

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL held at COUNTY HALL, LEWES on TUESDAY, 19 JULY 2011 at 10.00 am.

Present Councillors Barnes, Belsey, Bennett, Bentley, Birch, Daniel, Dowling, Elkin, Ensor, Fawthrop, Field, Freebody, Freeman, Gadd, Glazier, Harris, Healy, Heaps, Howson, Hughes, Jones, Kenward, Livings, Lock, Maynard, O'Keeffe, Ost, Pragnell, Reid, Rodohan, Rogers OBE, Scott, D Shing, S Shing, Simmons, Sparks, Stogdon, St Pierre, Stroude, Taylor, Thompson, Mrs Tidy, Tidy, Tutt, Waite, Webb and Whetstone.

18 Minutes of last meeting

18.1 RESOLVED – to confirm the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 17 May 2011 as a correct record.

19. Apologies for absence

19.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lambert and Thomas.

20. Chairman's Business

MAURICE SKILTON

20.1 On behalf of the Council the Chairman paid tribute to a former colleague, Maurice Skilton, following his death in May. Maurice was a highly respected and very experienced councillor serving on the County Council from 1974 to 1977 and from 1985 to 2009. He also served as a councillor on Eastbourne Borough Council for a total of 44 years. Maurice held a number of senior positions including Chairman and Vice Chairman of the County Council, Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Leader of Eastbourne Borough and on a number of committees and Panels. On behalf of the County Council, the Chairman sent best wishes to his family.

20.2 The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect for their former colleague.

WELCOMES

20.3 On behalf of the County Council the Chairman welcomed Diana Grice (Director of Public Health) and Simon Hughes (Assistant Chief Executive) to their first County Council meetings.

CHAIRMAN'S ACTIVITIES

20.4 I have attended a number of engagements since the last County Council meeting including: attending the Lord Lieutenant's lunch for the Queen's Award for voluntary service county finalists at Sussex Downs College, Eastbourne, the Dreamlight event at Drusillas park for chronically ill and disabled children, the Sussex Parallel Youth games, the Kent Chairman's Civic dinner, the Uckfield Road Safety day at which I presented the awards for the children's poster competition, the visit of HRH The Duchess of Gloucester to the Wealden Safety in Action event at Herstmonceux Castle, visiting the Let's Do Business Exhibition in Eastbourne and the emergency services 999 day in Eastbourne, hosting a summer reception for people who make an impact in East Sussex including representatives for the voluntary sector, charities, the emergency services and local councils. The Vice Chairman and I attended the National Volunteers' Week Fayre at the De La Warr Pavilion at which I hosted the VIP reception. The Vice Chairman also attended a number of events including the Anne Frank and You exhibition at the Sussex Coast Collage, Hastings, the Chestnut Tree House children's hospices presentation and lunch and the Battle Abbey school annual service and prize giving. He has also generously attended a number of events with me and between us we attended a number of summer concerts performed by the East Sussex Music Service.

PRAYERS

20.5 The Chairman thanked the Right Reverend Kieran Conry, Bishop of Arundel and Brighton for leading the prayers before the Council meeting.

PETITIONS

20.6 The Chairman informed the Council that immediately before the meeting he had received petitions from members as follows:

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| Councillor Healy | - calling on the County Council to provide a zebra crossing, a slow down lighted sign or a crossing patrol at Bourne School, Eastbourne. |
| Councillors Heaps and Rodohan | - calling on the County Council review the extent of the double yellow lines in Vicarage Road and Greys Road, Eastbourne |
| Councillor O'Keeffe | - calling on the County Council to put double yellow lines on either side of Bell Lane, Lewes |
| Councillor O'Keeffe | - calling upon the County Council to introduce a 20 mph speed limit for the Landport area of Lewes |
| Councillor O'Keeffe | - calling upon the County Council to recognise and act upon the repeated requests of Landport |

residents for double yellow lines

Councillor Sparks - calling upon the County Council to introduce a 20 mph speed limit along Church Street, Uckfield

Councillor St Pierre - calling upon the County Council to maintain the East Chilmington to Chailey School discretionary bus service

21. Questions from Members of the Public

21.1 Copies of questions asked by Raymond Cade of Heathfield, Sarah Osborne of Cooksbridge, and Victoria Bowden, John Anderson, Elizabeth Harrison, Patrick David, Paulette Hutchinson, Andy Hutchinson, Michelle Pearce, Michael Pearce, Stephen Israel, Rosemary Haskell-Thomas, Suzi Hoskins, Hamish Black and S Sheer (all from East Chilmington) and the answers by Councillors Jones (Lead Cabinet Strategic Management and Economic Development) and Bennett (Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness) are attached to these minutes. Supplementary questions were asked by Raymond Cade, Sarah Osborne, Paulette Hutchinson, Michelle Pearce, Michael Pearce and Stephen Israel and were responded to.

22. Declarations of Interest

22.1 The following members declared personal interests in items on the agenda as follows:

<i>Member</i>	<i>Position giving rise to interest</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Whether interest was prejudicial</i>
Councillor Birch and Scott	Members of the Joint Waste Committee (appointed by Hastings Borough Council)	Governance Committee report, paragraph 1	No
Councillor Kenward	Member of the Joint Waste Committee (appointed by Rother District Council)	Governance Committee report, paragraph 1	No

<i>Member</i>	<i>Position giving rise to interest</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Whether interest was prejudicial</i>
Councillor Maynard	Leader of Rother District Council	Cabinet report, paragraph 1 and Governance Committee report, paragraph 1	No
Councillor D Shing	Vice Chairman of the Community and Environment Scrutiny Committee (Wealden District Council)	Governance Committee report, paragraph 1	No
Councillor Tutt	Substitute Member of Joint Waste Committee (appointed by Eastbourne Borough Council)	Governance Committee report, paragraph 1	No

23. Reports

CALLOVER

23.1 The Chairman of the County Council, having called over the reports set out in the agenda, reserved the following paragraphs for discussion:

Cabinet	- paragraphs 1, 2 and 3
Adult Social Care and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee	- paragraph 1
Sussex Police Authority	- paragraph 4
East Sussex Fire Authority	- paragraph 3

NON-RESERVED PARAGRAPHS

23.2 On the motion of the Chairman of the County Council, the Council **ADOPTED** those paragraphs in the reports of the Committees that had not been reserved for discussion.

24. Cabinet Report – Reserved paragraphs

24.1 The Chairman reminded the Council that he was taking paragraph 3 of the Cabinet report with the report of the Adult Social Care and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Jones moved the reserved paragraphs of the Cabinet's report.

24.2 The motions were CARRIED after debate.

25. Adult Social Care and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee – Reserved paragraph

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF RESPITE PROVISION

25.1 The Chairman reminded the Council that he was taking paragraph 1 of this report with paragraph 3 of the Cabinet's report.

25.2 Councillor Pragnell moved the adoption of paragraph 1 of the Scrutiny Committee report.

25.3 Councillor Bentley moved the adoption of paragraph 3 of the Cabinet's report. The motion, including the recommendations, was CARRIED.

25.4 The motion to adopt paragraph 1 of the Scrutiny Committee's report, including the recommendations, was CARRIED on the basis that implementation would be in accordance with the recommendations of the Cabinet.

26. Questions from County Councillors

ORAL QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

26.1 The following members asked questions of the Lead Cabinet Members indicated and they responded:

Questioner	Respondent	Subject
Councillor Field	Councillor Bentley	The number of consultants employed in Adult Social Care for more than 6 months, in what capacity and the number who previously worked for the County Council.
Councillor Freeman	Councillor Bentley	Attendance levels for day services and the impact of price increases for day services on attendance

Questioner	Respondent	Subject
Councillor Heaps	Councillor Elkin	Number of adult social care clients who have had their service reviewed in past 12 months and the number who have had funding allocated
Councillor Daniel	Councillor Maynard	Publication of findings of CPO enquiry in relation to the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road
Councillor Scott	Councillor Bentley	The impact of the collapse of Southern Cross on the confidence of the private sector to deliver residential care in East Sussex
Councillor Whetstone	Councillor Bennett	Number of schools closed or affected by industrial action on 30 June
Councillor Tutt	Councillor Maynard	Renewal of civil parking enforcement contract
Councillor St Pierre	Councillor Maynard	Cost of the Atkins parking review for Lewes
Councillor Freeman	Councillor Jones	Publicity regarding projects completed in Seaford
Councillor O’Keeffe	Councillor Bennett	Consultation with head teachers prior to school admission appeal hearings
Councillor Taylor	Councillor Maynard	Need to encourage motor cyclists to wear high visibility jackets

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

27.2 Written questions were received from Councillors St Pierre and Sparks for the Lead Members for Learning and School Effectiveness, Economy, Transport and Environment and Children and Families. The answers are attached to these minutes.

27.3 The Lead Members responded to supplementary questions by the questioners for the purposes of clarification.

28. Report of the Sussex Police Authority

28.1 Councillor Tidy drew members’ attention to paragraph 4 of the Sussex Police Authority report.

QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Question from Raymond Cade, Heathfield, East Sussex

I have read the “Local Growth” bill with interest. For many years I have believed that in difficult economic times it is essential that local government, businesses and other organisations co-operate to promote investment, commerce and, most importantly, jobs.

In my opinion, this can be most effectively achieved by utilizing local knowledge, expertise, organisation and management. Parochial self-interest, responsibility and local accountability are the most likely drivers to cut bureaucracy, force inter-agency working and work towards a common objective.

I was disappointed and suspicious about the regional partnership for this area including East Sussex, Kent and Essex. I broached the subject with Councillor Simmons at a public meeting a few months ago.

In any event, it is important that the partnership is monitored and reviewed to ensure it is being effective.

a) What procedures have been decided to gauge the effectiveness and success of the Regional Partnership in relation to the setting up of new businesses and the creation of jobs?

b) Has a reliable, easy to understand and transparent method of demonstrating the results been devised?”

Response by Councillor Jones

Thank you for your question concerning the Local Enterprise Partnership for East Sussex, Greater Essex and Kent and Medway.

The LEP has recently (15th July) agreed its vision, strategic priorities and enabling activities for the area. Our agreed strategic priorities are to secure the growth of the Thames gateway; promote investment in our coastal communities; strengthen our rural economy; and strengthen the competitive advantage of strategic growth locations.

The LEP intends to do this by focusing on enabling activities reflecting issues that span the whole LEP geography and where we can, working collectively make a real difference. These enabling activities will focus on strategic transport infrastructure, universal superfast broadband, skills and new financial instruments.

Both the strategic priorities and enabling activities reflect the needs of the East Sussex economy and we will be leading on the broadband element of what will now become a detailed work programme. This will enable us to identify the effectiveness and success of the LEP and to demonstrate the effectiveness and results of its activities. The work within East Sussex to improve our own economy will continue, strengthened by the LEP-wide work.

The LEP has strong political and business representation from East Sussex and I believe this is reflected in the agreed priorities and focus of its future activity.

2. Question from Sarah Osborne, Cooksbridge, East Sussex

a) What was the point of conducting public consultation given that ESCC ignored the 84% of respondents who voiced strong opposition to proposed changes to the East Chilmington –Chailey bus service ? What percentage of opposition to proposed changes in policy do ESCC need following a public consultation before it has any influence on decision making?

b) Does ESCC have any concerns that the children of parents who are disabled or have a medical condition preventing them from taking their children to school , will now be walking unaccompanied on a route that is only assessed as safe when accompanied by an adult?

c) Will ESCC give an assurance that the council will ensure all verges are kept cut short and free of nettles and brambles etc so as to become viable step-offs for the children walking from East Chilmington to Chailey School.

d) As the route walked by the children frequently floods will ESCC give assurance that all culverts and drains will be kept clear to help ameliorate the problem.

Response by Councillor Bennett

a) We undertook a consultation with the parents of those children affected. I do understand why the majority of respondents were opposed the proposed change. The majority was significant although less than the 84% you are quoting - the actual percentage who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal was 74% which was 51 responses.

We sent out letters to families of the 18 children who were having free transport on this route. Of these one young person will continue to receive free transport as they are moving up to their examination year in September. Six children will continue to receive free transport for statutory reasons and 5 left school this summer. Therefore the maximum number of children who will no longer receive transport is 6. It is possible that some of these may be eligible on low income grounds.

This was a consultation and not a referendum and the purpose was to gather the views of those affected and to seek out any issues that we might not have been aware of and which we would need and indeed want to consider. For instance we were aware from previous discussions that parents are concerned about the safety of the journey and this is why we undertook a further assessment of this.

I do realise that this proposal has come as bad news to the community and the decision will affect some families significantly. This is not a step that the

Council has taken lightly and is caused by our need to reduce our expenditure in order to meet the cuts imposed on us by central government.

The hard position we are facing is that the Children's Services Department in East Sussex is required to make over £20m of cuts in this current financial year and we know that there are more cuts to come in the next few years. No decision to reduce spending on children is easy to take and this is no exception. So much of our spending is constrained in many ways as the majority is determined by the law and our duty to our most vulnerable looked after children. The Department has had to take a long hard look at all of the areas where we have been doing things that we are not legally bound to do and this area of discretionary transport is one of them. This decision follows, as you may know, a similar decision in relation to transport to church schools.

Overall, ceasing to provide all discretionary transport from September 2011 it is estimated will save the Council around £550,000 in a full financial year. The savings from this route will contribute £15,400 to this.

In making these savings in areas of discretion we are ensuring that we are able to provide services to our most vulnerable children. The Council has a statutory duty to provide transport to children from our poorest families and also to those with disabilities which mean that they would not be able to travel to school otherwise. It is clearly right that we should do this on both a legal and a moral basis.

The Council, in seeking to cut our expenditure, also needs to take into consideration issues of equity and I know that there are many other parents and communities who also would like to have free home to school transport and are able make reasoned and articulate arguments why this should be provided but the current financial situation means that this cannot be something which can be expected of the state. It might be something, however, that the community and parish might wish to take forward as a collective. I am sure that the officers would be happy with assist with advice on any such proposals. It might be a good opportunity to develop an excellent example of the state stepping back and the community empowering themselves to become more self reliant.

b) I can reassure you that East Sussex County Council has concerns about the safety of all of our young people. Our officers have reassessed the route using the best practice guidelines and have found it to be safe. However, ultimately parents have the responsibility to get their children to school. The children affected by this change are of secondary school age and legislation only requires the County Council to provide transport if the school is more than 3 miles from home.

I do recognise that this will cause issues for some families who, for a variety of reasons, would not be available to accompany their children to school. But their children would not be the only young people needing to get to school and I would assume that there could well be opportunities for children to walk to school together with others – I know that in many areas parents join together

to operate what are known as walking buses for instance. This may be a real opportunity for the small society of East Chiltington to put some flesh on the bones of the notion of the big society perhaps?

c) Yes indeed, as part of the routine maintenance carried out by our Highways Department. It is our policy that grass verges in rural areas will be cut twice a year, which is generally sufficient to prevent brambles, nettles and gorse bushes from becoming established. At junctions and bends where sight lines between road users may be obscured by vegetation we increase the frequency of cuts.

d) Yes, there is new legislation (The Flood and Water Management Bill) that requires us to investigate and report on flooding within the county. We must also notify those persons who are responsible for any flooding on the required remedial action they must take. This will include the drains and culverts installed by the highway authority as well as land drains that may be the responsibility of adjacent land owners.

3. Question from Victoria Bowden, East Chiltington, East Sussex

I drive daily during term time on Novington Lane to take my children to private school. How can I safely pass children, parents and possibly younger siblings, when a single track lane is open to two-way traffic with very limited passing places, potholes, no lighting and many drivers moving at speed?

Response by Councillor Bennett

I know that you will want to drive very carefully on this route in order not to cause them injury and I am sure that is what you already do. The route does not have high levels of traffic and has been assessed as safe for children to traverse as long as they take reasonable care.

4. Question from John Anderson, East Chiltington, East Sussex

We are pensioners and have lived in East Chiltington for 35 years. I am an ex Parish Council Chairman. We wish to ask whether you have considered each of the following four points before deciding to withdraw the school bus service for our village children attending Chailey School?

a) It is clear that Novington, Chiltington and Honey-pot lanes from East Chiltington to the school are narrow and traffic is fast (all three lanes are unrestricted - up to 60 mph allowed, only part of Mill Lane has a restriction of 30 mph).

b) There are no footpaths at the side of any of the lanes in either direction forcing children walking to school to walk in the roadway itself.

c) There is no lighting whatsoever and in winter the journey to and from school will of necessity be walked in total darkness.

d) There is a strong possibility of a serious accident to a child occurring as a direct result of this proposal and those who make the decision need to bear this onerous possibility clearly in their minds.

Response by Councillor Bennett

Yes, we did consider these 4 points. Officers carefully reassessed the route this May and again considered it to be safe. I do know that this is a rural road and therefore it does not have any of the same safety features as can be found in more urban area but this does not mean that it is unsafe for young people to use to walk to school. Like you, I would prefer that there was a pavement for them to use but you will recognise that this is not a realistic option in this case.

The route assessment was carried out in line with guidance based on best practice such as the Local Authority Road Safety Officers Association's Guidelines for the identification of Hazards and the Risk Assessment of Walked Routes to School.

This defines the scope of any assessment as:

- The route was available if the child 'accompanied as necessary' could walk the route in reasonable safety.
- In assessing the safety of an available route consideration is given only to the potential risk created by traffic, highway and topographical conditions, not personal safety.
- For a route to be classified as non-hazardous there needs to be:
 - * Step offs on roads which are lightly trafficked but have adequate sight lines to provide sufficient advanced warning or if there are no step offs there must be sufficiently good sight lines to give adequate warning
 - * If there is a need to cross the road there must be sufficient gaps in the traffic flow and sight lines to allow enough opportunities to cross safely.
 - * Many routes may lie along roads that have neither footway or verge. In these cases consideration must be given to the width of the road, traffic speed and composition and to visibility.
- In many rural areas the exercise of continual judgement is likely to be required to assess the relative risk of passing obstacles such as narrow bridges.
- The presence or absence of street lighting on a route is not considered to be a factor.

I do realise that this is not an easy journey for the young people to make. However, it is one of many roads in the county like this and as it has been assessed as safe, although clearly not ideal, the Council is not required to provide transport. As I have already explained making the high level of cuts we have to make this year in Children's Services is not an easy task and one which we undertake with a heavy heart but we have no option but to look first to those areas of expenditure which are discretionary.

I do understand that the residents of East Chiltington expected this free transport to continue as the Council has provided it over and above its statutory responsibilities for many years. However, there never has been a statutory responsibility for this and, in these times, when central government requires us to make significant savings and we are required to maintain statutory services across the county, the Council is left with no choice but to remove areas of discretionary spend. Even so, in doing this, we are continuing to provide discretionary transport to those young people about to take their GCSEs. We have taken this decision exceptionally in light of their special circumstances and to ensure they have the best start possible to their adult lives.

5. Question from Elizabeth Harrison, East Chiltington, East Sussex

I would like a response to questions with regard to the proposed cancellation of the discretionary transport currently provided for children travelling from East Chiltington to Chailey School. I am particularly concerned with the evidence base for the proposed cancellation, specifically, what numbers of cars constitutes "very low traffic flows" and how can the council be confident of its route assessment if "no recent surveys" have been conducted? In relation to this, I would also like to know if the same figures of traffic flow are assumed for Novington Lane as for Mill Lane?

Secondly, if we lose our rural school bus service do you think we will also lose diversity in our rural communities and discourage working families from coming to live here? I know of one working single mother of three children who has decided not to move to a house in Hollycroft, East Chiltington partly because of concerns about getting her children to school.

Response by Councillor Bennett

Whilst, it is intuitive to believe that traffic has increased in the county over the past 6 years for this route we do not have any evidence to suggest that this is the case. We do not have recent counts on Novington Lane and Honeypot Lane themselves. However, information from 2011 for South Road and Mill Lane, which are the respective extensions of the roads in question, suggests that traffic flows have stayed at similar levels to 2005 or indeed may have slightly decreased.

South Road and Mill Lane currently carry just over 300 vehicles in the morning peak, and, therefore, Novington Lane is likely to still carry around 60 vehicles as recorded in 2005.

I would sincerely hope that this decision will not have any long lasting or major impact on the make up of our rural communities. Following this change the transport policy will be the same for all parts of the county and I am not aware that other villages have experienced any major impact. Obviously parents will take into account a wide range of issues when coming to a decision about where to set up their family homes. Rural transport will be one of these I am not sure whether or not it would be the major factor. I suspect the decisions

will be individual for each family. But I am sure also that the quality of the local school will be also be significant and in that respect I am sure that the parents of East Chiltington hold their local secondary school in the high regard that I do.

6. Question from Patrick David, East Chiltington? East Sussex

- a) Do you think it is fair that teachers at Chailey school are unable to comment on this transport situation?
- b) How many seats will be available on the bus for children who do not qualify for assisted place and how will these be allocated?
- c) Will those working parents who are expected to walk their children up to four hours a day to and from school qualify for unemployment benefit if they are forced to give up their jobs as a result of this new demand on their time?

Response by Councillor Bennett

- a) I am aware that the Headteacher felt that it would be inappropriate for teachers to sign the petition as they are employees of the County Council. It is for her to make decisions about how she instructs her staff. I do not feel it is for me to comment on whether this is fair or not.
- b) I understand that the plan is to hire a 16 seater bus and extend another route to cover East Chiltington. I gather that unless numbers change all of the seats will be taken by children who have an entitlement to free transport including those living in East Chiltington. So unfortunately there will not be any vacant seats available next year, although this may well change in the future.
- c) Can I refer you to my earlier answer on this point? I know that the challenges of being working parents are hard to balance on a day to day basis for families and there are many working parents in the county. Each one of them has to come to some arrangements in order for their children to get to school. Whatever we as elected members may feel about this the County Council simply does not have the funds to assist them all.

7. Question from Paulette Hutchinson, East Chiltington, East Sussex

About the school bus in East Chiltington, how will you stop my children from feeling different because they will be entitled to a free school bus, and other children in the village will not? Has anyone actually walked the way from East Chiltington to the School and back again in the middle of winter?

Response by Councillor Bennett

I am saddened that you feel your children will feel different because you believe they will be entitled to free transport when others are not. There are times in a modern democracy such as ours when some are entitled to benefits

where others are not. There should be no circumstances where people, and especially children and young people, are made to feel badly about this. I do hope that this will not be the case.

I am not aware that anyone from the Council has undertaken this journey in the winter period. The safety assessment was undertaken in May 2011.

8. Question from Andy Hutchinson, East Chiltington, East Sussex

If the East Chiltington bus closes do you think that it is safe for even one child to walk 4.2 miles on an unlit single carriageway road which is open to two way traffic with a speed limit of 60mph?

Response by Councillor Bennett

I have previously explained about how the safety assessment has been undertaken and the guidelines that underpin these types of assessment.

9. Question from Michelle Pearce, East Chiltington, East Sussex

- a) If the route is safe for children to walk why aren't all the children being expected to walk? Why are children from qualifying low-income families considered unable to make the journey on foot?
- b) What are the children supposed to do if a vehicle approaches on a stretch of the route, which has "limited forward visibility" and where there are no step-offs or pavements?
- c) How many seats will be available on the bus for children who do not qualify for assisted places? How will these be allocated?
- d) How is a family with an average income and growing out-goings expected to afford £1000 a year to get our 2 children to and from Chailey school as well as our son to College to study for A levels on the train (est cost £840 pa)?
- e) What footwear are the children expected to wear on the walk to school and will the council obtain special permission for them to wear non-uniform waterproof footwear at school?
- f) When was the last traffic survey done on Novington Lane and Mill Lane done, and what figures did it produce?
- g) If the lane is considered safe for children to walk to school on why does the safety report say that they need to be accompanied?

Response by Councillor Bennett

a) Additional rights to free transport for children who come from low income families were brought in by the government a couple of years ago and we are required by law to make this transport available. The purpose of this provision

was to support parents with low incomes in having an opportunity to express a preference for their children to attend a wider range of local schools as more affluent parents are able to do by being able to draw on their own resources.

b) I am sure you would join me in urging all children and young people to take care when walking along roads whether or not there is a pavement. There is some very helpful advice in the Highway Code which is for pedestrians to to the right-hand side of the road so that they can see oncoming traffic. It goes on to say that pedestrians should take extra care and be prepared to walk in single file, especially on narrow roads or in poor light and to keep close to the side of the road.

I know that more advice is available on the Directgov website – direct.gov.uk

c) As I have previously explained there are currently no spare seats available on the hired vehicle planned for September 2011.

d) As I have explained there will not be any spare seats on our hired transport to purchase. I am sorry that you, like so many other families, are feeling the effect of the financial climate. As I explained earlier the County Council is also facing difficult budgetary issues and we are having to make some very difficult decisions on where to spend the money that we do have – our priority has to be our most vulnerable children from whom the council has a statutory obligation.

e) Clearly you will want your children to wear appropriate footwear to school. I am sure the Headteacher will allow changes of footwear to be made if these do not conform with the school's uniform rules.

f) May I refer you to my previous answer on this matter.

g) This is a factor which is taken into account in the recommended good practice safety assessment. The guidance says that Council's must make the assessment for children travelling on the route who are 'accompanied as necessary'.

10. Question from Michael Pearce, East Chiltington, East Sussex

a) Is it a serious suggestion that the children walk with no pavements, no street lighting, on a single track road, being passed by peak hour traffic including farm vehicles, buses and 4x4s on a lane with no pavements? Or is there an inbuilt presumption that without the bus children will be driven to school?

b) How does ESCC expect parents to be able to work if they have to spend up to 4 hours accompanying children to and from school and are therefore at best only available for work between 10am and 2pm?

c) What safety measures are being prepared for children walking from East Chiltington to Chailey School in terms of crossing patrols, pavements, lighting, road signs, speed limits and grit bins?

Response by Councillor Bennett

a) As I have explained the route has been assessed as safe for children to walk accompanied as necessary. There is therefore no presumption or expectation that children will be driven to school.

b) May I refer you to my previous response to a similar question?

c) There are no immediate plans to implement any of the measures detailed in the question. I am aware that the Parish Council has had some discussions with Lewes District Council about a grit bin at Hollycroft and I believe that it is possible that either Lewes or the Parish Council will fund this.

11. Question from Stephen Israel, East Chiltington, East Sussex

a) Why do parents need to accompany their children to school when walking from East Chiltington, if this route is not deemed dangerous? (please do not answer that this is the statutory recommendations from government as that does not answer the question).

b) According to the assessment of walk to route to school by ESCC "road widths are considered adequate for the majority of the route when traffic flows are taken into consideration". At which points of the route were road widths not considered adequate?

c) What was the percentage of the public that was in favour of the stopping of the discretionary school bus service from East Chiltington, when ESCC conducted its public consultation?

d) If the weather is too bad for the children to walk ie. heavy rain, ice or flooding, will children be able to have a place on the bus on an ad-hoc / per-journey basis?

e) How will children walking to school get there when Novington Lane floods, this especially happens underneath the railway bridge? (which most years floods up to about 3/4 feet above the road level)

f) How are children supposed to be accompanied on the 2.5 mile journey to school (measured from our house) if their parents are ill or working? Will they be expected to walk alone or miss school?

g) Will the children and the adults accompanying them be provided with fluorescent jackets for their journey?

h) What was Chailey School's view about the proposed policy of closing the East Chiltington to Chailey discretionary bus service?

i) What is Chailey School's policy on children walking, or cycling to school along Novington Lane and Mill Lane?

j) What is Chailey School's view on the increased amount of traffic this proposed policy could bring?

k) Have any members of the traffic team, or any councillors walked the route from East Chiltington to Chailey School, and back again, in the middle of the winter months?

- l) Would any of the councillors be willing to let any members of their family walk from East Chilton to Chailey School on a daily basis?
- m) Are the councillors aware that Novington Lane is a single track lane with many blind spots, when one goes north towards Mill Lane?
Are the councillors aware that cars travel exceedingly fast on the stretch of road from Novington lane to the doctors surgery, and that there are no pavements or lights?

Response by Councillor Bennett

- a) Please can I refer you to my previous answer – the basic answer is that the guidance we follow in making these assessments says that we should assess the route for children who are ‘accompanied as necessary’. And this is what we have done in this case.
- b) I understand that there are various points where the road widths are inadequate however as traffic flows are low a pedestrian can judge and choose when to pass these points safely.
- c) We consulted with parents of those children who would be affected but clearly had many more responses than this. Of the responses we received 13% were either in favour or strongly in favour. This was 9 individual responses
- d) Unfortunately as I have explained there will be no spare seats on our hired transport in September. If some should become available our policy is to offer these for purchase by parents who are prepared to commit to termly travel.
- e) I have earlier explained the steps the Council will take to avoid flooding.
- f) Please can I refer you to my previous response to a similar question.
- g) Whilst clearly the Highway Code advises that pedestrians should make sure that they can be seen as easily as possible by traffic and that they should wear something which is high visibility, it is not the County Council’s responsibility to provide these items.
- h) That is a question you will need to address to the school governors.
- i) This is a question for the school governors.
- j) Again you would have to address this question to the school governors.
- k) Can I refer you to my previous answer to this question.
- l) Clearly I cannot answer on behalf of my colleagues but I can say that we are all bound by the same legislation as you are.

m) Yes, we are aware of the road conditions following the site visits and, as I have explained, the route assessment was carried out in line with guidance based on best practice.

12. Question from Rosemary Haskell-Thomas, East Chiltington, East Sussex

Firstly, the safety aspect of my children walking to school... Novington Lane is a 60 mph road which local cars drive very quickly on. It has a number of very bad potholes which make passing of cars difficult and therefore dangerous. There are numerous blind bends and also at least two blind brows. If you insist on making the local children walk, will there be any traffic calming implementation?

My children receive free school meals at present but these will soon stop as I am returning to work as a registered nurse. However the cost of the bus will remain astronomically out of bounds for me as I am a single mum with 4 children, 3 of which will be going to Chailey. I am also worried that my children will feel self conscious whilst they are still in receipt of free transport. Surely this will ostracise and embarrass mine and others like them!

If the school bus is not used by the locals then a number of parents will be using their cars to transport the children to school. Are you not concerned about the fact that this will INCREASE the amount of traffic on the road and create greater risk to those who are walking !There will also be an increase in the carbon footprint of our community !!

Do you intend to install a footpath or cycle path for the route.

Response by Councillor Bennett

It is never our wish that children should be embarrassed and ostracised. I would sincerely hope that the young people living in East Chiltington would not act in such a fashion.

I would not expect the traffic level to increase through this proposal. The number of children and families who previously would have had free travel is small (6) although I do know that this decision is significant for each one individually I do not believe that this is likely to lead to a huge increase in local traffic.

Even so there are steps that the local community might like to consider – perhaps organising a shared minibus or a car sharing rota.

There are no plans to install a footpath or cycle path.

13. Question from Suzi Hoskins, East Chiltington, East Sussex

I am a mother of 2 girls, one of whom is moving on from Chailey school this year, whilst the other is now in year 7.

I consider the lanes between East Chiltington and Chailey school to be unsafe for my child to walk along (particularly when the light levels are low, and during the morning rush hour).

I am aware that a traffic survey was undertaken in 2005, and that it deemed the route to be safe IF THE CHILDREN WERE TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT.

I therefore have several questions for the council concerning their present decision to withdraw free bus transport.

a) As traffic levels have increased dramatically since 2005, is it the council's intention to re assess the safety of the route to be walked from East Chiltington?

b) Will any new survey be taken during peak hours?

c) Has the council taken into consideration the increased traffic levels that could be caused by the proposed Gradwell Park development, in terms of construction vehicles, and future vehicle movements from the site.

d). As it is the council's intention that the children walk to school (a journey of over 2 1/2 miles from our house), I would like to ask which side of the carriageway the assessors of the route deem safe for the children to walk on? Will the children be expected to cross and recross the road in order to follow the safest path? I would like to point out that the road is a single track lane with blind corners, no footpath, and no verge in places.

e) As the route is deemed safe only if the child is accompanied by an adult, does the council think it reasonable for a parent to spend 4 hours a day accompanying their child to school?

f) My husband works and I have rheumatoid arthritis and would be unable to walk with my daughter to school. What provision will the council offer my family?

g) What facilities are to be installed in Chailey School for children who opt to walk or cycle to school?

Bike racks?

Outdoor clothing storage?

Outdoor footwear storage?

h) I am concerned that truancy will increase, if parents are at work and children are expected to walk alone to and from school in bad weather. What safeguards will the council put in place to ensure that children arrive in school when they are supposed to?

Response by Councillor Bennett

a) As I have explained there is no evidence to suggest that traffic flows have increased in the area since 2005 and we have recently reassessed the safety of the route. We are not intending to conduct a further assessment at this time.

b) There are no immediate plans to undertake a new survey.

c) As you know planning permission has not yet been granted. If permission is given I am advised that the Gradwell Park development will not have any significant impact on peak hour traffic flows. Traffic generation from the site is low and, due to the shift pattern to be operated at the proposed development, is unlikely to coincide with peak hour traffic flows. All construction traffic would be required to approach the site from the east.

d) May I refer you to my previous response on this matter.

e) May I refer you to my previous response on this matter.

f) This will be something for the school to decide and I am sure you will be in discussion with the governors.

g) May I refer you to my previous response on this matter.

h) I am concerned to hear that you feel children will truant from school unless taken on a council provided bus – I personally cannot believe this will be the case as I am sure the young people of East Chiltington value their excellent education at Chailey School too highly for that.

14. Question from Hamish Black, East Chiltington, East Sussex

a) Is the school bus service means tested? If so there seems to be discrepancies in the mileage allowance .e.g. if children live over 4 miles away they will not qualify.

b) What is the council's duty on safe road use by children on single track and B roads without pedestrian provision?

c) What is the council's view on the schools dominant bus policy? Given the possible extra cycle/pedestrian and car use, will the council provide extra facilities?

Response by Councillor Bennett

a) Children from families with low income are entitled to free transport if they live between two and six miles of the school. All other children are entitled to free transport if they live more than 3 miles from the school. So children living more than 4 miles clearly would be entitled.

b) It is parents' duty to ensure their children are aware of road safety. There is some good advice and interesting road safety games on the DirectGov website I mentioned earlier.

c) I am sorry but I do not understand the question about the bus policy. The East Sussex Home to School Transport Policy is in compliance with statutory requirements. The school would be responsible for installing any cycle racks.

15. Question from S. Sheer, East Chiltington, East Sussex

Will bike racks be provided at Chailey School so that children can cycle to school thereby giving them an opportunity to take responsibility for their own journey to school?

Response by Councillor Bennett

This is a question that you will need to address to the school governors. It is not a county council responsibility.

WRITTEN QUESTION PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

1. Question by Councillor St Pierre to Councillor Bennett, Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness

Can the Lead Member clarify the number of contracts with providers of home to school transport which have been recently cancelled prior to the original time scale?

Why are places for statutory children on school buses been cancelled, when the walk to school is just under 3 miles but along narrow rural lanes with no public transport? Why has no safety audit been arranged to determine the safety of these rural rat runs without pavements or footways for young walkers?

What negotiations are in place with the faith schools which serve young people in East Sussex to ensure the governors consider local contractors in the provision of transport in the school year commencing 2011?

Answer by Councillor Bennett

There are been 2 contracts terminated this year before they were due to expire in July 2015. The first serves Chailey Secondary School and the other serves St Pauls Catholic College in Burgess Hill. Whilst they were terminated before the end of the contract notice was provided in accordance with our contract termination notice period.

If children are entitled to statutory home to school transport, this transport will be provided. Where the safety of a route is questioned a safe walking route assessment is carried out and should the route be deemed to be unsafe then the children on that route will become entitled to home to school transport under the unsafe route entitlement.

The Council is continuing to contract transport to faith schools where there is no public transport alternative until the end of the next school year in July 2012. Negotiations have taken place with faith schools to consider future transport options where our contracted hired arrangements will cease. As schools are self governing the Council is not in a position to influence whether or not the governors decide to procure transport themselves or if so, with whom they may contract.

2. Question by Councillor St Pierre to Councillor Maynard, Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment

Given the Council's observations of pollution caused by traffic in Lewes, some of which may be the result in bus operators not being able to cross the railway bridge at Lewes and thus unable to deliver an integrated transport system, and further to the response to my question at the County Council meeting in March 2010 confirming the dangerous condition of this bridge will Councillor

Maynard confirm the budget allocation and the timetable with Network Rail for undertaking repair work?

Answer by Councillor Maynard

Within the council's current capital programme there is an indicative provision of £400,000 in 2013/14 and a further £350,000 in 2014/15 which equates to a 50% contribution to the cost of carrying out the necessary repair work which will be undertaken by Network Rail. The capital programme will undergo a review as normal as part of the budget setting process this year and the funding will not be finally confirmed at this stage but will be considered alongside other council priorities. In terms of timing the, the Option study and detailed design for a scheme is to be undertaken by Network Rail's consultant during 2011/12 and 2012/13.

3. Question by Councillor Sparks to Councillor Belsey, Lead Member for Children and Families

Can you please advise the number of parents with disabled children who were receiving respite care but since the start of the new financial year have had this reduced or withdrawn and what additional support is now given to those parents receiving less respite care to avoid the more costly option of full time care for their disabled child?

Answer by Councillor Belsey

Since the start of the new financial year there have been no reductions to respite or short break services for disabled children. In the previous financial year the County Council did have a contract with an independent children's home in the county to provide some additional overnight stays. Following a realignment of our short break contracting in light of the ending of the Aiming High for Disabled Children grant from the government we did not renew this contract for the current year.

Three children had been receiving some overnight short breaks from this independent children's home and all now access this provision from our in-house short break residential units.

Although alterations to support packages for disabled children are only normally made as a result of a change in the family's circumstances there was a time in the previous financial year when some families experienced a temporary reduction in the number of overnight stays available at our in-house units. This is extremely regrettable but was a natural consequence of the changing circumstances of the children we are supporting and not a result of any budget reduction or change in grant funding.

Where temporary reductions were made these were preceded by careful discussion and review with the family. Those families who unfortunately were affected were, wherever possible, offered alternatives such as sessions at

Specialist After School Clubs and/or support from Sessional Workers or the Outreach Team.

The Council has an extensive offer of Short Break services and it remains a priority for us to support families to live as normal lives as possible. This in turn serves to increase families' resilience and their capacity to continue to care for all of their children. Many of these short break services can be accessed directly by parents without the need for a social care assessment and include after school and weekend activities, adventure holiday breaks, specialist childminding and bespoke services to children with complex medical needs.

4. Question by Councillor St Pierre to Councillor Belsey, Lead Member for Children and Families

- a) How many children and young people are now in residential full time care in ESCC Looked After Children's respite establishments?
- b) How long have these children been resident and what plans are in place to find a permanent placement or for them to be returned to their families?

Answer by Councillor Belsey

a) There are currently seven young people in full time care who are placed in the two residential units: Acorns, (130 Dorset Road Bexhill) and The Bungalow, (37 Sorrel Drive Eastbourne).

b) The length of residency is as follows:

Placement Duration
1 for 2 years
1 since April 2010
1 since June 2010
2 since November 2010
1 since December 2010
1 since March 2011

Councillor St Pierre will appreciate that there is a wide variety of reasons for children staying at the units and these are often complex. For each child there is a plan for the future but sometimes their circumstances and complex needs mean that for many there is no swift solution.

The future plans for these children are as follows:

Plan
2 are in transition to an adult placement
For 3 we are seeking a family placement
1 is likely to return home
For 1 we are seeking a long term residential placement

