

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

1. Question by Councillor Osborne to the Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

It would appear that in some councils the rule about councillors having to face re-election after an absence of six months is not subject to any of the provisions about maternity leave. Some councils use their discretion to agree that a woman can be missing for more than six months in particular circumstances, but there is no rule.

Can the Lead Member confirm that East Sussex County Councillors taking maternity or paternity leave will not be subject to re-election either after a six-month absence or after an agreed period of statutory leave?

Answer by the Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

Whether a Member is granted a dispensation in relation to a period of absence is a matter for Full Council to consider and not just me as Leader. While I can't respond for other members of the Council I would be supportive of such a request. I would also expect that they and the residents that they represent are properly supported during this period.

2. Question by Councillor Lambert to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

East Sussex County Council declared a climate emergency in October 2019 and set a target of achieving carbon neutrality from its activities as soon as possible. Part of the climate emergency comes from car emissions, and in particular, from cars left standing with their engines running. One in ten urban roads breached legal levels for the toxic gas NO₂ and nearly 800 stretches of monitored road fell short of the minimum standard. (*The Times*, 19 December 2020). The tragic death of Ella Kissi-Debrah from an asthma attack with the coroner's finding that the failure of the local authority to reduce pollution levels to legal limits was a contributory factor in her death, highlights the urgency of reducing emissions.

We therefore need to take urgent action to avoid this as much as possible. Under Section 42 of the Road Traffic Act of 1988, a fixed penalty fine can be issued by local authorities for allowing an engine to run while stationary.

Will the County Council write to all schools, including nursery schools and colleges in the county asking them to advise parents to switch off their car engines when collecting children from school? Will the County Council further work with partner authorities to put up notices reminding people to switch off their car engines when parked and to apply for the right to issue fixed penalties under the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions Fixed Penalty Regulations 2002/1808)?

Answer by the Leader and Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The Sussex Air quality partnership, which is hosted by ESCC, carried out a Defra-funded project in 2018-19 which included:

- 1) anti-idling interventions at 25 schools in Sussex, which was delivered by the charity Living Streets.
- 2) An assessment of the air quality impact of idling outside 4 of these schools, which was carried out by nationally-recognised air quality experts from the Environmental Research Group at Imperial College.

Living Streets concluded that: ‘the most surprising outcome was that our data and observation showed that most parents and carers were not idling outside schools’.

The Environmental Research Group, for their part, were unable to find conclusive results from the air quality assessment.

In other words, whilst there are no doubt instances at some schools where idling of vehicles by parents or carers at school drop-off and pick-up times is contributing to poor local air quality, it doesn't appear to be as widespread as is commonly believed to be the case.

Nevertheless, Sussex Air partners, including the County Council and its district and borough partners, have put up a number of anti-idling signs, including outside some schools and by some level crossings. What is unclear at this stage is what difference these signs make to idling behaviour.

In view of the available evidence, the County Council doesn't believe that it's appropriate or effective to write to all schools in the county asking them to advise parents to switch off their car engines when collecting children from school. What the County Council will continue to do is work with schools to support them to increase the number of pupils who walk or cycle to and from school. For example, through the use of Defra funding we have secured, we have delivered projects with schools specifically aimed at improving air quality. These have included organising the temporary closure of streets outside schools during drop-off and pick-up times to encourage walking and cycling and we are working with Sustrans to explore extending this to other schools. We are also working with Sustrans to deliver educational sessions on air pollution and assisting pupils and parents or carers to plan walking and cycling routes to and from school. We feel that this is a more practical and effective way to support behavioural change that will lead to a real improvement in local air quality.

This will also be supported through the delivery of the East Sussex Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan. By working with key local partners ESCC will look to increase the cycling and walking network across the county alongside delivering travel behaviour change programmes, with schools being a key target audience.

3. Question by Councillor Lambert to the Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

The rollout of the Covid vaccination has raised significant concerns about communication and accessibility of the Clinical Commissioning Group. Despite briefings arranged for councillors, no links were provided so that councillors could keep residents updated with regular, accurate information about the rollout of the

vaccinations. The email link that was provided, did not work. The website does not explain who the members are or give details of names and contact addresses, including for the Director of Communications and Chief Executive. This lack of accessibility meant that the many councillors receiving numerous emails from anxious residents were unable to provide re-assurance or a clear timetable on the rollout of the programme. Residents were also confused by the lack of local vaccination centres and why GPs in some areas were administering the vaccine but not in others.

Will the Leader of the Council write to the Chief Executive of the Clinical Commissioning Group asking for clearer information to be provided on the website and for more clarity on the work of the CCG?

Answer by the Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

The Director of Adult Social Care has been in contact with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in East Sussex who are very sorry to hear the concerns that have been raised about the communication in relation to the Sussex COVID-19 Vaccination Programme and have provided the following information about how the programme is now working:

There are now a range of ways for those in the eligible groups, as set nationally, to be offered and receive the vaccination:

1. GP led vaccination services are in place across our communities, established in primary care network areas, providing the vaccination to registered patients at the specific GP practices;
2. Three larger vaccination centres have now opened in Sussex (Eastbourne, Brighton and Crawley);
3. Three pharmacy led services (Midhurst in West Sussex, and Ore and Ticehurst in East Sussex) to provide additional choice for people in where they receive their vaccination.

People in the priority groups can book appointments at the above services via the national booking system after receiving an invitation letter.

4. A roving service is in place to visit care homes and those who are housebound and who cannot attend a vaccination site.

To support this programme, a range of communications approaches are being utilised to ensure the public, partners, stakeholders and the media can be kept updated on the detail of how services are working, the latest programme news and developments. This includes:

- A Daily Update (weekdays). The highlights of these updates, together with links to the full briefing, are included in the County Council's normal twice weekly Member updates.
- A twice weekly stakeholder communication that provides the latest data on uptake and percentages of the population who have received the vaccination.

- Virtual face to face briefings, drop in sessions for the voluntary and community sector.
- Attendance at community, public and patient meetings.

Further to this, a public campaign has been launched for Sussex – “When will I get my jab” – to further support effective communication around the programme and engagement with our communities.

The Sussex COVID-19 vaccination programme is system wide and involves health and social care partners in planning and delivery. As such, an area of the Sussex Health and Care Partnership (SHCP) website has been developed to hold all of the latest information, including the communications products such as the Daily Updates, about the programme. The main section is available here:

www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/get-my-jab and the latest briefings can be found here: <https://www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/keepsussexsafe/sussex-covid-19-vaccination-programme/stakeholder-briefings/>

This website is for the Partnership and provides information on what the SHCP is and who is involved (<https://www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/about-us/>), but it does not hold information about the leadership of any of its individual partners. Information on the Chief Executive of East Sussex CCG and leadership team is available on the CCG’s website at the following link: <https://www.eastsussexccg.nhs.uk/about-us/our-governing-body/members/>

Locally, the NHS recognises the high interest in the vaccination programme and a dedicated email address has been established to support residents to ask their questions and receive timely and accurate information - sxccg.vaccineenquiries@nhs.net. We would encourage all residents and Councillors to use this and the team will be able to respond to you as quickly as possible.

In light of the above response from the CCG, the Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development does not consider it necessary to engage further with the CCG on this matter.

4. Question by Councillor Stephen Shing to the Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

Due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty on when lockdown and restrictions will ease, it is unknown whether the coming County Council elections in May 2021 could go ahead. As a member of the IT references group, I am aware that the council is going to provide a new laptop to new council members, I wondered whether the council would consider delaying the order for those laptops and any other equipment until we know the election date?

Answer by the Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

As you will be aware, Government has now confirmed that the elections will go ahead on the 6 May. Officers are therefore continuing to make preparations based on this date and this includes the planned renewal of Member computer equipment.

To ensure that new devices are available in May to replace the current 2in1 machines, which have reached the end of their lifespan, it is recommended that a period of eight weeks be allowed from ordering the new devices to deploying them. This allows time for manufacturing, shipping and for IT & Digital to prepare the devices for Members. Consequently, an order will be placed by early March. An update will be provided to the Member Reference Group on 22 February.