

At our Public Cabinet meeting yesterday we considered the Quarter 3 Performance and Resources Report. This report sets out the County Council's performance, including a financial update, for the period from 1st April 2022 to 31st December 2022. I thought, for a change, it might interest you to understand more about the wide range of the work undertaken by the county council. I have therefore reproduced an excerpt from the report, which sets out our performance update by our key priorities, as set out in our Council Plan. The full report is available as part of the cabinet Papers which can be found at:

<https://westsussex.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g3301/Public%20reports%20pack%20Tuesday%2014-Mar-2023%2010.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

### **Performance Summary by Priority**

*17. During this period, the key focus has been on the ongoing global energy crisis, cost of living and inflation which is impacting operations across the council. The County Council has no additional resources to address the impact and is anticipating additional cost and demand pressures in many services. The County Council with focus on partnership working, continues to help those most in need to access the range of support that is available.*

#### **2. Keeping People Safe from Vulnerable Situations**

*18. As in previous quarters, the health and social care system in West Sussex continues to experience significant pressure and this dominates the work of the Adults Social Care Service. The reasons for this are complex but include high demand from our partners, in particular our NHS partners requiring support in the timely and safe discharge of patients from hospitals within the county.*

*19. Performance within the Children and Young People and Learning and Skills Portfolios continues to be focused on maintaining a strong trajectory of improvement as we prepare for the imminent Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) by Ofsted. Recent activity has focused on individual teams where the overall level of performance has fallen below the standard we expect. The service has therefore maintained a strong focus with staff and managers on providing evidence of the impact of our improvement activity at a child and family level. The Children First Transformation programme continues to provide a strong framework for service delivery and is on track with the implementation of Phase 2 of the Family Safeguarding model and the implementation of the Phase 2 Fostering Service Redesign. Both will support the improvements in practice and performance in readiness for a full Ofsted inspection.*

*20. To ensure we are ready for the ILACS, the Practice Improvement Plan has been reviewed and supports activity across all service areas within children's social care and early help. This activity remains closely aligned to performance reporting and is reported to the independent Improvement Board monthly. The Improvement Board has acknowledged the hard work being undertaken and that there is evidence that the service is maintaining the trajectory of improvement.*

*21. During the third quarter, we have continued to see levels of high demand within the areas of early help and social care, and the service has managed this well. Recruitment remains a high priority the successful recruitment of 35 qualified social workers from the South Africa programme are now being inducted into the service from January 2023.*

*22. Teasel Close children's home in Crawley, which is run by the County Council, received an Ofsted rating of 'good' in all areas following an inspection in November 2022. This means the five Council run children's homes that are currently open are rated good or outstanding.*

*23. Working closely with district and borough councils and charities, the County Council is using its £4.8m Household Support Fund from Government, to provide a package of financial and practical assistance to people over the winter. The Community Hub continues to offer direct support to vulnerable households, providing essentials such as food and supplies, as well as grants to those*

who are eligible. The Council used some of the Household Support Fund to provide food vouchers for every West Sussex child who receives benefits-related free school meals over the October halfterm and the Christmas school holiday. Over 17,000 children were given a £15 supermarket voucher for October and a £30 voucher for Christmas supporting around 10,000 households.

24. Library staff are on hand to help and advise people on a range of topics, from money management to energy saving, job seeking and benefits guidance. Regular library events such as 'Story Time' are free for families of young children. The 'Here To Help - Cost Of Living' webpages, also have practical advice and information about how to apply for extra local and national support.

## **2. A Sustainable and Prosperous Economy**

25. With more than three-times the average rainfall in November, the highways network in West Sussex experienced significant flooding. The teams have been working hard with contractors to keep the roads open and repair any subsequent damage to the carriageways that has been caused by the water.

26. A total of £7.4m worth of road surface improvement schemes were completed at 197 sites countywide in the six months to October. 138km of road were either completely resurfaced or had surface dressing or micro-asphalt treatments. Approximately 22,000 potholes were filled. Three programmes of work include 38 resurfacing schemes, totalling approximately 25km in length and representing a total investment of £3.4m. The new road surfaces are more durable and resilient to potholes and the material used has 11% less carbon emissions than traditional methods. Micro-asphalt treatment was used at 113 sites, with a total of 44km roads treated and representing a £2m investment and 46 sites, totalling 69km of road, received surface dressing treatment, representing an investment of £2m.

27. Construction is also progressing well at three Active Travel Fund schemes in West Sussex which will all provide improvements for cyclists and pedestrians. Findon/Findon Valley involves construction of a 2km-long shared cycleway/walkway route, the A283 Steyning Road in Shoreham includes construction of a crossing for both pedestrians and cyclists to access the river-side footway and cycleway and improve connectivity for schoolchildren. The A259 Drayton, near Marsh Lane will provide improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and bus passengers

28. Bus services are still recovering from the impacts on patronage from the pandemic, therefore, a national 'BusIt' campaign has been launched to attract older people with free bus passes to return or start to use buses again. Additionally, a national £2 capped bus fare launched on 1st January 2023.

29. Bidding as part of a South-East consortium, the council has been successful in securing funding from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to deliver the Create Growth programme across the county to provide support for high-growth potential businesses in the creative industries. The consortium has been awarded funding of £1.275m to deliver business support as part of the programme, over three years. The programme will work to develop the network of investors in the region and build their understanding of the benefits of investing in this sector. This will increase the ability of creative businesses in the South-East to access private investment in the future. The programme is being set up now and will launch in January 2023.

## **3. Helping People and Communities Fulfil Their Potential**

30. Recent events to help residents stay safe include free electric blanket testing, free kitchen fire safety events at Worthing and the relaunch of the road safety show 'Safe Drive Stay Alive'. Biker Down workshops run by firefighters have also taken place, which teaches vital skills that could save a life in the event of a road traffic collision involving a motorcycle. A new free online interactive home fire safety check tool has also been launched.

31. *Outbreaks of avian bird flu in captive birds, both domestic and commercial, were confirmed in West Sussex for the first time. Working with DEFRA's Animal and Plant Health Agency, 3 km control zones were established around premises in Billingshurst (October), Arundel (November) and Horley (December) and Trading Standards Officers conducted doorstep visits within those areas to identify keepers of birds and ensure that they were being suitably housed whilst DEFRA vets dealt with the outbreaks.*

#### **4. Making the Best Use of Resources**

32. *Ongoing investment in low carbon and renewable energy by the County Council continues to help towards offsetting the increase in the authority's own energy bills and to lead by example in demonstrating the importance to invest in clean energy. The County Council also works with a specialist energy partner to market the energy it generates and operate its batteries to deliver the best financial return.*

33. *The County Council's draft Budget and Council Plan for 2023/24 was published and subject to review by the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee in January, an all-Member Day and budget and Council Plan session with key stakeholders. The Cabinet is proposing that the Council will spend £1.86 billion (gross) next year to deliver vital services to a growing population of 882,676 residents and 37,400 businesses across West Sussex. Final decisions on the budget are to be made at the Full Council meeting on 17th February.*

#### **5. Responding to the Challenges Posed by Climate Change**

34. *A new zero-carbon school in Burgess Hill has been approved that will generate its own energy and offer excellent educational facilities to 900 local children. The County Council has approved capital funding of £57m to build the secondary school. Its position will provide maximum sunlight to nearly 1,000 solar photovoltaic panels generating an estimated 296,000 kWh of energy a year. The LED lighting will be controlled automatically by daylight and movement detection. The main building will have fresh air ventilation, keeping the school a comfortable temperature, even in extreme heat. The school will include a Special Support Centre enabling children with special educational needs and disabilities to be supported to learn in a mainstream school.*

35. *Government funding of up to £1.8m has been awarded to the West Sussex Chargepoint Network, which is providing electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints for residents in areas which have no off-street parking. Working with district and borough council partners this will help fund up to 450 on-street chargepoints and 100 in public car parks to encourage people to consider making the switch to electric vehicles.*

36. *Around £0.250m of funding was secured to undertake studies at 37 schools, which will identify site specific measures to decarbonise these sites. Within the next few weeks, we expect to have sufficient information to plan a future programme of school decarbonisation works and be ready to bid for funding to undertake the works.*

37. *The County Council has approved a £7.7m investment in solar PV and battery storage systems for schools and corporate buildings across the county. This investment builds on the council's existing portfolio of solar PV assets delivered through the Solar Power for Schools Programme. The PV and battery systems will help to reduce energy costs and contribute to achieving net zero operation. Following approval, the Energy Services team has started a procurement exercise to commission an installer to deliver the programme over the next three years.*

**Jeremy Hunt**