or responsibilities?

Answer

- (a) The County Council has adopted, and is implementing, a number of plans and strategies, including the Climate Change Strategy, the Pollination Plan, the West Sussex Tree Plan, the Notable Road Verge initiative, and the Local Wildlife Sites initiative. These initiatives bring together the County Council's aspirations and align them to those of the community and other major stakeholders in West Sussex.

Following flooding in the county during 2012/13, the County Council resolved to address issues with the drainage infrastructure. Since then, investments have been made in highway drainage and environmental improvements in areas worst affected by flooding. Local communities have been successfully supported by the funding for over 360 projects (over £3.3m) and work has been undertaken with nearly 150 community groups.

One of the first local authorities to set a carbon reduction target, in 2011 the County Council pledged to reduce emissions by 50% by 2020. At the end of 2019/20, the target was met and corporate carbon emissions were reduced by 51%. In April 2019, the County Council pledged net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and interim figures show that the carbon footprint is continuing to reduce.

In 2019/20, the County Council exceeded the Government's recycling target of 50%, achieving recycling rates of 53.1%, and also achieving the most improved rate of reuse, recycling and composting in the south-east in the same year. The County Council is now working towards the 2025 Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (Defra's) target of 55%.

Furthermore, the County Council continues to support, and be an active member of several key partnerships, including the pan-Sussex Local Nature Partnership, the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre and the Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority. In addition, work continues with the other local authorities in the county and the valuable work of the High Weald AONB Unit and the Chichester Harbour Conservancy is supported.

- (b) The primary focus is on delivering the commitments and actions identified in the above plans and strategies. Where appropriate, opportunities will be taken to secure external funding to accelerate delivery or to bring forward proposals that are programmed for delivery in the longer-term.

As at present, the County Council continues to look for ways to work in partnership with private, public and third sector organisations where they share the ambition to protect, maintain and improve the environment of West Sussex.

- (c) The new responsibilities for local authorities relate to governance, waste and resource efficiency, air quality, water, and nature and biodiversity.

Notably, Defra are expected to launch a second consultation process this month around the key new measures in the resource and waste strategy to help promote a more circular economy. Officers have been involved in several workshops with Defra and the County Council will be poised to respond jointly with our district and borough partners.

The enactment of the Bill will require secondary legislation and, therefore, it is too early to understand how those new responsibilities will be apportioned within two-tier areas. However, the situation is being monitored and work continues locally, regionally and nationally to fully understand the likely resource implications for the County Council from the enactment of this Bill.

9. Written question from Cllr Michael Jones for reply by Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities

Question

The Fire Brigades Union has recently analysed the 2021/22 local government finance settlement and concluded that government funding for fire and rescue services in England has been cut by £139.7m since 2016/17. Funding for fire and rescue services has been reduced by 13.8% in cash terms over the five years since the last local government finance settlement, leaving fire and rescue services exposed as they face emerging threats from flooding, wildfires, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The analysis reveals that from 2016/17 to 2021/22 four brigades have had their funding cut by more than a third, this includes West Sussex which has lost £4.3m or 43.9%.

Can the Cabinet Member tell me:

- (a) Whether the fact that West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service has had one of the most significant budget cuts in the country has been raised with the Government recently; and
- (b) If he has asked why West Sussex residents deserve to be less well protected than residents in other areas?

Answer

- (a) Officers and members continue to lobby central government for fair and equitable funding for all County Council services including fire and rescue. Like many authorities, West Sussex has experienced a reduction in funding over several years. A key aspect of this is the reduction in government grant available for all services, including fire and rescue services, and in particular a relatively outdated fire funding formula. Resourcing for the Fire & Rescue Service is managed within the County Council's overall budget and distributed based on the resources required to meet the county's risk; it is not informed by the figures that have been quoted by the Fire Brigades Union. The West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service has not had a budget cut. In fact, over the last three years, there has been considerable investment in the service. Following the last HM Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services inspection the

County Council has invested an additional £5.1m (over three years) to resource improvement in prevention, protection and response in such areas as IT, vehicles equipment and training. In addition, a further £0.9m was invested in 2020/21, and together this investment has created additional capacity that has allowed the service to respond robustly to establish the improvements required, as demonstrated by our ability to respond and adapt effectively to the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- (b) Every fire and rescue authority must produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), which is an assessment of all foreseeable fire related risk within our county. Resources are allocated based on this risk assessment and not demand and each fire and rescue service IRMP will be different but must identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face. The fire authority must also publish an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the Framework which is subject to scrutiny by the Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

10. Written question from Cllr Chris Oxlade for reply by Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities

Question

Evidence, requested over a year ago by the Scrutiny Committee, has still not been provided to show that staffing in Surrey's fire control is adequate to manage emergencies in both Surrey and West Sussex. When West Sussex had their own fire control, shift strength was six per shift, to manage around 9,000 incidents a year. The Surrey fire control also has just six staff per shift, but they now have to manage over 20,000 incidents a year.

Members have not been kept informed about plans for East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service to hand their fire control function over to Surrey. This will increase the number of emergencies the Surrey fire control has to manage to over 30,000 a year. If staffing is not significantly improved, there will be a more frequent risk of delays in the response to West Sussex emergencies. The risk of errors under pressure will also increase.

Will the Cabinet Member:

- (a) Inform Council of the maximum and minimum staffing levels proposed for the joint control when East Sussex joins the arrangement; and
- (b) Provide the evidence used to justify those levels?

Answer

- (a) and (b)

The Joint Fire Control Task and Finish Group was held in early 2021 on behalf of the Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee. The report from the group is due to be published in the next scrutiny committee papers.

The Task and Finish Group looked at all areas of the project including project delivery, performance, and included a look forward to East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service joining the collaboration.

Recent large multi-fire engine incidents including simultaneous incidents over the last fourteen months and several spate conditions* events have been experienced across Sussex and Surrey and have demonstrated that levels of staff are effective.

The fire control utilises state of the art mobilising technology where data messages are used by the operators and crews. The use of data enables operators to focus on answering 999 calls and allows for efficient management of the control room. Previous technology was outdated and did not utilise data messaging technology, therefore technology between the new and old control centre is not comparable. Staffing levels of six including two officers are both efficient and effective and are supported by modern technology.

- * 'Spate conditions' occur where many calls are being received simultaneously for multiple incidents not at the same address. These conditions are often for periods of hours or even days and can be prepared for in some cases, such as severe weather forecasts.