

Cabinet: Item 8

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Cabinet Report: Current and recent Business

Start of Life

Stephen Hillier Children and Young People



1 Better Change and 'Pause' Partnership

A team has been established within the Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help service to work more effectively with mothers who have had, or are at risk of having, repeated removal of children in their care, enabling these women to make positive changes to their lives. Known as 'Better Change', the whole-system approach will ensure effective partnership working between health professionals and the County Council and have a measureable impact for children and families. The team incorporates the knowledge and skills of a number of professionals including midwifery, domestic abuse support and wider family support. The partnership will provide a more targeted response by encouraging the women to take a 'pause' from having children and provide the support they need to achieve their own goals and create a more positive future. In addition this approach should see benefits for the County Council in the form of a reduction in the burden of court proceedings in children's social care and the consequent costs of care.

2 Therapeutic Support for Children and their Families

The Sussex-based charity [Lifecentre](#) has been commissioned by the West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Groups, in collaboration with the County Council, in response to the strategic priority of supporting those who have experienced Child Sexual Exploitation. The service will deliver pre-trial support, play therapy and counselling to children up to the age of 18 and their families who have experienced or witnessed sexual abuse or exploitation; this also includes access to a telephone helpline service. The service was commissioned following a detailed needs assessment and extensive consultation with over 50 children and young people, 50 stakeholders, including local service providers across the statutory and community and voluntary sector, clinicians and safeguarding leads. Since the service started in July 2016, over 100 children and young people have received direct support with family members also assisted where appropriate. Lifecentre is delivering training on supporting the children and young people's workforce across the county who are dealing with children and young people who have witnessed sexual abuse.

3 Family Assist

[Family Assist](#) is a new web-based communication and information tool for families, developed in a partnership between the NHS and the County Council, currently running as a six-month pilot. During the pilot, midwives at Western

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Sussex Hospitals Foundation Trust are asking pregnant women in the Chichester, Worthing and Shoreham areas to sign up to the scheme. They will receive relevant information and tailored support and advice via email to help them through their pregnancy and the early stages of their child's life. Users of the service will also be able to contact professionals for personal, non-emergency advice. Once registered, users will have the option of adding access to their site for up to five people (such as other family members), thereby providing them with access to all the relevant information and email advice too. Professionals working with these families will be using a professionally-approved and trusted source of information – 'the knowledgebase' – meaning that all staff access the same information and providing consistent messages. This addresses previous feedback from families who have encountered the issue of different professionals giving different advice. If the pilot proves to be successful, it is planned that Family Assist will be extended across the county and the age range that it caters for will be increased. The Family Assist website and email system complements an app which is currently being used by County Council frontline staff called Baby Buddy. [Baby Buddy](#) is a free app targeted more specifically at younger families that offers guidance through pregnancy and the first six months of a baby's life.

Start of Life

Richard Burrett Education and Skills



4 New arrangements for engaging with schools

The Cabinet Member has taken a decision to alter the way that the County Council formally engages with schools. A review by members of the previous Education and Skills Forum had concluded that improvements should be made to existing arrangements. The statutory role of the Schools Forum, i.e. making decisions and acting as a consultative body on funding proposals put forward by the County Council, should be kept separate from the consideration of wider education issues. In response to the review, the Cabinet Member has decided to re-instate the statutory Schools Forum. The wider work, including the development of Education strategy and policy, improving inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils in mainstream schools and raising pupil outcomes, will now be carried out by a new Area Inclusion and Improvement Governance Board. The membership of the Board will include representatives from schools, officers of the County Council and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Partnership Boards. This clear separation of roles should enable a more focused approach to these different areas of work.

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5 School Funding Announcement

The Cabinet Member welcomes the Government's announcement about increased funding for schools and High Needs in 2018/19 and 2019/20. The indicative total increased funding for mainstream schools and academies in West Sussex is £12.8m in 2018/19 and £11.1m in 2019/20. f40, the group that represents the lowest-funded education authorities, estimates the shortfall in funding in schools in West Sussex is £48m over this period. Local authorities are responsible for distributing the total funding to schools through their locally-agreed formula. The announcement will mean an indicative total increase in funding for High Needs pupils in West Sussex of £0.9m in 2018/19 and £0.3m in 2019/20. However, the demand on this budget is such that, despite the increase, an overspend in this area is still anticipated in 2018/19. Council officers are carrying out work to model the allocation of funds to schools through the formula in 2018/19 which will be the subject of formal consultation via the Schools Forum this autumn. This will include proposals to ease pressures on the High Needs budget.

6 Post-16 Transport Policy Review

The Cabinet Member has taken a decision to launch a four-week public consultation on proposals to raise the transport charges made to Post-16 students. Currently certain eligible students pay the County Council £427 towards the cost of their transport to school or college, with a waiver existing for families on low incomes. The consultation sets out a proposal to raise the payments to £600 to bring the fees in line with the average cost of contract coach places and the price of an equivalent journey on public transport. This is also more consistent with the fees that students in most other counties pay. The existing policy of waiving the charge in full for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) students from low-income families will continue. The consultation will also enable the County Council to ensure that parents are aware of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund, a government grant allocated to schools. This grant enables students who might otherwise have been deterred by the cost of transport to remain in education.

The Economy

Louise Goldsmith Economy



7 Crawley Growth Programme

The Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Company (LEP) has approved a £14.64m Local Growth Fund investment for a significant regeneration programme for Crawley. The Crawley Growth Programme has been developed in collaboration

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with Crawley Borough Council and identifies a number of key projects to build and deliver growth and regeneration in Crawley. The proposed investment package, including transforming Crawley town centre and improvements at Manor Royal Business Park, has been supported and approved by the LEP. The LEP investment brings the total investment package for Crawley to around £60m, aligning funding commitments from partners, including £9.6m from the County Council. The County Council, as the delivery body for the Local Growth Fund investment, will work with the Borough Council to oversee the delivery of proposals that will unlock significant growth in the Crawley economy demonstrating the scale of what can be achieved for the county through working in partnership.

8 Bognor Regis Regeneration

The Leader attended the 'Changing the Tide' conference held in Bognor Regis in September which championed the positive regeneration-led change in the town. The delegates, who included investors, local businesses and community groups, heard how the town is an exciting place to invest, visit, work and learn, with a strong focus on the major regeneration investments in the town and the opportunities these will bring. This includes projects such as the University of Chichester campus expansion and the Creative Digital Hub project. The County Council, with support from Arun District Council and the University, is leading on the Creative Digital Hub project to create a collaborative work space at Bognor Regis railway station and deliver economic benefits to the town. The heads of terms were signed in August 2017 for the lease of the station spaces and work is now progressing towards securing a hub operator and, in partnership with [Hemingway Design](#), fitting out the spaces as a digital hub. While the work is progressing a series of successful workshops have been held to engage local businesses and organisations who are part of the hub community, with around 30 attending the latest workshop on 27 September. The hub is scheduled to open in the summer of 2018 and forms a vital part of the development of Bognor Regis's economy.

9 Experience West Sussex

Following the launch in April of the 'Experience West Sussex' visitor marketing campaign for 2017, there have been approximately 12,000 new social media followers across [Facebook](#), [twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), taking the total to over 23,000 followers. Running as part of the campaign to promote the county as a tourist destination, a photo competition was also launched in July to look for images inspired by the Experience West Sussex themes of Back to Nature, Cultural Encounters and New Experiences. Over 280 entries were received, demonstrating the number of activities and destinations that West Sussex has to offer. The Leader has chosen four winning photographs which are on display in County Hall, Chichester. The winners also received prizes donated by local businesses which feature in the campaign.

10 Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)

The [Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership](#) (LEP) is developing a new Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). The SEP outlines the strategy for economic growth for the Coast to Capital LEP region and was first published in March 2014,

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following close collaboration with the County Council and other partners to ensure that there was close alignment with the County Council's priorities and that the Local Growth Deal would support the delivery of these. Following the decision to leave the EU and the emergence of an Industrial Strategy Green Paper, it has become evident that a new SEP is required. The new SEP will set out clearly the economic challenges and opportunities for the region, and what conditions, investment and interventions are needed to achieve economic growth. The Leader, who is a member of the LEP Board, attended one of the vision development workshops to explore the economic opportunities and challenges. The County Council will continue play an important role in developing the new SEP to ensure that it continues to support the County Council's priorities and promote economic growth in West Sussex. The development is at an early stage and more information and timelines will be available as the work progresses.

The Leader

Louise Goldsmith



11 West Sussex Leaders' Board

West Sussex Leaders have agreed to operate as a Strategic Board on behalf of all communities within the county area: the West Sussex Leaders Board (WSLB). The WSLB will develop a collective and influential voice for West Sussex on a range of key priority issues and develop a consensus around the regional 'Offer and Ask' to central government. Leaders have agreed the following priority areas:

- (1) Local Government Funding;
- (2) Economy and Infrastructure;
- (3) Housing and Planning;
- (4) Education and Skills;
- (5) Environment; and
- (6) Health

While the County Council develops its 'offers and asks' as an area, Leaders have agreed to take a pragmatic approach to opportunities that present themselves and work collectively to influence the Government where it is in the County Council's interests to do so. Good examples of this work are the submission of a West Sussex bid to pilot 100% business rate retention and the collective work on an expression of interest for investment from the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

12 Scouts Annual Award

In September the Leader attended the West Sussex Scouts Annual General Meeting. The event gave thanks to the volunteers across the county who ensure, through Scouting, that young people are able to thrive and prosper. The West Sussex scouting movement has continued to grow in membership over the last 40 years and has developed over that time to include both girls and boys from all backgrounds. The County Council has a working partnership with the Scouts through its Think Family programme (part of the County Council's Integrated Prevention service to vulnerable families), to give young people the opportunity to get involved with Scouting who might not otherwise do so. Think Family works with families to tackle challenges and difficulties at an early stage, and provides practical support to help the family achieve personally-agreed goals and build resilience. The partnership has proved very successful in providing young people with practical skills and valuable life experiences and continues to benefit those children who have become involved. This is another example of how West Sussex works in partnership with organisations across the county to do the very best for its residents.

Later Life

**Amanda Jupp
Adults and Health****13 Stoptober**

October marks the start of the annual Public Health England Stop Smoking challenge - [Stoptober](#) - that supports smokers across England towards quitting for good. It calls for smokers to sign up to quitting smoking for 28 days on the national Stoptober website, which gives access to support such as digital resources and local stop smoking services. In West Sussex, 15.4% of adults still smoke; smokers need social care four years earlier when compared with non-smokers. This year Stoptober has two themes, engagement with football clubs (targeting routine and manual workers) including Crawley Town, Burgess Hill Town and Chichester Ladies Football clubs and asking vaping shops to support the campaign. The West Sussex stop smoking service is already e-cigarette friendly. Stoptober will be used to start to build links with vaping shops in West Sussex to support community stop smoking providers in future. Special focus has been given to Arun District as an area of high smoking prevalence; for example, 56% of routine and manual workers in Arun smoke.

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14 Seasonal Influenza Campaign

The Public Health Team is working to support this year's NHS seasonal influenza (flu) campaign to improve the uptake of the flu vaccination. The viral illness can lead to increased deaths in elderly and at-risk groups, increased emergency admissions to hospital, GP consultations, school absences and calls to 111. Outbreaks of flu in care homes can lead to temporary home closures. Most cases in the UK occur during an eight- to 10-week period during the winter and add to the pressures on NHS services. To reach the immunisation target of 75% in the over 65s in West Sussex, an additional 9,686 people will need to be vaccinated this year based on last year's figures. Other groups of eligible people are those in at-risk groups, including pregnant women, carers, children aged two to eight and frontline health and social care workers. Working with key partners in West Sussex, this year's campaign will encourage everyone who is eligible for the free flu jab to take up the offer. More information on the winter flu vaccination is available at www.nhs.uk/conditions/Flu/Pages/Introduction.aspx.

15 Suicide Prevention Strategy

Around 5% of avoidable deaths in West Sussex are a result of suicide, which is the leading cause of death in people aged 20 to 34 years in the UK. Suicides are not inevitable. With timely and effective evidence-based interventions, treatment and support, both suicides and suicide attempts can be prevented. A local-level Suicide Prevention Strategy has been developed to present a set of [priority areas](#) for action in West Sussex for 2017 to 2020, aligned with national strategic priorities. The final document will be signed off by the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB). The strategy is based on evidence drawn from the West Sussex Suicide Audit (2017), engagement with front-line workers via an online consultation, a brief review of effective models of suicide prevention and local-level analysis of emergency hospital admissions for self-harm. The multi-agency West Sussex Suicide Prevention Steering Group has been set up to co-ordinate local implementation of the national strategy 'Preventing Suicides in England'. The Group, in liaison with the HWB, will oversee and support development and delivery of the local strategic action plan which addresses the priority areas for action.

16 West Sussex Care Month

October is West Sussex Care Month. Throughout the month the County Council has been running a public awareness campaign aimed at helping West Sussex residents to live independently for longer - a key priority of the County Council. The campaign, which is returning for its third year, reinforces the principles of the Care Act and highlights the importance of giving good, early information and advice and useful contacts to the public. Radio slots have been arranged with Spirit FM and More Radio on a variety of topics including how to pay for care, staying well this winter and how to get a job in care. Communications have also been made through a range of channels including magazines, newspapers, social media and more. Members have been asked to share the information through their local contacts to let residents know about the initiative. For more information about the campaign, please visit www.westsussex.gov.uk/caremonth.

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17 Discharge to Assess services

The Cabinet Member has taken a decision, following a successful pilot programme, to increase Discharge to Assess services across the county. The services will support hospital patients who are medically fit for discharge to have the option of being admitted into a care home for up to six weeks, free of any customer contribution, for individually-tailored reablement training. During the placements, customers will also have time to make decisions, alongside their family and carers, about long-term care needs. It is intended that the Discharge to Assess project will reduce delayed transfers of care between health and social care organisations and reduce the level of dependency of an individual, which in turn reduces the level of care packages required for as many customers as possible. The project outcomes will be monitored closely to ensure the County Council's continued commitment to help the most vulnerable feel supported and safe.

18 Time to Change Hub

The [Time to Change Hub](#) in West Sussex is developing a programme to support the reduction of stigma and discrimination experienced by people with mental health problems. The hub is a partnership of many local organisations and people who have experienced mental health problems ('lived experience') and is co-ordinated by [Coastal West Sussex Mind](#) and the County Council. The partners are committed to ending mental health stigma and discrimination and to change the way people think and act about mental health. People with lived experience of mental health issues have informed the action plan through meetings in Chichester, Worthing and Crawley. The programme is encouraging people with lived experience to become [Time to Change Champions](#) who, through their social contacts, work to reduce stigma and discrimination. The hub is providing training to support and develop the skills of the champions and for employers to reduce stigma and discrimination in their workplace committing to sign the [Time to Change Employers Pledge](#).

Stronger Communities

Deborah Urquhart Environment

**19 Street Sweeping Contract**

The County Council has recently procured a contract to divert, for the first time, street sweepings waste away from landfill. Currently the County Council disposes of around 6,400 tonnes of material swept from streets by the district and borough councils into the Redhill landfill site. The new contract will result in

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almost all street sweepings being recycled, mainly through grit recovery and composting of leaves. At that level of diversion, the County Council will save over £1.7m during the initial three-year period and a further £1.2m if the contract is extended for two further years. The County Council will also benefit from a reduction in carbon emissions as the material will be processed in-county. There are no extra costs for the district and borough councils and it will increase recycling rates by 1.72%.

20 Sussex Energy Tariff

The County Council is working with [Robin Hood Energy](#), a not-for-profit energy company owned and operated by Nottingham City Council, to launch a local energy tariff for West Sussex residents by the end of 2017. Three energy tariffs for gas and electricity (fixed, standard variable and pre-payment) will be marketed under the 'Your Energy Sussex' brand and will be available to residents in West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove with the backing of partner authorities in these areas. The aim of a council-backed energy tariff is to encourage more customers, particularly those that have never switched their energy supplier, to engage with the energy market and save money. It is estimated that many residents could save up to £300 per year by switching to a more competitive energy deal. The tariffs will be fair and competitive year-on-year. A high level of customer service will be offered and there will be no penalty for early exit from fixed-price tariff deals. Surplus revenue generated by the initiative will support a fuel poverty fund which will be shared between supporting partner authorities to help vulnerable households in their areas. The contract with Robin Hood Energy will also allow the development of an energy tariff in the future. The County Council is considering the launch of a 'green' renewable energy tariff, which would incorporate energy generated in West Sussex and an energy tariff for businesses in the county.

21 Clothes Swap Swish

According to waste analysis, in 2016/17 West Sussex residents disposed of 11,428 tonnes of textiles, yet only 2,428 tonnes were recycled at Household Waste Recycling Sites (HWRS) or taken to clothes recycling centres. These figures exclude those taken to HWRS sites by charities and other outlets meaning that around 9,000 tonnes a year are thrown out with the rubbish, costing the County Council over £1.4m a year for disposal. A 'Clothes Swap Swish' was run by the Waste Prevention Team on 6 October to help raise awareness at the County Council. Members and staff were reminded to 'Think Before You Throw' and offered practical solutions for textiles to be reused, repaired or recycled. This saved money and provided an opportunity to swap or give clothes a new life, make contact with members of the Waste Prevention Team and volunteers to get general tips and advice on recycling and reducing waste. The swishing event formed part of a small, mainly online, communications campaign to inform and remind the public that they can easily recycle and reuse textiles. A larger campaign is planned for the spring and, if this event proves successful, further events will be planned across West Sussex during 2018.

Stronger Communities

Bob Lanzer Highways and Infrastructure



22 West Sussex Gigabit project

The Cabinet Member is pleased to welcome government investment into the West Sussex Gigabit project which will allow the County Council to trial a new way of building a full-fibre network in the county. The Government desires a larger, full-fibre footprint across the UK and the investment by Department for Culture, Media and Sport is to test innovative ways of getting suppliers to build the technology. In West Sussex, the County Council will be piloting an approach to connect the county's public sector estate to 'ultrafast' broadband services. The County Council has been working in partnership with Adur and Worthing Councils to design a project that delivers the maximum number of public sector buildings connected for the funding available. The County Council is expecting that the network will be built in urban areas where the density of public sector estate is greatest. In the future, public services will demand 'ultrafast' speeds to connect to each other and communities, to share information, give and receive services and interact efficiently in a digital environment. The next steps will be to carry out a procurement for a supplier with the intention of building the new full-fibre network from 2018.

23 Proud to Serve

As the County Council moves to a new phase in its provision of online services for its customers, the Customer Experience Programme has been closed and the County Council is scoping a new programme called 'Proud to Serve'. This will be led by the Director of Communities and builds on current work including the Digital Vision. Its primary focus will be Digital Customer and Digital Workforce. The previous Customer Experience Programme has enhanced the customer focus and expertise within the organisation. It promoted closer working with services and IT to deliver real improvements and attracted funding to support self-serve and channel shift (the process which encourages customers to access or interact with services via channels other than those to which they normally choose). Achievements included a new website that went live in 2015 including [Find my Nearest](#) pages, [Online Payments](#) and improvements to [Love West Sussex](#). Improvements were also made to how enquiries to the Highways service were managed and avoidable contact was reduced from 39% to around 5% and first contact resolution increased from 11% to 29%.

24 Highways Termed Maintenance Contract

Following a successful tender exercise the County Council received six strong bids for the Highways Termed Maintenance Contract. The County Council is

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currently in dialogue with four of the bidders. The process will last until the end of October when some changes to the specification and contract itself will be made and re-issued to the four bidders. The contract will be awarded in February with a view to it starting in July 2018. Various details are still being considered through the dialogue including the structure of the service, the level of resource and the methods of delivery. A further Task and Finish Group has been established to monitor the next stages of the procurement process.

25 A27 Consultations

The Cabinet Member has responded to Highways England's consultations on proposals to improve the A27 at Worthing, Lancing and Arundel. The Cabinet Member has supported Highways England's proposals for the Worthing to Lancing scheme whilst acknowledging the need for more substantial improvements. He has expressed support for Option 5A at Arundel, subject to concerns about environmental impacts being addressed. Following feedback from local members and the Environmental and Community Services Select Committee, amendments were made to the consultation responses to highlight concerns about the environmental impacts of the proposals to be addressed at the next stage for these projects. The Cabinet Member has also written to Highways England requesting that a solution for A27 Chichester should be developed through a continuation of the Build a Better A27 community workshops for consideration in the Government's next Roads Investment Strategy.

Stronger Communities

Debbie Kennard Safer, Stronger Communities



26 West Sussex Libraries

The Cabinet Member joined staff and library users at a Digital Library Plus launch event at Worthing Library on 17 August. An award of £178,000 from Arts Council England has enabled the Library Service to purchase new digital equipment which is being used to support older people who may feel isolated, jobseekers needing IT skills and adults with learning disabilities. These groups are learning how to use the equipment to access library services, as well as find wider, relevant online help. The launch event engaged partners from across the County Council, district and borough councils and local NHS and voluntary sector organisations. During the event, the Cabinet Member was able to promote the record-breaking success of the Summer Reading Challenge. In West Sussex libraries this year, 16,000 children have taken part in the project, sharing books with their families and collecting rewards from their local library. The scheme encourages parents and carers to support their children's reading by borrowing books themselves and reading alongside their children.

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27 Armed Forces Covenant

The Cabinet Member joined representatives of the Armed Forces community at the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award Ceremony on 6 September on HMS Victory. The event was held to recognise the commitment to upholding the key principles of the Armed Forces Covenant for employers in the South East that 'no member of the Armed Forces Community should face disadvantage in the provision of public and commercial services compared to any other citizen'. The County Council has shown its continued commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant by reviewing the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Veterans and its work with the Career Transition Partnership to promote the County Council as a great place to work. The County Council will continue to recognise the value serving personnel, reservists, veterans and military families bring to its business as work progresses towards a Gold award.

28 National Customer Service Week

The County Council has a '[customer promise](#)' which it endeavours to uphold at all times. For the past three years it has also undertaken specific activities in support of customers during National Customer Service Week. This year it was held from 2 to 6 October. The week-long event gave the County Council the opportunity to raise the importance of customer service and the vital role it plays in successful business practice. It gave a chance to focus on the County Council's core value of being a customer-centred organisation where its staff are proud to serve. This year a variety of activities took place including two 'digital tea parties' to help residents learn how to access and use digital services, and 'Tell us what you Think', where the communications team captured feedback from residents about the service they experience from the County Council.

29 Fire Cadets Programme

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service is working with the Greater Brighton Metropolitan College (MET) to launch a brand new fire cadets programme. 13 September marked the first day of the 38-week programme in which 16 students from the MET's uniformed services course started their learning about the fire service; from the roles and responsibilities of individuals within WSFRS to practising hose drills, working at height, and using the special protective clothing and equipment firefighters rely on every day. They will also learn about team work and the principles of working in a disciplined organisation, and undertake HeartStart first aid training, which equips individuals with invaluable skills to deal with cardiac arrest, blood loss and choking. Previous cadet programmes have been run solely by the fire service. However, collaborating with the MET allows a centralised, streamlined approach to a programme that will benefit many young people for many years to come. The cadets will experience the practical aspects of firefighting and also learn about the community safety and prevention work which makes up a large proportion of a modern-day firefighter's role.

Effective Council

Jeremy Hunt Finance and Resources



30 Fairtrade County Status

The Cabinet Member is pleased to announce that West Sussex has been awarded Fairtrade County status by the [Fairtrade Foundation](#), for its commitment to Fairtrade principles after a two-year campaign. This follows a campaign led by Fairtrade West Sussex, which was set up in 2009. Following a notice of motion to the County Council in March 2015, and a subsequent decision by the then Cabinet Member for Corporate Relations, the County Council, together with local Fairtrade Steering Group, has achieved the five criteria necessary to be granted this excellent award. The County Council promotes a number of Fairtrade initiatives such as ensuring that Fairtrade tea and coffee is available in its schools, staff restaurants and at its meetings, together with the provision of education packs about Fairtrade to local communities. It also collaborates with the local Fairtrade Steering Group to promote Fairtrade amongst local businesses, commercial and other organisations, including shops and cafes. As a result of the support of the public and the Fairtrade campaign, an increasing number of farms in developing countries are now selling their products on Fairtrade terms, bringing them a stable income as well as enabling social and environment benefits through the Fairtrade Premium. The county will continue to build on its achievements and take the campaign further. An update on these activities will be reported to the Fairtrade Foundation when the county renews its Fairtrade County status in one year.

31 Pension Fund Pooling

All Local Government Pension Scheme Funds are required by the Government to pool assets. The ACCESS Pool (a collaboration of central, eastern and southern shires) has been created. Eleven local authorities make up the ACCESS Pool with combined assets under management of £40.6bn as at 31 March 2017. The investments are managed on behalf of over 2,600 active employers, and over 984,000 members. Elected members continue to be fully engaged in the Pooling initiative. The ACCESS Joint Committee had its first formal meeting on 31 July at which the Inter Authority Agreement was formalised. At its second meeting held on 2 October an update on the Collective Investment Vehicle Operator Procurement process was presented to the Joint Committee. Members were also informed about the proposal for investment funds to be made available to coincide with the operator appointment. This will allow meaningful early progress in pooling and hopefully investment manager fee savings, for the benefit of the ACCESS funds.

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32 Audit Opinion on the Annual Statement of Accounts

The County Council's external auditor, EY, issued its audit opinion on the annual Statement of Accounts for both the County Council and the Pension Fund on 13 September. Auditors have again given the County Council a clean bill of health (for the eighth year running) on both the accounts and for value for money, confirming its opinion that the County Council is a going concern with sound forward planning. EY reported that the County Council secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The report comments on the systems, processes and financial health of the County Council. The audited version of the accounts has been published on the County Council's [website*](#).

Contact: Helen Kenny, 033022 22532

Background Papers

None