

## EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

### PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021 at 7pm

Committee Members: Cllr Woodgate (Chairman)  
Cllr Favor (Vice Chairman)  
Cllr J Dabell (Town Mayor)\*  
Cllr A Peacock (Deputy Town Mayor)\*  
Cllrs Amos, Belsey, Mrs Bennett, Mrs Mockford and Whittaker

Officers present: Town Clerk and Community and Tourism Manager  
Others present: WSCC Cllr Russell, Cllr Dennis, Sgt Voigt and Cllr Ody. Cllr Farren and Cllr Peacock attended via Zoom.

\*= Absent

# = arrived during item 4

#### 122. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public attended.

#### 123. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from the Town Mayor who was attending an official engagement.

Cllr J Dabell	Official Mayoral engagement
Cllr Peacock	Delayed at work (but attended on Zoom)

#### 124. TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of 2<sup>nd</sup> September for accuracy and for the Chairman to Sign them

#### 125. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman advised of a few items:

**Railway Station** - we understand that the works are starting to put the lifts in. In order to facilitate the works, disabled spaces at the station have been temporarily suspended and 7 disabled spaces have been put in on Firbank Way. These are having to be monitored as sadly Sainsbury customers have been seen to use the spaces. With thanks to Disability Access for keeping us up to date as sadly Southern have not provided us with the timescales nor final plans.

**Dementia Café** : Know Dementia have secured funding and will be opening a dementia drop in café on a fortnightly basis in East Grinstead in 2022. The Venue is not yet determined.

**Prostate Cancer Testing** - Many thanks to the Lions who have held another successful prostate test event, 516 men were tested on 27<sup>th</sup> November and any results which need follow up will be advised to them over the next few days. Huge thanks to the Lions team who are supporting our medical services so well with this and the vaccine roll out and

indeed also the Taxi Welfare checks. Thanks also to the Town Councils Amenities & Tourism committee who granted free use of the Meridian Hall for the tests to take place.

**Queens Walk** : Officers have introduced our cleaning contractors, Monitor, to Evolve Estates. Monitor have advised that as they service EGTC and MSDC public toilets in the area. They are able to offer a good price to Evolve. It is disappointing that the toilets are not yet open. There is a disagreement as to the S106 conditions as to when they are to be opened, before or only after a % of retail units are let. At this time there do not appear to be any retail units let from the new side of the development. Thanks to Cllr Whittaker who has been liaising with Evolve and trying to push them along.

Thanks were also given to the Lions for organising the diabetes checks in the town last month.

#### 126. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Cllr Bennett noted that there were on decisions to be made but reminded all that she was a WSCC Councillor and their stakeholder governor for Queen Victoria Hospital

Cllr Favor and Cllr Mrs Mockford declared they were employees at the Queen Victoria Hospital.

Cllr Belsey reminded all that he was the cabinet member at Mid Sussex with LCWiP responsibility.

#### 127. WSCC CHILDREN'S EARLY HELP SERVICES

Cllr Jacquie Russell gave an update.

##### **Introduction**

We are now just coming to the end of the second year of the Children's Services Improvement Journey that has been overseen by the Government appointed Commissioner and our partner in practice Hampshire County Council.

Last year was about laying the foundation blocks and future plans for the service to build upon in order to move from an inadequate rating to good and beyond. We have spent this year in the hard yards of implementing those plans whilst feeding back to Ofsted at each 4 monthly monitoring visit and to the Commissioner at each monthly improvement board meeting.

##### **Early Help**

Elements of further transformation of the service commenced in early January this year, with the proposals for the redesign of the Early Help service, which went through scrutiny, out to public consultation in the Spring, back to scrutiny in the summer with the final decision to implement the redesign proposals taken by Cabinet in July of this year.

The new model will commence in January 2022 and will operate both out of the 12 family hubs that are strategically positioned across the County in areas of greatest need and also on an outreach basis i.e. family workers will not be static in centres, but will go out and work directly within families. There will also be much stronger links into schools and we will in time see the implementation of partnership boards in each locality with the plan to include family representatives as well as elected members, school representatives, health partners and officers.

As with any redesign there has been an impact on the number of Children and Family Centre buildings, but it is important to note that there has been no loss of access to services. Ironically one of the biggest concerns that came out of the consultation was the loss of access to universal services also known as Early Years services i.e. health visitors, baby weighing clinics but these have always been available in the community via health partners.

West Sussex are however under contract to provide our health partners with some buildings within which to deliver the Health Child Programme i.e. Early Years and health have identified a further 10 buildings they wish to operate out of on top over and above the 12 Family Hubs that we have retained and I am pleased to say that Blackwell Children and Family Centre which was surplus to Early Help requirements is one of the buildings Health have identified that they wish to remain in and negotiations are currently underway. Once contract negotiations are completed then Health will take over the building for the remainder of the contract term which runs until the end of 2024 at which point it will be renegotiated.

### **Family Safeguarding**

The service are currently in the process of carrying out training with respect to our new social work practice model Family Safeguarding which works along similar lines to Early Help, working directly with families using techniques such as motivational interviewing, empowering families to find solutions to their challenges as opposed to telling them what they must do. Like Early Help the new practice model will roll out across the county in the early New Year and it will consist of 26 multidisciplinary teams of comprising workers with specialisms in domestic abuse for both victims and perpetrators, mental health, a social worker, a family worker and a Team Manager.

Family Safeguarding, as a social work practice model was first piloted in 2014 by Hertfordshire County Council and is proven to reduce the number of police call outs to domestic abuse incidents by some 60% and numbers of children on child protection plans by 43%. The decision to adopt this model by WSCC has Department for Education backing and they have indeed granted West Sussex funding towards its implementation to the tune of approximately £4.5m over the implementation period.

### **In House Residential Review**

We have now completed Phase 1 of our in-house residential review, with the three homes in the south of the County that were closed in 2018 now fully refurbished with 2 of the 3 open and the third just awaiting its Ofsted sign off which is due imminently. All three homes are refurbished to a very high standard with our home for children with complex needs and disabilities being particularly breathtaking with respect to the facilities it provides children who are there either permanently or for respite. Phase 2 of our refurbishment programme will commence in April 2022 and will focus on the three homes in the north of the county who are all currently rated as outstanding by Ofsted as of last year. We also now have brand new provision for solo placements which occur occasionally which again is just awaiting the sign off from Ofsted. Feasibility studies are about to commence for a phase 3 which in time we hope will complete the review of our in house provision and provide us with a robust in-house service that we can control, that will overall increase our local provision, particularly with respect to placements for our children with complex needs whilst reducing our reliance on costly external placements which can also be out of county.

### **In House Foster Carer Review**

As with our in house residential provision there is a real need to reduce our reliance on independent fostering agencies which are very costly. We are now taking steps to increase our internal foster carer provision which ultimately gives us more control and is better for

our children. Phase 1 of the foster carer review was implemented in April of this year and addressed the element of pay with phase 2 - which addresses the wider package of support and respite for foster carers - is currently underway and due to be implemented in early 2022. Since the implementation of phase 1 of the new offer we have already seen a significant amount of enquiries into the service with regards to becoming foster carers but given it takes around 26 weeks to fully approve a foster carer we won't see the full effects in terms of a shift away from independent to in house foster carers until next financial year.

### **Social Worker Offer**

Prior to July of this year and in a bid to create some stability in the workforce during what has been a very unstable time, the authority had offered a recruitment and retention package to social workers whereby they were given a sum to remain with the authority for a set period of time. Recognising that this could never be a sustainable way forward for the service, this was replaced in July with a permanent, more competitive package in line with our neighbours that dealt not only with pay but support and career progression. This has so far been well received, with 98% of social workers that were with us during the retention period choosing to remain. We are in the process of a significant recruitment drive and are seeing some quality applicants expressing early interest in joining us, which I think is indicative of the fact that they can see change is occurring within the service leadership with the added attraction to them of the new social work practice model Family Safeguarding shortly to be implemented.

### **The Trust Position**

In December last year the Commissioner filed his report to the Minister of State recommending a **pause** to the work being undertaken to direct Children's Services control away from the County Council and placed into a Trust. The Commissioner's view was that the pace with which change had begun should be allowed to continue pending further review in December 2021. The Commissioner is due meet with the authority shortly and will be submitting his next report to the Minister of State in January 2022 which will incorporate his recommendations with respect to whether or not to remove the option of a trust altogether and whilst I am not privy to his opinion at this time, having worked closely with the service and attended improvement board meetings, I remain hopeful that we can achieve this end but time will tell on that. Should we achieve this end, we will be the first authority in the country to have had a decision not only paused but completely revoked.

### **National Social Worker of the Year**

A West Sussex Social Worker scooped not only the overarching National Social Worker of the Year award but also the award for Social Justice Advocate for her work in promoting diversity and cultural competency amongst social workers. The Chairman of the County Council will present Vivian Okeze Tirado with a gift and some flowers from all members of the County Council at Full Council on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude whilst there are a lot of good news stories coming out of West Sussex Children's Services, we are not out of the woods and there is still work to do. We have two to three further Ofsted monitoring visits before a full inspection likely in 2023 and whilst each monitoring visit produces a report that is more positive than the last, the fact remains there are still areas which are tough nuts to crack – the biggest being variability in social work practice. However there will be a significant push in this area over the next year which coupled with a very robust quality assurance auditing process, we now have in place gives me the confidence as Cabinet Member to say that the service are fully committed to ironing out that variability and instilling stability within the next 12 months. It is ultimately that

stability and quality of practice that will put Children's Services on a much more stable footing and ultimately provide better outcomes for our children and families.

A question was asked about the 12 hubs, as to why there were none in East Grinstead and where is the closest? Cllr Russell said the closest is in Haywards Heath and they have to be determined where most need is, there are also 2 in Crawley.

128. UPDATE FROM CLLR JOY DENNIS – WSCC HIGHWAYS

Cllr Dennis explained how the budget is split between the various districts and the capital and revenue spend.

**A22 Imberhorne Lane** – looking to get the planned resurfacing extended to the county line junction

**A22 Surrey County Council project** - SCC have an A22 project re air quality and congestion. There is new technology and a business case being developed. WSCC have a copy of the feasibility project to see how they can use this info in their own strategic work.

**St Margaret's Loop** – WSCC have made progress the possibility of adopting the bridges, a detailed inspection is needed but this is possibly moving forward in Spring 2022.

**Other updates included:**

- WSCC Highways – payments to be made by utility companies who want to dig up the highway and this will provide funds to allow the inspections by WSCC and quality control over temporary lights and works.
- The Traffic Road Order process is to be sped up following a review, which could take 7 months from start to finish, which will be a vast improvement.
- Road safety to be improved for all road users.
- Bus Back Better – working with the bus companies to get people back on the buses and investing in the services and routes.

*Questions followed:*

*The MSDC site allocation DPD has been published 2 projects, there are two projects at the Felbridge end of town, are WSCC working with Surrey and others to ensure that the road systems can cope? Yes as previously mentioned working together.*

*What indications could make speed limits go up?*

There are not many that would increase as often the focus is on decreasing. The Highways Team don't deal with the national motorways and major A roads, this would be the Highways Agency. It is unusual to see an increased speed limit although on the A2300 it was increased following dualling.

*Why can't the resurfacing of Woodlands Way & Blenheim Close along with other roads be prioritised when the road surface is so bad*

These roads are being looked at, Cllr Dennis is awaiting a response as the work was due to be programmed in the Summer, then September then this year. It has to be done and when she gets an answer Cllr Dennis will come back.

*The comments were supported and it was added that pavements need work especially Woodbury Avenue to Sackville School. The hedges encroach onto the pavement forcing*

*users into the roads. Verges and grass cutting also a concern where overgrown in the summer.*

It is always a problem as to the ownership of hedges and verges and who is responsible for keeping them clear. It should be reported to Love West Sussex website so it can be looked into. Pavements need to be reported and evaluated.

*Do WSCC have an active tree planting programme?*

Yes – Ash dieback has caused an issue, but the Queen’s green canopy project has also been taken on board.

Cllr Dennis was thanked for attending and then she left the meeting.

## 129. POLICE MATTERS

Sgt Paul Voigt attended. He started by saying that the East Grinstead NPT is a team that care very much about the Town. Sgt Voigt updated on some of the ASB issues that happened in the town over Halloween – car break ins, items being thrown from the bridge. This understandably caused a great deal of alarm, working with Council and Highways this seems to have been addressed. Police did a lot of work, CCTV was compromised with lighting and vegetation but this has all been improved. Liaison with the schools has been helpful to enforce the repercussions of the events.

Vehicle crime is a problem.

It was mentioned that the social media presence seems to have reduced and it was felt that this was useful to explain the work of the team. It was asked if this could be picked up again.

Sgt Voigt said they were still posting but it does depend on the area that the work is focused on. He will revisit this with PCSOs to ask that they post when in East Grinstead.

It was stated that it can be difficult with social media where events are reshared and may be out of date or exaggerated. So an update from the police with the facts would be helpful, to assist and reassure residents.

Is it a good use of money, where new PCSO’s have been recruited, where the number of crimes in the Town Ward over two years have only reduced by a small %. While a reduction is welcomed was this proportionate and a good use of money?

Sgt Voigt was not able to answer this as resourcing is not for him to comment.

The Chair thanked Sgt Voigt and the NPT for all their work and the positive impact in the town.

It was added that social media is not a formal reporting method and the usual methods of 101 and 999 should be used.

## 130. COMMUNITY PROJECTS REPORT

Ms Fletcher reported on the SID data in Woodbury Avenue when last in town. It has shown that drivers were 81% compliant with the speed limit, which was a high % yet 15% of drivers were speeding which was twice the national average.

LAT: The officer shared the conclusion with the LAT team.

King George's Field – 90% of rubbish is McDonalds, but why were we asking the business to solve the problem when it was the public that caused it. It was explained that all businesses were called on to be a responsible business and contribute to the community. The licence conditions also require them to assist with this. There used to be a litter picker employed, which Miss Fletcher would take up with McDonalds.

The report was noted.

131. EG HEALTH NETWORKS AND QVH UPDATE

The report was noted with the added comment that the Vaccine Booster programme is being upped following Government advice.

The streetlight outside the old Argos building (the temporary Vaccine Centre) has been reported by Evolve Estates who are looking to get this fixed.

132. UPDATE ON ROUGH SLEEPING IN EAST GRINSTEAD

The report was noted and that Turning Tides and Streetlink visit a referred person to offer help if they can. MSDC via Turning Tides visit regularly on referral. Hot meals are available too in many social cafes in different parts of town, if a person is homeless. Our Library team have the information to assist.

It was asked if the process for referral and how to access help and hot meals can be updated and put on the website and social media.

133. LCWIP UPDATE

Cllr Ody gave an update as to the progress and that East Grinstead is in better shape than other Mid Sussex towns as our local LCWIP group had already started the work.

Cllr Whittaker said that Site Allocation DPD will take into account the changes needed for new developments.

LCWIP will be an agreed programme but the funding follows later to implement via developments and grants.

134. PUBLIC ART PROJECT – WAYFINDING AND STATION MURAL

The report was noted.

The Chairman thanked the committee and announced that there was no further business and the next meeting would take place on **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021** and closed the meeting at 8.41pm.

SIGNED:  
CHAIRMAN