
Cabinet Report: Delivering Our Council Plan 2021-25

This report sets out the key strategic decisions, policy and programme initiatives, consultations, government announcements and key events within each Cabinet portfolio area to deliver our strategic priorities.

Leader – Paul Marshall

- The Government has confirmed that **from April 2024, many of the functions undertaken by [Local Enterprise Partnerships \(LEPs\)](#) will be transferred to county councils**, unitary councils and combined authorities, with those local authorities taking on the economic growth and business representation functions of LEPs. The move will be supported by government funding in 2024/25 with announcements in due course. The County Council is working with partners to ensure a smooth transition to this new arrangement in order to maximise the opportunities it presents for the county.
- On 1 September, a new [Careers Hub](#) covering the whole of West Sussex was launched. The Hub, which is hosted by the County Council, is working with all secondary schools and colleges, as well as a range of apprenticeship providers and businesses to improve careers education and experiences of the workplace, with the aim of helping young people find their best next step and improve employment outcomes. The team has joined the County Council from the former Coast to Capital Careers Hub. The new arrangements will help to ensure the Hub's strategic plans can be closely aligned to local businesses, employment and skills priorities. The Careers Hub is also covering Brighton & Hove and is supported by the West Sussex district and borough councils and the national Careers and Enterprise Company.

Adult Services – Amanda Jupp

- In preparation for Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance of adult social care, the County Council has prepared a [baseline self-assessment \(PDF, 14.2MB\)](#) against nine quality statements, mapped across four themes of working with people; providing support; ensuring safety; and leadership, using the CQCs draft assurance framework. Each theme is summarised by three areas to be most proud of or where there is evidence of good practice and three areas that need further improvement. The **two-year adults' improvement programme** will address most of the areas identified for improvement. Others will be addressed through business-as-usual activity, as part of the directorate's annual business planning cycle. The self-assessment is a working document and will be reviewed regularly with updates provided to members, staff, partners and stakeholders.
- Avila House in Worthing is being converted to provide an **extra care scheme for adults** who require care, support, and suitable housing. This will be the first scheme in the county to accept referrals for adults aged 18 years plus who meet the criteria. Construction at Avila House commenced in September 2022 and the first customers are expected to be able to move in in winter 2023. This will enable the service to develop in line with other commissioned extra care schemes and ensure a consistent and successful contract management of the care and support provider. On 5 September, the Director for Adults and Health approved the [award of the care and support contract](#) to Leonard Cheshire to progress this work.

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- The Department for Health and Social Care announced that additional funding will be provided to local authorities through the [Market Sustainability Improvement Fund](#). West Sussex has been allocated £5m in 2023/24. A further allocation will be received in 2024/25. However, this amount is currently unknown. A spending plan is being prepared to increase social care capacity in line with the grant spend conditions, which set out that local authorities can choose to use the funding to increase fee rates paid for adult social care providers, increase adult social care workforce capacity and retention, and reduce adult social care waiting times.

Children and Young People, Learning and Skills (Lead Member for Children) – Jacquie Russell

- The achievements of children and young people in care, care leavers and children in kinship care, across West Sussex have been celebrated at the annual [Exceptional People in Care \(EPIC\) awards](#). Young people from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Advisory Board helped organise and host the ceremony which saw awards presented in a wide range of categories including Care Leaver of the Year and Best Foster Carer. Plans are already underway for the 2024 EPIC awards and Children's Services are keen to hear from potential sponsors willing to support the event.
- The [outcome of the Adult and Community learning Ofsted inspection](#) has been published with the Council's provision maintaining a rating of 'good'. The report recognised the County Council's 'clear vision for education and skills' and the focus on supporting the most vulnerable. Inspectors also highlighted that 'most learners develop new knowledge and skills quickly and effectively'. Plans are in place to implement further improvements to areas where the report suggested making changes would be beneficial.
- Work is progressing towards completion of the [rebuild of Woodlands Meed College](#) to enable the new building to open in the new year. Following a delay to the original August handover date, a new timeframe outside of term time has been set to ensure disruption is minimised for staff and students. The project will significantly improve facilities for the 100 pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities who attend the college.
- The County Council has [commissioned a physical inspection of 114 maintained schools](#) to check for any **Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete** (RAAC) materials following the new measures announced by the Government in August. The inspection is a precautionary measure as construction work took place at these schools between 1930 and 2000 when RAAC was in use in the building industry. The survey work commenced during September and is being undertaken in accordance with the [Department for Education guidance](#).

Community Support, Fire and Rescue – Duncan Crow

- Six retained firefighters have been welcomed into the West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service after completing the **first training course for new recruits at Platinum House**. Following the intensive two-week training course, a Pass Out Parade was held on 15 September. The parade is a long-standing fire service tradition which gives the recruits an opportunity to showcase a selection of their new skills. During the event, firefighters used the Service's new facilities to perform hose running and ladder climbs, as well as extinguishing a

fire in the training tower. Having the first Pass Out Parade at the Fire Service's new training centre was acknowledged as a milestone in seeing the new facilities now in action.

- **West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service is running a series of [free electric blanket testing sessions for residents](#)** in October. Faulty electric blankets are a common cause of fire in the home. Last year almost 40% of the blankets tested by the service were defective and posed a serious risk of starting a fire. Residents are being encouraged to have their blankets tested to ensure they have peace of mind that their blanket is still safe to use and can book an appointment by phoning 0345 872 9719. Regular testing is recommended for blankets over two years old to ensure they are still safe to use. Blankets over ten years old should be replaced. The Fire & Rescue Service recognises the pressures of the cost of living and provides advice on how residents can [stay warm and safe in their home](#) during the winter months.
- Community Safety Partnerships across West Sussex are [asking residents how safe they feel in their local communities](#). An [online consultation](#) is open to people of all ages to share their experiences of crime and anti-social behaviour in their local areas. The responses will allow the partnerships to further improve their understanding of local communities and see whether their current priorities reflect the experiences of the residents living there. Information from the consultation will be shared with the [Safer West Sussex Partnership](#), which brings together the six district and borough Community Safety Partnerships, along with Sussex Police, the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, West Sussex Fire and Rescue and other key agencies. For those that would prefer a paper copy survey, this can be requested by calling 01243 777100 or emailing communitysafety.wellbeing@westsussex.gov.uk. Paper copies will be supplied with a return free post envelope.
- The County Council emails out an informative [monthly newsletter called Staying Safe Online](#), which provides helpful advice and tips for helping to keep everyone safe online, including how we as adults can help keep our children safe. The [Online Safety Bill](#) passed its final Parliamentary debate on 19 September and is now ready to become law. The bill takes a zero-tolerance approach to protecting children and adults online and makes sure social media platforms are held responsible for the content they host.

Environment and Climate Change (and Deputy Leader) – Deborah Urquhart

- The County Council is contributing to [World Beyond Waste](#), a digital series with the Chartered Institute of Waste Management and Content With Purpose, a production company, which explores the resources and waste sector's role as a vital change agent for the transition to a low-carbon, resource efficient, circular economy. A [short video](#) highlights the UKHarvest Community Food Hub Programme and the contribution and support of volunteers.
- [Think Before You Throw](#) is an animated communication campaign which promotes waste reduction; it is designed and supported by the West Sussex Waste Partnership. The aim is to encourage resident behaviour change and increase recycling across the county (also look for 'West Sussex recycles' on Facebook).

Finance and Property – Jeremy Hunt

- The **audit by external auditors (Ernst and Young) of the 2022/23 Pension Fund accounts** has commenced and is expected to be completed and reported to the Council's Regulation, Accounts and Audit Committee on 1 December. Due to government pressure on the external audit sector to complete a high number of outstanding audits of other local authorities, there is no clear timeline for when the audit of the 2022/23 West Sussex County Council accounts will commence. The delay in audit completions, largely caused by the increase in audit requirements over recent years, is outside the County Council's control. The [County Council's draft accounts \(PDF, 2.4MB\)](#) were published by the statutory deadline of 31 May and the Council has no outstanding audits from previous years.
- An **update on the Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy** was noted by the Cabinet in July and discussed at the [Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee](#) on 7 September. The report highlighted a budget gap of £171m over the next five years before any Council Tax increases, of which £45m is in 2024/25. Over the summer, work has been undertaken to review the Council's service pressures and the impact from the remaining high levels of inflation and to identify opportunities to close the budget gap with a focus on 2024/25 and 2025/26. An update will be presented to the Cabinet on 17 October and further discussed at the all-member session on the Council Plan and 2024/25 Budget, which will be held at County Hall North on 18 October. This session will mark the start of the 2024/25 budget process and is an opportunity for all members to be engaged in the development of next year's budget before approval by the full Council on 16 February 2024.

Highways and Transport – Joy Dennis

- More than £5m in further funding has been secured from the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles which will enable the provision of up to **[1,000 extra Electric Vehicle chargepoints across the county](#)** at 230 locations, plus the installation of the underground electrical infrastructure needed for an additional 400 chargepoints. Working in partnership with the supplier, Connected Kerb, and borough and district council partners, it will significantly bolster the existing scheme to make on-street charging more accessible for residents who do not have off-street parking and boost efforts to enable sustainable transport options across West Sussex.
- The County Council's **[consultation on the draft Active Travel Strategy](#)** is open until 15 November and invites comments on the future of walking, wheeling and cycling in West Sussex. The strategy takes forward ideas set out in the county's Transport Plan and develops them in more detail. Comments are also invited on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan which is a companion document to the Active Travel Strategy.

Public Health and Wellbeing – Bob Lanzer

- The **[West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board \(HWB\)](#), in the new Integrated Care System (ICS) governance landscape**, is key for driving integration and continues to have an important role in instilling mechanisms for joint working across local health and care organisations and setting strategic direction to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population and reduce

health inequalities. At its recent meeting, the West Sussex HWB agreed to accept and progress the Local Government Association's) [support offer to HWBs \(PDF, 88.6KB\)](#). This process will include helpful reflection on the Board's role in supporting the local place of West Sussex.

- The Government's [Major conditions strategy: case for change and our strategic framework](#) focuses on developing a comprehensive approach to addressing six groups of conditions; cancers, cardiovascular disease (including stroke and diabetes), musculoskeletal disorders, mental ill health, dementia and chronic respiratory disease, which together account for over 60% of ill health and early death in England. It highlights that smoking directly contributes to developing all major groups of conditions and remains the biggest single cause of preventable illness and death and driver of health disparities. Throughout October, organisations in the Smokefree West Sussex Partnership, led by the County Council, are urging smokers to quit this [Stoptober](#) and seek free support from a stop smoking advisor to have the best chance of quitting for good. Research shows that smokers are three times more likely to successfully quit with support. [Free local Stop Smoking services](#) are available across West Sussex provided by participating GP practices and pharmacies, and [West Sussex Wellbeing](#).
- Led by NHS Sussex, [COVID-19 and flu vaccinations](#) are underway across the county, with those most at risk, including adult care home residents, being offered the vaccination from 11 September. Adult COVID-19 and flu vaccination programmes were due to start in October to maximise protection over the winter months. However, programmes were brought forward nationally due to the potential risks presented by the COVID-19 variant BA.2.86. The County Council is supporting both vaccination programmes, carrying out targeted work with partners to increase uptake, reduce inequalities, and improve the health of the local population. The Council is also offering a free flu vaccine voucher to staff and councillors who are currently not eligible as part of the NHS flu vaccination programme.

Support Services and Economic Development – Steve Waight

- The County Council's Digital Infrastructure Team has been working with telecoms operators and industry partners to improve mobile connectivity in line with the county-wide [Digital Infrastructure Strategy \(PDF, 2MB\)](#). The Council's new **BEACH project** has attracted funding from the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology as part of its [£88m Open Network Ecosystems programme](#). BEACH, in partnership with Worthing Borough Council, will bring improved 4G and future 5G connectivity to Worthing beachfront and town centre to address performance and capacity issues. The consortium, led by Dense Air Ltd, will work together to create a cellular network able to be shared by mobile network operators and hosted on local authority-owned assets. The network will meet connectivity demand at peak times while intelligently managing low and peak demand power consumption, saving energy and supporting the County Council's county-wide agenda to de-carbonise by 2030.

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Background papers: None