

## MINUTES

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# EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

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**MINUTES of a MEETING of the EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL held at Council Chamber - County Hall, Lewes on 15 OCTOBER 2019 at 10.00 am**

**Present** Councillors John Barnes MBE, Matthew Beaver, Colin Belsey, Nick Bennett, Bill Bentley, Phil Boorman, Bob Bowdler, Tania Charman, Charles Clark, Martin Clarke, Godfrey Daniel, Philip Daniel, Angharad Davies, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Deirdre Earl-Williams, Simon Elford, David Elkin (Chairman), Nigel Enever, Michael Ensor, Kathryn Field, Gerard Fox, Roy Galley, Keith Glazier, Darren Grover, Carolyn Lambert, Tom Liddiard, Laurie Loe, Carl Maynard, Ruth O'Keeffe MBE, Sarah Osborne, Peter Pragnell, Pat Rodohan, Phil Scott, Jim Sheppard (Vice Chairman), Daniel Shing, Stephen Shing, Alan Shuttleworth, Rupert Simmons, Andy Smith, Bob Standley, Richard Stogdon, Colin Swansborough, Barry Taylor, Sylvia Tidy, David Tutt, John Ungar, Steve Wallis, Trevor Webb and Francis Whetstone

### **31 Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2019**

31.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the County Council held on 9 July 2019 as a correct record.

### **32 Chairman's business**

#### PROJECT RUDOLPH

32.1 The Chairman reminded all councillors that each year Christmas presents are collected at main council officers in Eastbourne, Hastings and Lewes for children whose families live in financial crisis and who would not otherwise receive a present. This project is very much valued by the children and families and I would ask that you support this when Project Rudolph 2019 is launched.

#### VOLUNTEERS

32.2 The Chairman referred to the amazing contribution that volunteers make every day in East Sussex. There are many volunteers across the County and the Chairman stated that, on behalf of the Council, he would continue to show his appreciation to these unsung heroes.

#### CHAIRMAN'S ACTIVITIES

32.3 The Chairman reported that he had attended a number of engagements since the last meeting of the County Council including: memorial services for the Dieppe raids which he attended as the guest of the Mayor of Dieppe and The Mayor of Bexhill's service at which our former colleague, Stuart Earl, was posthumously awarded 'The Freedom of Bexhill'.

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### PRAYERS

32.4 The Chairman thanked Jez Field for leading the prayers before the meeting.

### PETITIONS

32.5 The following petition was presented by a member immediately before the meeting:

Councillor O’Keeffe - calling on the County Council to declare a climate emergency and to take action on a number of points to make East Sussex carbon neutral by 2030.

### 33 Declarations of Interest

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

Member	Position giving rise to interest	Agenda item	Whether interest was prejudicial
Councillor Philip Daniel	Self-employed economic consultant teaching public finance to graduate students and providing advice to the IMF and member states, which includes the fiscal treatment of extractive industry revenues	Item 4	No
Councillor Webb	Member of the Pension Committee	Item 4	No
Councillor Webb	Community organiser for the Greek Orthodox Church fund raising concert for the right to work for asylum seekers campaign	Item 8	No

### 34 Petition

34.1 Julia Hilton (a representative of the petitioners) addressed the County Council prior to the debate. The Council agreed to vary procedure to enable all councillors who wished to speak to do so.

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34.2 The following motion was moved by Councillor Bennett and seconded:

*In order to maintain the momentum of its responsible approach to Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) considerations consistent with the Paris Agreement and the Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2019), and building on the substantial progress on ESG matters made over the last 36 months by the Committee, this Council agrees to:*

- 1. Recognise the concerns raised through the petition.*
- 2. Note that the East Sussex Pension Fund is already recognized as having a strong approach to socially and environmentally responsible investment with a below benchmark exposure to both carbon and fossil fuels.*
- 3. Request that the Pension Committee asks its investment consultants to undertake a further investigation, with particular focus on the long term risks and opportunities to the Fund associated with climate change, and report back to the Committee on how, in the light of its need to fulfil its obligations to all pension scheme employers and members, it might further integrate ESG considerations including those relating to its approach to fossil fuel exposure, into its investment strategy.*

34.3 The following amendment was moved by Councillor Stephen Shing and seconded:  
To delete the motion and replace with –

*The County Council agrees:*

- 1) To note that the Council's current policy of "engaging" with fossil fuel companies has been unsuccessful, and its continued investments in fossil fuels are "no longer aligned with the interests of the East Sussex Pension Fund" and pose "a material financial risk" to the Fund*
- 2) that, in line with its Responsible Investment Policy, the East Sussex Pension Fund: (a) immediately freezes any new investment in the top 200 publicly-traded fossil fuel companies; and (b) divests from its existing investments in these companies within five years.*

34.4 A recorded vote on Councillor Stephen Shing's amendment was requested and taken. The amendment was LOST, the votes being cast as follows

### FOR THE AMENDMENT

Councillors O'Keeffe, Daniel Shing, Stephen Shing and Webb

### AGAINST THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Barnes, Beaver, Belsey, Bennett, Bentley, Boorman, Bowdler, Charman, Charles Clark, Martin Clarke, Godfrey Daniel, Davies, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Earl-Williams, Elford, Elkin, Enever, Ensor, Fox, Galley, Glazier, Liddiard, Loe, Maynard, Pragnell, Scott, Sheppard, Simmons, Smith, Standley, Stogdon, Taylor, Tidy and Whetstone

### ABSTENTIONS

Councillors Philip Daniel, Field, Grover, Lambert, Osborne, Rodohan, Shuttleworth, Swansborough, Tutt, Ungar and Wallis

34.5 The following amendment was moved by Councillor Tutt and Seconded:

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To delete the motion and replace with –

*That East Sussex County Council believes that it would be possible for East Sussex Pension Fund to obtain either the same or greater return for the fund by divesting from shares in the fossil fuel based companies within their portfolio. To do so would also remove the financial risk that the fund has recognised such investments bring.*

*The Council therefore requests that the fund issue immediate instructions to their investment consultants (Hymans Robertson) to provide an analysis of the implications of fossil fuel divestments and its associated risks and opportunities. The outcome of such analysis will allow the fund to decide on whether it can meet its long term strategic objectives if it divests current fossil fuel holdings.*

34.6 A recorded vote on Councillor Tutt's amendment was requested and taken. The amendment was LOST, the votes being cast as follows

### FOR THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Charman, Charles Clark, Godfrey Daniel, Philip Daniel, Field, Grover, Lambert, O'Keeffe, Osborne, Rodohan, Scott, Daniel Shing, Stephen Shing, Shuttleworth, Swansborough, Tutt, Ungar and Wallis

### AGAINST THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Barnes, Beaver, Belsey, Bennett, Bentley, Boorman, Bowdler, Martin Clarke, Davies, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Earl-Williams, Elford, Elkin, Enever, Ensor, Fox, Galley, Glazier, Liddiard, Loe, Maynard, Pragnell, Sheppard, Simmons, Smith, Standley, Stogdon, Taylor, Tidy and Whetstone

### ABSTENTIONS

Councillor Webb

34.7 A recorded vote was requested and taken on the motion moved by Councillor Bennett as follows:

*In order to maintain the momentum of its responsible approach to Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) considerations consistent with the Paris Agreement and the Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2019), and building on the substantial progress on ESG matters made over the last 36 months by the Committee, this Council agrees to:*

- 1. Recognise the concerns raised through the petition.*
- 2. Note that the East Sussex Pension Fund is already recognized as having a strong approach to socially and environmentally responsible investment with a below benchmark exposure to both carbon and fossil fuels.*
- 3. Request that the Pension Committee asks its investment consultants to undertake a further investigation, with particular focus on the long term risks and opportunities to the Fund associated with climate change, and report back to the Committee on how, in the light of its need to fulfil its obligations to all pension scheme employers and members, it might further integrate ESG considerations including those relating to its approach to fossil fuel exposure, into its investment strategy.*

34.8 The motion was CARRIED with the votes being cast as follows:

### FOR THE MOTION

Councillors Barnes, Beaver, Belsey, Bennett, Bentley, Boorman, Bowdler, Charman, Charles Clark, Martin Clarke, Godfrey Daniel, Philip Daniel, Davies, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Earl-

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Williams, Elford, Elkin, Enever, Ensor, Field, Fox, Galley, Glazier, Grover, Lambert, Liddiard, Loe, Maynard, O'Keeffe, Osborne Pragnell, Rodohan, Scott, Sheppard, Daniel Shing, Stephen Shing, Shuttleworth, Simmons, Smith, Standley, Stogdon, Swansborough, Taylor, Tidy, Tutt, Ungar, Wallis and Whetstone

### AGAINST THE MOTION

Councillor Webb

### ABSTENTIONS

None

## 35 Questions from members of the public

35.1 Copies of questions from Nina Ovenden from Easons Green, Isaiah Keal from Easons Green, Anou Rothschild from Easons Green and Ingrid Burniston from Easons Green and the answers from Councillor Claire Dowling (Lead Member for Transport and Environment) and Councillor Fox (Chair of the Pension Committee) are attached to these minutes. Supplementary questions were asked and responded to.

## 36 Reports

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

Cabinet report (16 July 2019) - paragraph 1 (Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources – State of the County)

Cabinet report (8 October 2019) - paragraph 1 (Council Monitoring)

Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development report – (paragraph 1 Notice of Motion: Right to work for those seeking asylum)

Place Scrutiny Committee report - paragraph 1 (Notices of Motion: Climate emergency)

### NON-RESERVED PARAGRAPHS

36.2 On the motion of the Chairman of the County Council, the Council ADOPTED those paragraphs in the reports that had not been reserved for discussion as follows:

Governance Committee report paragraph 1 – Amendment to Constitution – scheme of delegation to officers

36.3 The Chairman informed the Council that he was going to vary the order of the agenda by taking item 9 (report of the Place Scrutiny Committee) next

## 37 Report of the Place Scrutiny Committee

37.1 Councillor Bowdler moved the reserved paragraph (Notices of Motion: climate emergency) in the report of the Place Scrutiny Committee.

37.2 The following amendment moved by Councillor Tutt and seconded was LOST:

*East Sussex County Council:*

- (i) supports the aims and implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.*
- (ii) recognises and declares a Climate Emergency.*
- (iii) will set a target of achieving carbon neutrality from its activities as soon as possible and in any event by (insert) [2030] (delete) [2050, in line with the new target for the UK agreed by Parliament in 2019].*
- (iv) will build upon the work we have undertaken to date, will commit resources where possible and will align our policies to address the Climate Emergency.*
- (v) will set out a clear plan of action to reduce our carbon emissions.*

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- (vi) *will report (insert) [six monthly to the County Council] (delete) [annually at the May County Council Meeting] on its progress towards the target.*
- (vii) *will investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment, as well as writing to central government with respect to the emergency to request funding to implement swift appropriate actions.*
- (viii) *will use our Environment Strategy to provide a strong unified voice in lobbying for support to address this emergency, sharing best practice across East Sussex and more widely through other partners*
- (ix) *(insert) [will include an environmental impact assessment on every Council report]*

37.3 The following motion was moved by Councillor Bowdler was CARRIED:

*East Sussex County Council:*

- (i) supports the aims and implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.*
- (ii) recognises and declares a Climate Emergency.*
- (iii) will set a target of achieving carbon neutrality from its activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050, in line with the new target for the UK agreed by Parliament in 2019.*
- (iv) will build upon the work we have undertaken to date, will commit resources where possible and will align our policies to address the Climate Emergency.*
- (v) will set out a clear plan of action to reduce our carbon emissions.*
- (vi) will report annually at the May County Council Meeting on its progress towards the target.*
- (vii) will investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment, as well as writing to central government with respect to the emergency to request funding to implement swift appropriate actions.*
- (viii) will use our Environment Strategy to provide a strong unified voice in lobbying for support to address this emergency, sharing best practice across East Sussex and more widely through other partners*

### **38 Report of the Cabinet - 16 July 2019**

Paragraph 1 (Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources – State of the County)

38.1 Councillor Glazier moved the reserved paragraph of the Cabinet's report.

38.2 The motion was CARRIED after debate

### **39 Report of the Cabinet - 8 October 2019**

Paragraph 1 (Council Monitoring)

39.1 Councillor Glazier moved the reserved paragraph of the Cabinet's report.

39.2 The motion was CARRIED after debate

### **40 Report of the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development**

40.1 Councillor Glazier moved the reserved paragraph (Notice of Motion: Right to work for those seeking asylum).

40.1 The motion was CARRIED after debate.

### **41 Questions from County Councillors**

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

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<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Councillor Field	Councillor Claire Dowling	Use of road ahead closed signs
Councillor Lambert	Councillor Glazier	Financial implications of the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service withdrawing from the Obis pension administration service
Councillor Ungar	Councillor Glazier	Involvement of councillors in budget setting process
Councillor Godfrey Daniel Councillor Charman	Councillor Bentley Councillor Standley	Road safety communication to councillors Timing of decision from Department for Education regarding funding for the Hastings Opportunity Fund
Councillor Galley	Councillor Standley	Consultation regarding the future of Fletching School
Councillor Scott	Councillor Claire Dowling	Monitoring of road works to minimise impact on traffic flows and consideration of evening weekend working
Councillor Stephen Shing	Councillor Claire Dowling	Penalties issued for roadworks that overrun.
Councillor Stogdon	Councillor Bentley	Role of scrutiny in relation to road safety communications and associated toolkit.
Councillor Field	Councillor Glazier	Role of councillors in putting forward items for scrutiny

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

41.2 Four written question were received from Councillors Lambert, Tutt, Ungar and Whetstone for the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability, the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development and the Lead Member for Resources. The questions and answers are attached to these minutes. The Lead Members responded to supplementary questions

THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 1.43 pm

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The reports referred to are included in the minute book  
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### QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

#### 1. Question from Nina Ovenden, Easons Green, East Sussex

What is East Sussex County Council going to do about traffic and road safety in the coming years when people become more and more aware about car use and want to cycle, but there are no cycle lanes and the speed limit is 60 on most country roads?

#### Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The national speed limit is set by central government and covers all roads where a specific lower speed limit has not been imposed by legal order. It varies depending on the road type - 70mph on motorways and dual carriageways whilst 60mph on all other roads - and is specific to the class of vehicle being driven (for example HGV's are restricted to 50 mph on a single carriageway road). The Highway Code highlighted the need for drivers to adapt their driving to the appropriate type and condition of road you are on, taking into account the road and traffic conditions, anticipating what pedestrians and cyclists might do and being prepared for road users emerging from junctions

I acknowledge that people are becoming increasingly aware of the impact that petrol or diesel vehicles can have as a contributor to climate change, air quality issues and the impacts to health from limited physical activity. However, for some people the use of a vehicle, especially within rural areas, provides their only realistic means of travel - for getting to work, taking children to school or for shopping.

That said, we have invested significantly in cycling infrastructure across the County in recent years, including the Horsey Way in Eastbourne, which is a shared cycling and walking route connecting residential areas to key local town centre services, together with a shared cycling and walking route connecting Lewes – Ringmer, which is a proving a popular route and is used for essential journeys to employment and education and as part leisure activities.

Whilst I note your point that this growing awareness of the impact of car travel may influence peoples travel choices, including towards cycling, I think it is important to note that transport or mobility as we know it now, is currently going through some significant change. We are gradually moving towards the use of zero emission vehicles and using data to improve the way that our road network and transport services are devised, planned and managed. We will have to take account of these changes when we review and update our next Local Transport Plan.

Many of these concepts for future mobility provision are still very much focused towards the urban areas, but the County Council will need to consider how these translate to serve the rural areas of the county, and this may include the need to review current speed limits. The Department for Transport is proposing to publish a strategy in relation to this and how these concepts can be applied to rural areas, and as such the County Council will refer to this when we update our Local Transport Plan. In support of this the County Council is also developing a county wide Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan in response to the Department for Transport national Cycling & Walking Investment Plan. We will use this to lobby for future investment in cycling and walking infrastructure and initiatives.



**2. Question from Isaiah Keal, Easons Green, East Sussex**

How has East Sussex County Council planned to educate the local people on the climate issue and how to prevent it?

**Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment**

The County Council already carries out some educational work on climate change with local schools, as part of its programme to reduce its own carbon footprint. More widely, the Council is currently working with a range of partners to update the Environment Strategy for East Sussex. One of the key themes in the Strategy will be on climate change and it will include measures on how to mitigate against the impacts of climate change, as well as how individuals and organisations can contribute to reducing their carbon emissions. The Environment Strategy is due to be published in 2020.

**3. Question from Anou Rothschild, Easons Green, East Sussex**

How are East Sussex County Council planning to reinvest the pension fund to benefit the environment and the community when the petition to stop investing the pension fund into fossil fuels comes through?

**Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee**

The petition relating to fossil fuels will be debated by the Full Council on 15 October. Any decisions or actions arising from the debate will be considered by the Pension Committee at its next meeting on 25 November 2019.

**4. Question from Ingrid Burniston, Easons Green, East Sussex**

As the number of people in East Sussex grows, and the amount of waste too, how is East Sussex County Council going to deal with the waste problem knowing that many of its residents will want to ensure they are disposing of their waste in a way that won't harm the environment?

**Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment**

We are not predicting a waste problem in East Sussex. We keep track of how much waste our residents create on an ongoing basis. Waste levels are currently relatively low and we predict they will continue to be at this level for some years yet. Black bag waste created by residents has been declining. We also keep track of how many extra houses are being built now and in the future and this helps us to predict where extra waste might be created and whether we need to change how we manage it as a result. We are satisfied that we have the capacity at our waste facilities to manage future waste levels.

We and the districts and boroughs in East Sussex communicate with our residents on an ongoing basis on how to use our waste services. This helps residents understand what they should put out for recycling and what they can take along to their local recycling centre.

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We are fortunate to have our own facilities and we manage most of our waste locally.

- Our black bags/bins go to the Newhaven Energy from Waste facility where electricity is created from the waste they can't recycle
- Our kerbside recycling in the green bins end up at Viridor's Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in Crayford, Kent. Brighton's kerbside recycling ends up at our MRF in Hollingdean, Brighton
- Our garden waste goes to our composting facility in Whitesmiths

All of our waste and recycling is managed responsibly by our partners Veolia and Viridor.

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### WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

#### 1. Question by Councillor Tutt to the Lead Member for Resources

At the Cabinet meeting on the 16 July 2019, the Chief Finance Officer informed the meeting that the savings planned for 2018/9 were only “part year savings”. As this was not clear at the time the budget was set in February 2018 I would be grateful if the Lead Member could clarify what if any part of the savings agreed as part of the 2019/20 budget are intended to be “part year savings”. If indeed any part of these savings are “part year” could he also explain how the shortfall will be met in the current financial year?

#### Answer by the Lead Member for Resources

The 2019/20 budget approved by Full Council on 5 February 2019 included proposed savings of £5.131m.

The timescales for actual delivery of savings may well change due to a number of factors including as a consequence of public consultation or the service changes required. As part of the Council Monitoring: Quarter 1 2019/20, it was reported that the following 2019/20 savings will be delivered part year.

Savings	Full Year	Part Year Delivery	To be delivered in future year	Shortfall will be met by
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
ASC: Working Age Adults: Nursing, Residential and Community Based Services	247	124	123	Reported as part of ASC 2019/20 outturn
ASC: Meals in the Community	483	121	362	Reported as part of ASC 2019/20 outturn
CET: Civil Parking Enforcement	1,000	250	750	Use of projected underspend in Waste Services and transfer from reserves
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,730</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>1,235</b>	

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For completeness, within Children's Services, there are savings for which it has been planned to bring forward into 2019/20 and future years as particular programmes of review are brought to a conclusion.

Savings	Brought Forward from Prior Year	Part Year Delivery	To be delivered in future year	Shortfall will be met by
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
CSD: iSEND and ESBAS	831	570	261	Use of SEND Reform Grant
CSD: Early Help	1,561	564	997	Use of Corporate Reserves
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,392</b>	<b>1,134</b>	<b>1,258</b>	

### **2. Question by Councillor Ungar to the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability**

As we are all aware Children's and Young People's lungs are particularly susceptible to damaged by air pollution. Each school day here in East Sussex thousands of children attend school. Many of these schools are under the control of East Sussex County Council. During that time the council is responsible for the children and for protecting them from harm. It is reported that Westminster Council will be testing school classrooms to measure the levels of pollution that might be found in there.

What is East Sussex County Council doing to check the level of pollutants, if there are any, in the Council's School Classrooms?

If unacceptable levels of pollutants are found, what action will the Council take?

What physical environmental protection measures will the County Council take to protect classrooms, and therefore, children from pollution?

### **Answer by the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability**

The statutory local air quality management system covers external air quality rather than internal air quality. Internal air quality can be highly complex and includes different sources to external air pollution (for example from heating sources, cleaning products, furniture and so on).

District and Borough Councils are responsible for reporting annually on external air quality. Where there is an exceedance of statutory health-based air quality thresholds, a District or Borough is required to declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and to develop an action plan that works towards bringing air quality below the thresholds. The County Council assists this process with transport data and with identifying and implementing measures to enable and encourage modal shift and to reduce congestion. Currently, there are 2 AQMAs in East Sussex, one in Lewes and one in Newhaven. There are no schools within either of these AQMAs.

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The County Council also hosts the Sussex Air partnership, which disseminates local air quality data and delivers the Air Alert service (please see: <http://www.sussex-air.net/>). In 2018-19 the County Council led a Defra-funded project to work with 25 schools across Sussex to encourage parents and carers to avoid idling their vehicles during school drop-off and pick-up times and to encourage more pupils to walk and cycle to and from schools. Monitoring of air quality outside the participating schools took place during the anti-idling interventions. A final report on the data is being produced by independent air quality experts at Kings College London.

There is on-going research into the effectiveness of different physical measures on air quality, for instance planting trees and hedges between roads and school buildings.

### **3. Question by Councillor Whetstone Leader of the Council**

The Council is the Corporate Trustee of the Ashdown Forest Trust and has a wider remit than just its financial responsibilities. How are County Councillors kept informed to fulfil those responsibilities?.

### **Answer by the Leader of the Council**

The Cabinet and the Council receive an annual report on the financial position of the Trust. Full Council in its role as Trustee also agrees an annual grant of £65k to the Conservators who's statutory duties align with the objects of the Trust .

The Council has delegated to the Chief Operating Officer the exercise of the day to day management of the Trust and to agree the accounts of, and grants by, the Trust after consultation with the Lead Cabinet Members for Resources and Transport and Environment, and the Director of Communities Economy and Transport. Other matters are referred to Cabinet. Issues such as the protection of Trust land from encroachments are dealt with at officer level on behalf of the Trust. The Trust has agreed a protocol with the Conservators of the Ashdown Forest.

Should individual members wish to be apprised of particular activities of the Trust other than those agreed by the Council and Cabinet then they can of course contact officers and request an update.

### **4. Question by Councillor Lambert to the Lead Member for Resources**

What assets does the County Council hold that are underused in whole or in part, whether this is through the removal of services or for other reasons? What strategic approach is being taken to look at:

- the meanwhile use of all or part of these assets e.g. by a community group
- community asset transfer
- disposal and re-investment

Who is responsible for this work and how will it be managed and scrutinised by members?

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### **Answer by the Lead Member for Resources**

The County Council has a substantial estate across its school and non-school portfolios, comprising approximately 470 separate assets managed at either Service level or through the Property Services department.

Place Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 11 June, received a report setting out the strategic approach to assets, which included a wide review of activities. This remains part of the governance process as we move to update our Corporate Asset Management Plan.

<https://democracy.eastsussex.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=516&MId=3977&Ver=4>

The County Council has a list of approximately 15 properties noted as surplus to service needs, or currently vacant. This includes assets which are temporarily surplus (where all or part of assets are held for alternative service use) or permanently surplus (where an asset is not required for any service use and available for an alternate purpose).

Some assets offer limited alternate opportunity particularly those of a leasehold nature (subject to specific terms of a lease) or owned but held subject to specific land use or planning covenants.

Where any asset is identified as becoming available, the first step taken is to assess any current or wider service need. If it is not recyclable, or the property is not fit for purpose, it will be assessed as a development, disposal or 'strategic hold' opportunity (particularly where there is scope for some commercial development or investment).

The principles underlying the process propose that the Council should only retain an asset if:

- it is identified as having/could have development potential within the local plan, or within a realistic timescale (deliverability);
- It can be re-let/intensified for full revenue generation;
- the Council wishes to develop the site itself or through a partnering arrangement;
- it has strategic value (i.e. land to support future expansion of adjacent operational or investment assets);
- sites will unlock a development in future (within a specific timescale); and/or
- there is an identified service requirement.

As part of this process, there is continued liaison with our public partners, through groups such as SPACES in order to share opportunities, information on assets and collaborative arrangements.

Asset disposals, reflected as Capital Receipts, continue to support, and are a valued funding stream, for the Capital Programme.

With regard to meanwhile use and community asset transfers, the County has published its "Asset Transfer Policy" which supports third party use, and the Policy outlines our general approach. The link is provided:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/7736/g-asset-transfer-policy-2016.pdf>

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The requirements of the Capital Asset Management Strategy, particularly relating to surplus or vacant assets, are managed through Property Services, with reporting through to Lead Member and Cabinet as appropriate.