
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 Leader, Chief Executive, Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change and Director for Children, Young People and Learning attended **the County Councils Network annual conference** in Marlow, Buckinghamshire. The conference provided an opportunity to build relationships with colleagues and explore the key challenges faced by county councils across the country, including sustainable funding, devolution, LEP transition, children's social care pressures, adult social care reform, highway investment and net zero.
- On 26 October, the Leader published a decision on [Future Visitor Economy Arrangements](#). The visitor economy is important for the County Council and for the wider West Sussex economy, with over 37,000 jobs supported by the sector and a pre-pandemic value of £2bn. The decision confirms and develops the pan-Sussex approach to the visitor economy that began during the pandemic between West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council. A key feature of the arrangements is to ensure Sussex benefits from national opportunities. An application has been submitted to Visit England to seek accreditation for an 'East Sussex, Brighton and Hove and West Sussex [Local Visitor Economy Partnership](#)'.
- The West Sussex local authorities have published a [West Sussex economic collaboration report](#) setting out the opportunities and challenges for the county's economy. The report identifies four themes to frame future collaboration between the County Council and the district and boroughs: skills, recruitment and retention; boosting productivity growth, investment and innovation; enhancing natural capital and transitioning to net zero; and improving connectivity. The Leader has hosted roundtables on all four themes for businesses and key stakeholders which have taken place over the autumn. The work will also inform planning for the transition of Local Enterprise Partnership functions to the County Council from 1 April 2024, following a government announcement. Detailed government guidance is expected in January.
- As announced in the members' Bulletin in October, officers are in contact with the Environment Agency and the Water Companies about holding a **Water Summit**, which builds on the spirit of cooperation demonstrated at the 'Water' Members' Development Session on 6 September. The summit would provide a forum for high-level dialogue between senior members/representatives of each organisation about key issues and priorities under the three themes in the national policy for water, '[Our integrated plan for delivering clean and plentiful water \(PDF, 4.3MB\)](#)', which are: transforming management of the whole water system; delivering a clean water environment for nature and people; and securing a plentiful supply of water (with protecting the environment and climate change being an underlying theme across all three).

Adults Services – Amanda Jupp

- The County Council and service provider [Health & Independent Living Support \(HILS\)](#) were one of four joint winners of the **Meals on Wheels Service of the Year** prize at the National Association of Care Catering Awards. The award recognises the 365-day caring service providing vital preventative work, supporting hundreds of local residents to stay healthy, happy, and independent. For more information about the meals on wheels service, or to sign up to receive meals in West Sussex contact by phone: 0330 2000 103 or email westsussex@hils-uk.org.
- In line with the [Joint Carer Strategy 2021-26](#), the Cabinet Member has given the go ahead to a [Carer Information, Advice Assessment and Support Service](#) which will re-focus provision on the growing carer population in West Sussex and the different needs of these carers across the county. Following consultation with carers the top three challenges identified were; feelings of stress, managing their own physical/mental health and missing out on socialisation because of caring. This service will have an emphasis on achieving 'communities around carers' at a localised level, and building carer resilience, to enable people to live well and ensure West Sussex is a county that values all carers.
- On 24 November **the Cabinet Member joined the Leader and representatives from adult social care providers across West Sussex, to meet with West Sussex MPs** to discuss a number of issues in relation to adult social care in the county. Discussions included an overview of workforce challenges, as set out in a recent Skills for Care report, the current demand for adult social care and the positive outcomes for residents that social care services enable. Adult social care funding and the limitations of short-term funding was also presented and a call for a minimum national care wage which would be the real living wage, as well as uplifts to support to keep people who have skills/knowledge/experience in the sector.

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

- **Two West Sussex Children's Homes have been rated 'good' by Ofsted** following the latest inspections. This was the first inspection for [Blue Cove](#) in Worthing since reopening in April, with the report highlighting the dedication and commitment of the staff team. [High Trees](#) in Crawley was praised for being welcoming and homely with children being actively involved in their current care and plans for their future. These outcomes mean that all the County Council's Children's Homes continue to have a 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted rating.
- [Approval has been given](#) for **insourcing the Child and Adolescent Multi-Disciplinary Service (CHAMPS)**, which works with the children and families being supported by Children's Social Care through providing psychology informed assessments and interventions. In changing the service to direct delivery by the County Council, the needs of existing service users will continue to be met as well as offering the opportunity to redesign and improve CHAMPS for the future.

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- An [additional 70 secondary school places will be made available at Sir Robert Woodard Academy](#) for those starting secondary school in September 2024. The extra places are being delivered following positive negotiations between the County Council and the Academy and will assist with significantly reducing the pressure on secondary school places in the Shoreham area next year.

Community Support, Fire and Rescue – Duncan Crow

- The Cabinet Member attended the **West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Recognition and Achievement Awards Ceremony** on 16 November which celebrated the achievements of staff. Thirty-two long service and good conduct medals were presented to members of staff that have served within the fire and rescue service for 20, 30 and 40 years. Fifteen Commendation Awards were presented by the Chief Fire Officer to those who have been recognised for providing exceptional public service. This annual ceremony is an opportunity to formally recognise the dedication and commitment of Fire and Rescue staff who have gone over and above in contributing to keeping communities in West Sussex safe and well.
- **West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service** is encouraging people to sign up for a [free life-saving Biker Down workshop](#) to help them stay safe on the road this winter. Workshops will include training on scene management following a collision involving a motorbike, first aid, including helmet removal, and how to best be seen on the road. The first Biker Down workshop took place in November and further workshops have been scheduled on the following dates; [Shoreham Fire Station: 25 January, 6pm – 10pm](#), [County Hall North, Horsham: 22 February, 6pm – 10pm](#) and [County Hall, Chichester: 14 March, 6pm – 10pm](#). For more information on Biker Down workshops, please email FRSFirebike@westsussex.gov.uk.
- [The County Council has launched an initiative between Trading Standards and Public Health](#), aiming to combat the sale of illegal vapes, and illicit tobacco products. With the support of two newly appointed, Public Health funded, enforcement officers Trading Standards was recently able to seize over 1,400 illegal vapes, and illicit tobacco products in a single day of operations. Working in conjunction with alcohol licencing authorities, the Council's Trading Standards officers will also seek a review of any business's licence if caught selling age-restricted products to children. The Council urges the public to report any shops involved in selling illegal non-compliant vapes or sales to children via the official [online reporting tool](#) to directly inform Trading Standards.
- Mims Davies, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Work and Pensions, and MP for Mid Sussex, recently visited East Grinstead and Littlehampton libraries to meet the County Council teams responsible for the co-ordination and delivery of the [Household Support Fund \(HSF\)](#). The County Council has been allocated approximately £9.7m by the Department for Work and Pensions to provide HSF assistance up to 31 March 2024. Teams responsible for the co-ordination and delivery of the fund have worked with partners including the Council's Library Service, Citizens Advice, Carers Support West Sussex, food banks, fuel banks, community-based organisations and all seven West Sussex district and borough councils, to reach West Sussex residents in most need. [The County Council's Community Hub](#) is open 9 am to

5 pm seven days a week and offers advice and guidance regarding what support is available, along with administering the application-based element of the HSF scheme.

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

- The County Council, in partnership with UKHarvest and Biffa, has won a coveted [National Recycling Award](#) for the Community Food Waste Prevention and Rescue programme. The results of the National Recycling Awards were revealed on 16 November and the event to recognise and celebrate the sector's achievements saw more than 500 attendees from the recycling industry. The partnership won the Food Waste Initiative category and was praised by the expert judging panel, who are drawn from across the recycling sector.
- A [new, simpler approach to recycling](#) announced by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in October means that people across England will be able to recycle the same materials, whether at home, work or school, putting an end to confusion over what can and cannot be recycled in different parts of the country. Weekly collections of food waste will also be introduced for most households across England by 2026 and the Government is proposing new exemptions to make sure that waste collectors will be able to collect a core set of dry recyclables together. The West Sussex Waste Partnership will work together to implement the Government's Simpler Recycling Policy to ensure compliance with the Environment Act 2021.
- The County Council has an ambitious target to be a carbon neutral organisation by 2030. The [Tackling Climate Change Progress Report \(PDF, 4.1MB\)](#) shows the breadth of work undertaken in the last two financial years towards achieving this target. Highlights include reducing operational carbon emissions by 10% compared to 2020/21 and taking meaningful steps towards delivering significant carbon reductions within corporate buildings. Renewable energy schemes have been expanded, the development of a network of electric vehicle chargepoints is underway, and local businesses have been helped to prepare for the future through the ['Let's Go! Net Zero'](#) campaign.
- An initial **Natural Capital Feasibility Assessment** of 45 sites within the Council estate has been completed. The study will help inform the County Council's pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and considers the carbon sequestration and biodiversity net gain potential of some Council-owned land, together with any nature-based solutions that could be provided by conservation work and associated revenue potential for the Council. The desk-top study was completed by Adonis Blue Environmental Consultants (formerly Kent Wildlife Trust) and the next stage of work will be to survey a selection of sites to further inform feasibility and costs for nature-based interventions.
- Exceptionally wet weather (300% above annual averages) in late October resulted in flooding occurring in a number of places across Arun, and businesses and homes were affected in Bognor Regis, Shripney and beyond. The County Council's resources were stretched in response and all staff are thanked for their rapid response and hard work which helped to alleviate the immediate impacts. The County Council is **continuing to liaise with the Environment Agency and Southern Water** to work on ways to minimise the impact of these weather events in the future.

Finance and Property – Jeremy Hunt

- On 22 November the Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered his [2023 Autumn Statement](#). It was pleasing to see the additional support put in place for those on lower incomes, including the increase in the National Living Wage to £11.44, the increase in working age benefits by 6.7%, increase in Local Housing Allowance and support to pensioners with an increase in state pensions of 8.5% from April 2024. The independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast that the headline rate of inflation will fall to 2.8% by the end of 2024 and to the Bank of England's 2% target rate in 2025. If these trends materialise, it will help in reducing County Council costs in future years. The OBR also expects the economy to grow by 0.6% this year and 0.7% next year, rising to 1.4% in 2025; then an average of 1.9% between 2026 and 2028. Although additional funding was announced for councils with housing and planning responsibilities, it was disappointing that there was no reference to additional funding for county councils. The County Council will now have to wait for the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25, which is expected to be published in the week commencing 18 December, to find out if there is going to be any additional funding. However, based on the lack of any detail in the Autumn Statement, the assumption is that this is unlikely.

Highways and Transport – Joy Dennis

- Local highway authorities in the South East, including in Surrey, Kent, Hampshire, East and West Sussex, will each receive a [share of £734m](#) recently announced by the Government which they can use to identify which local roads are in most need of repair and deliver immediate improvements for communities and residents. This amounts to £2.161m for this year and next with a total of £67.684m over 11 years for West Sussex.
- From October this year, young people have been able to benefit from [new discounted bus fares](#) if their journey starts or finishes anywhere within West Sussex. The '16 to 20 Bus Saver' means young people can travel at reduced child rate fares offered by their local bus operator. The scheme is being funded by central government grant.

Public Health and Wellbeing – Bob Lanzer

- Following the [notice of motion](#) moved and backed by county councillors at the County Council meeting on 26 May regarding defibrillators, several cross-portfolio actions have taken place to increase county-wide coverage and accessibility of the devices. This includes a [press release](#) highlighting the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC's) £1m Community [Automated External Defibrillators \(AEDs\) Fund](#). The Cabinet Member and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Learning and Skills have also written to West Sussex schools encouraging them to register their devices on [The Circuit](#), the national defibrillator network available to the emergency services, to consider allowing community access, and a reminder of training requirements. Defibrillators maintained by the County Council's Facilities Management team are now all registered on The Circuit, three have been moved to external cabinets (Chichester, Horsham and Crawley) enabling 24-hour community access, and devices in Worthing are accessible during office hours. The Cabinet Member has also written to all town and parish councils in West Sussex sharing a letter from Will Quince MP, Minister of State for Health, encouraging them to

register AEDs on The Circuit and highlighting the DHSC's £1 million community AED fund.

- Following the publication of the Government's public health policy paper, ['Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation' \(PDF, 4.2MB\)](#), which sets out a route to prevent addiction to smoking before it starts, to support smokers to quit, and to stop marketing of vapes to children, the Government launched an [eight-week, UK-wide consultation](#) (which closed on 6 December) on proposals to make it an offence for anyone born on or after 1 January 2009 to be sold tobacco products. MPs will also get a free vote in Parliament on proposals. The Cabinet Member and Director of Public Health have issued a [press release](#) urging people to get involved in these national proposals to create a smokefree generation, taking this unique opportunity to have their say on ideas put forward by the government to raise the legal age for buying tobacco products, as well as tougher regulation aimed at making vaping less accessible and attractive to children and young people. Vaping can be an effective tool to help existing adult smokers to quit tobacco. However, vapes are not risk free; the message is simple – 'if you don't smoke, don't vape'.
- Building on communications messages over the last year, a County Council **all-age mental health communications campaign** will continue until March 2024 aiming to raise community awareness of mental health, signpost to sources of information and support, and to challenge the persistent stigma of mental illness. As part of this approach, a dedicated campaign page ['Your mental health – West Sussex'](#) on the Council's website has been developed to enable residents to find the information they need to help their emotional wellbeing and mental health. Additionally, there will be regular social media messaging and residents' e-newsletter articles, ongoing promotion of [Your Mind Matters](#), ['Don't brush it under the carpet'](#), the ['Warning Signs'](#) initiative, and more. An ongoing evaluation approach, including analytics and feedback from support services, will guide and inform future communications.

Support Services and Economic Development – Steve Waight

- The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has confirmed that the County Council has been successful in its bid to become [one of ten UK 'Innovation Regions'](#) and received £3.8m in funding designed to drive forward innovation and unlock opportunities for economic growth through making use of world-class digital infrastructure. The County Council will work with food and drink agricultural sectors across Sussex to improve economic performance by co-developing, alongside telecoms and technology partners, education centres and commercial producers, foundational technology such as 5G networks and Artificial Intelligence applications.

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Background papers

None