
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

- On 5 February the Government announced that Sussex (West Sussex, East Sussex & Brighton) is one of six areas that will [join the Government's Devolution Priority Programme](#). This follows the Expression of Interest which was submitted by West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Councils on 10 January. This means Sussex is on the fast track to receive the significant additional powers that come with a strategic combined authority and elected mayor. The Government is now [seeking views on proposals to form a Mayoral Combined Authority for the local government areas of East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, and Brighton and Hove City Council](#). The consultation will run until 13 April. A decision by the Government on the plan and timetable will follow.
- The County Council has been working with district and borough councils to **draw up preliminary proposals for the creation of unitary local government** in the county from 2028. The Government provided the [criteria for these proposals](#) in a letter to the Leader on 6 February. The deadline for submitting preliminary proposals is 21 March. The Government will then consider the options and will support the development of final proposals, which are due to be submitted by 26 September. Government decisions are not expected until early 2026.

Adults Services – Amanda Jupp

- To assist West Sussex residents in financial planning when choosing the best options for long-term care, Adults Services advocate the use of [Carewise](#) for support. Carewise was set up by the County Council, Age UK West Sussex, West Sussex Partners in Care and the Society of Later Life Advisers. It provides information and advice about care and support options, guiding to the most suitable way of paying for long-term care.
- Between 18 and 20 February, the onsite element of the [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\)](#) assurance process of Adult Social Care in West Sussex took place. The assessors met more than 200 individuals, including staff, elected members, partners and people who use Adults Services, with more than 100 members of staff attending drop-in sessions. Throughout the visit there was an impressive one-team approach, with everyone working together. Timescales for publication of the final report are yet to be confirmed.

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

- [Students from nine schools were invited to visit and tour the Houses of Parliament](#) as part of a celebratory event recognising their efforts to encourage students to get involved in the 2024 West Sussex Youth Cabinet and Parliament elections. The students were hosted at the event by the Member of

Parliament for East Worthing and Shoreham, Tom Rutland MP, and received a Democracy award from the County Council. Nearly 5,000 young people from over 20 schools took part in the elections which saw 48 new [Youth Cabinet members](#) and four [Youth Parliament members](#) elected.

- The first round of [successful funding applications have been approved](#) which will [increase the supply of early years and wraparound childcare provision for primary school aged children](#), delivering additional places in areas of the county where there is a shortfall. This is in response to the Department for Education's reforms to childcare which include phasing in additional entitlements to free hours of childcare and term time wraparound provision between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm to improve parents' opportunities for accessing employment. The outcome of a second round of funding applications will be determined in the spring.
- The County Council is [seeking views and comments to help shape the new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Inclusion Strategy](#). The Strategy, to be launched in the autumn, is part of the [long-term commitment to improving SEND services](#) and will set out the proposed vision, principles and priorities for the future and actions required to achieve good quality services for children, young people and their families. The consultation is open until 3 April with respondents encouraged to highlight areas for improvement, and what should be included in the Strategy, to ensure it reflects the needs of those it represents.

Community Support, Fire and Rescue – Duncan Crow

- [The Cabinet Member and Leader attended an event](#) on 13 February marking [100 years since the County Council adopted the Public Libraries Act](#), establishing a county-wide library service. Representatives from the national libraries sector also attended the celebrations, which included the launch of the service's [Library of Possibilities and Wonders Virtual Reality experience](#), created especially for the centenary. This centenary year will include [a programme of events across all libraries](#), highlighting the past, present and future of the service, as well as continuing to offer a wraparound service for all ages, needs and abilities.
- West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WSFRS) has become a [Primary Authority](#) for organisations in the county, including care providers, providing assured and consistent advice on fire safety regulations as well as being a single point of contact to help ensure compliance with legislation. The WSFRS recognises that as an owner, manager or operator of a business/charity regulatory requirements can sometimes be difficult to interpret which is why the WSFRS Primary Authority Scheme offer is an effective method of helping organisations implement measures to ensure they remain compliant with fire safety legislation.

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

- More schools and other buildings across West Sussex will soon be able to generate and use their own renewable energy thanks to the [expansion of a County-Council solar project](#). The programme is part of the County Council's [Climate Action and Adaptation Plan](#) and will help attain the target of being a

carbon-neutral organisation by 2030, in line with the commitment to protect the environment in the Council Plan.

- The RSPB, which manages Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve on behalf of the County Council, has successfully secured funding in partnership with the [Downs to the Sea project](#) to deliver a vital wetland restoration scheme. The [Ferry Pool Wetlands Project](#) will deliver an enhanced system of pools and watercourses for the benefit of breeding and wintering birds, lagoon biodiversity and the visiting public. This will resolve long standing management limitations and secure this strategically important wetland against the increasing impact of climate change.
- As the lead local flood authority for West Sussex, the County Council is responsible for developing, maintaining, applying, and monitoring a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS). A [public consultation has opened seeking views on the draft LFRMS](#). The feedback will help shape the final Strategy which will guide how the County Council works with water companies, district and borough councils, residents, landowners and the Environment Agency to improve local flood risk management in the county. It will include specific actions for the next five years.
- From 31 March (31 March 2027 for micro-firms), all workplaces (businesses and non-domestic premises) in England have a [legal duty to separate dry recyclable materials, food waste and black bin waste](#). This impacts County Council premises such as schools, libraries, offices and fire stations. Additional bins will be introduced and advice will be communicated to staff. All businesses/organisations have a Duty of Care to store their waste and use a registered waste carrier to dispose of it and should review their provision/requirements with their waste service provider.

Finance and Property – Jeremy Hunt

- New [national Procurement Regulations](#) are now live and all organisations that supply goods or services to, or may be interested in doing business with, the County Council will need to know about these changes. Existing procurement regulations will continue to apply for frameworks and contracts already in place or progressing, but new contracts must follow the new procurement regulations. The new regulations include a new central digital platform with more simple processes and greater transparency; and simplified [bidding processes for suppliers](#) will make it easier to bid, negotiate and work in partnership with the public sector.

Highways and Transport – Joy Dennis

- The Cabinet Member has allocated over £9m of new funding and £5m of existing funding to provide [a range of bus service improvements throughout the county](#). These include the installation of more Real Time Passenger Information Screens (in addition to over 300 installed in the last year); continuing bus priority improvements at traffic signal-controlled junctions; erection of more bus shelters in partnership with parish, district and borough councils; and, in partnership with bus operators, a continued focus on reducing bus journey times and improving passenger satisfaction.

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- As part of phase 1 of the [A29 realignment scheme](#) the Cabinet Member has [agreed](#) the early implementation of the Barnham Road Roundabout, which will provide access to land for development, including completion of the A29 realignment and the proposed new primary school. The new roundabout will allow realignment of the access to the Halo commercial area and, it is anticipated, will be a catalyst for the remainder of the development.
 - The County Council recently secured £2.35m in funding from the Department for Transport which will be used to [design and deliver walking, wheeling and cycling facilities](#), and detailed plans are being drawn up. In further recognition of progress, the County Council has recently been awarded the [Mobilityways Commute Zero Hero Award 2025 for Active Travel Champion](#) for the Council's [Active Travel Strategy](#) which prioritises school journeys and demonstrates a long-term vision to prioritise active travel.

Public Health and Wellbeing – Bob Lanzer

- A public consultation will be undertaken to **seek people's views on [pharmaceutical services in West Sussex](#)**. Insight gathered will help the local health system understand how local people use these services, identify any gaps, and plan for the future, so these services can continue to be developed to best meet people's needs. This information will contribute to the draft West Sussex Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment - a statutory report produced by the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board, which further public comment will be sought on later this year in a statutory 60-day consultation.
- The West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) will be seeking views through a **four-week public consultation on its draft Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-30**. Setting out the HWB's five priority areas, the survey invites feedback from the public, staff, and organisations across communities on how these priorities may be delivered, and how people would prefer to be informed of progress and developments. The strategy is the overarching plan for improving health and wellbeing for residents and communities and reducing inequalities in the county.
- The County Council supported national [No Smoking Day](#) on 12 March, encouraging smokers to make a quit attempt and improve their health, based around the positive theme 'Take back your life this No Smoking Day'. Utilising the Council's communications channels, the free local support available to help people quit was promoted, including the recently expanded [Smokefree West Sussex services](#), providing more choice for smokers in how they choose to quit.

Support Services and Economic Development – Steve Waight

- A [Sickness Absence Task and Finish Group](#), led by the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, is overseeing work aiming to stabilise and reduce sickness absence levels. Key actions taken to date have included an improved Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure, training of management teams in key areas, focused HR support for longer term absences, and improvements in advice provided from Occupational Health. Work will continue to make further improvements leading to an internal audit on policy compliance in quarter 1 of 2025/26 which will inform future action planning by the Task and Finish Group.

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- The Customer Service Centre and Community Hub have been utilising AI systems to assist with insights on resident demand and behaviours since October 2024. Focus is now shifting to integration and commissioning of additional new communications channels to the platform including text and voice chatbots. The **AI components used in the platform are being assessed to determine their use in other areas of the County Council where they could be used to drive further efficiencies**. The [Digital Strategy](#) outlines the approaches that are being taken.

Contact Officer: Helen Kenny, Head of Democratic Services, 033 022 22532, helen.kenny@westsussex.gov.uk

Background papers

None