

## COUNTY COUNCIL – 12 OCTOBER 2021

### QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

#### 1. Question from Sean MacLeod, Newhaven, East Sussex

On 23 July I asked a question regarding speech and language waiting times and SEND assessments for autism in your response you said the KPI of 16 Weeks for speech and language for example.

I am using a known case for a speech and language referral and the correspondence since.

On 15th March 2021 a referral was made for speech and language support, no contact was had from the services so on 11th May a follow up was made again just saying we will be in contact in next 5-7weeks, to this date no follow up has been had, when we actually contact the relevant department we are now being told: "we can not give you a date of when you will be contacted". This backs up my original question when I was informed that people are now waiting a year for speech and language assessments.

Now we move on to send and Autism, and another case study on the 17th March a referral was done for an Autism assessment, there has been absolute zero contact with the school who has made the referral or the parents of the children and to be absolutely clear you only have to look at social media to see this is not an isolated case with most people being told they are being told 2 years.

Services are clearly stretched due to covid but the children in our community have suffered astronomically for the past 16month with an extremely difficult education period and now these children are being failed by delays and delays and a clear lack of communication, when will ESCC start giving our children the education and support they need for to long they have been failed.

So can you please let me know exactly and truthfully the clear waiting times now for speech and language therapy and autism assessments and can you tell me exactly what you are doing to help the CCG improve waiting times.

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

These matters, as the question recognises, are the responsibility of the NHS East Sussex CCG. We work closely with the CCG to try to ensure that everyone understands the referral arrangements and pathways and that there is good joint working across services. The CCG has sent us the following information in response to the question.

Response from NHS East Sussex CCG:

At the CCG we recognise how important it is for children, young people, their families and carers to access the right advice, treatment and care that they need.

We are working with all partners to monitor and review need, and continue to improve services for our local population.

### Speech and Language Therapy

The Children's Integrated Therapy and Equipment Service (CITES) provide support for children with speech, language and communication needs. The current average waiting time for CITES is 12 weeks for an initial assessment and 8 weeks for follow up appointment.

We are very sorry to hear the experience that has been reported, however we are not aware of any children who have been referred to the Children's Integrated Therapy and Equipment Service who have been waiting a year for assessment. Any case where a child did not have an appointment within 12 weeks would be reviewed and monitored to ensure a resolution.

We understand that there have been delays for some follow up appointments but if the individual would like to contact us, we would be very happy to look into this further.

More generally, we know that 7-9% of children present with language difficulties and for school age children with language and communication needs there is a graduated approach to support.

This is:

- Step 1: the school will use the subscription based Language Link [Speech and Language Link - support for SLCN](#) to access an online standardised assessment of language understanding and to follow the advised, bespoke programme. Schools can use the support services of Language Link or speak to a SLT for additional advice through Therapy One Point is open across the week.
- Step 2: the school can make a referral through the ISEND Front Door. They will be provided with comprehensive advice regarding the communication environment as well as language screening and bespoke packages for children with language needs.
- Step 3: where a formal assessment of language and communication is needed a referral to Children's Integrated Therapy and Equipment Service SLT can be made.

### Autism

We do understand how concerning it is for parents who are waiting for their child to be seen for assessment for Autism.

We recognise that there are high levels of need and we are committed to addressing this.

We have identified significant investment in 2021/22 for this service in order to increase the service capacity. Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust is actively recruiting to additional posts to support this.

We are also working across Sussex to redesign the current pathway based on best practice.

If anyone has any particular concerns about a child's case we would encourage them to contact us directly.

## **2. The same or similar questions were asked by:**

**Jane Wilde, Eastbourne, East Sussex  
Julia Waterlow, Lewes, East Sussex  
Richard Moore, Lewes, East Sussex  
Dinah Morgan, Lewes, East Sussex  
Nicky Bishop, Battle, East Sussex  
Emily Johns, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex  
Rebecca McCray, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex  
Clare Finn, Hove  
Polly Charlton, Brighton  
Andrea Needham, Hastings, East Sussex  
Fiona MacGregor, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex  
Serena Penman, Lewes, East Sussex  
Hugh Dunkerley, Brighton  
Clare Barrett, Lewes, East Sussex  
Martin Atkinson, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex  
Zoe Axworthy, Brighton  
Guy Gladstone, Seaford, East Sussex  
Emily Skye, Seaford, East Sussex  
Ian Sheard, Battle, East Sussex  
Penelope Steel, Woodingdean  
Clare Halstead, Brighton  
Dorothy Amos, Hastings, East Sussex  
Anne Massey, Hove  
Annabel Faraday, Fairlight, East Sussex  
Carolyn Beckingham, Lewes, East Sussex  
Simon Mercer, Portslade  
Jason Evans, Saltdean  
Keith McMurray, Brighton  
Matilda Whittington, Eastbourne, East Sussex  
Susan Murray, Lewes, East Sussex  
Sara Meddings, Seaford, East Sussex  
Penny Beale, Hastings, East Sussex  
Jennifer Howells, Horam, East Sussex  
Ayesha Mayhew, Brighton  
Helen Doyle, Robertsbridge, East Sussex  
Scott O'Rourke, Eastbourne, East Sussex  
Mick Venables, North Chailey, East Sussex  
Daniel Hope, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex  
Jenny Embleton, Brighton  
Cherry Lavell, Polegate, East Sussex  
Jane Harris, Seaford, East Sussex**

Hamish Walke, Hove  
Noa Lachman, Hailsham, East Sussex  
Denzil Jones, Lewes, East Sussex  
Erica Smith, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex  
Ann Holmes, Lewes, East Sussex  
Sonya Baksi, Lewes, East Sussex  
Alison Cooper, Hastings, East Sussex  
Anthony Graham, Brighton  
Carl Evans, Brighton  
Nicky Reese, Saltdean  
Caroline Donegan, Ticehurst, East Sussex  
Mark Engineer, Barcombe, East Sussex  
Carole Mortimer, Lewes, East Sussex  
Jane Wigan, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex  
Madeleine Bradbury, Brighton  
Gary French, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex  
Elizabeth Ottosson, Eastbourne, East Sussex  
Suzette Attwood, Brighton  
Paul Tibbey, Lewes, East Sussex  
Manuela McLellan, Hastings, East Sussex  
Duncan Armstrong, Lewes, East Sussex  
Karl Horton, Hastings, East Sussex  
Anthony Bradnum, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex  
Paul Taylor, Lewes, East Sussex  
David Allen, Brighton  
Carol Turner, Eastbourne, East Sussex  
Gabriel Carlyle, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex

Does the East Sussex Pension Committee agree with the UN Secretary General António Guterres, that the latest UN climate report (<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>) 'is a code red for humanity' which 'must sound a death knell for coal and fossil fuels, before they destroy our planet'? How does it square this assessment with its continued refusal to stop investing local people's pensions in the giant fossil fuel companies – like Shell and BP – that are driving the climate crisis?

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

It is not for the Pension Fund to comment on a statement made by the UN Secretary General in response to a report published by IPCC. The Pension Fund's primary responsibility is the management of the financial risk to its memberships' pensions and ensuring there is sufficient money to pay pensions as they fall due and this is where it focuses its resources and decisions.

The Fund has updated its website, which clearly sets out the Fund's Investment Strategy and Statement of Responsible Investment Principles, which are regularly reviewed and updated by the Pension Committee. The Fund has a policy of engagement over divestment as its primary approach, which is supported by Department of Works and Pensions, the Work and Pensions Select Committee, the

Minister for Pensions and investor groups. Engagement to encourage companies to change their behaviour will help the real economy transition to net zero. The exposure of the Fund to oil and gas or coal companies once the implementation of existing approved strategic changes are fully implemented is very limited, with residual exposure held as tactical investments by the relevant investment managers and supported with engagement. The Fund's Statement of Responsible Investment Principles continues to acknowledge that where material risks remain following engagement activity, it retains the ability to divest where possible. As part of the climate strategy for the Fund, a quarter of the equity allocation is now invested specifically to fund sustainable opportunities from the energy transition or solutions to climate risk.

There is more information on the Fund's website ([www.eastsussexpensionfund.org](http://www.eastsussexpensionfund.org)) as to the investment strategy approach and principles.

### **3. Question from Maya Evans, Hastings, East Sussex**

Can you tell me what methodology you will use in order to take into account the needs of East Sussex's vastly differing communities when putting together the Bus Service Improvement Plan?

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

The Government launched its Bus Back Better strategy in March of this year setting out an ambitious timescale for all local Transport Authorities to produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) by the end of October.

The BSIP Guidance issued by the Department for Transport makes it mandatory for authorities to seek and report the views of passengers and third parties on the merits and demerits of bus services locally and the performance of the LTA and the local operators. These were to include local transport users' groups, MPs, local services and business organisations.

To help us understand the needs of the residents and businesses in East Sussex we undertook an online consultation exercise seeking the views of bus users, residents, businesses and local transport operators. The consultation specifically included two free text questions (see questions below) in our online survey and we received more than 2,500 responses to these questions.

Q. If you would like to make suggestions for improvements to an existing bus service or propose a new one or any other specific suggestions on bus services.

Q. Do you have any general comments or suggestions on how bus use could be improved?

We have analysed all of the responses and over 50 additional submissions from a broad range of organisations and developed our BSIP proposals accordingly.

A draft Bus Service Improvement Plan will be presented to Councillor Claire Dowling at her Lead Member Decision Making Meeting on 25 October, a copy of which will be made public on the ESCC website from 15 October.

#### **4. Question from Bernard Brown, Battle, East Sussex**

This question is about what risk evaluation East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has in place regarding a significant creditor in which it has a significant interest. It is about how the Council is protecting Council tax-payers money. East Sussex County Council has a four tiered relationship with East Sussex Energy Infrastructure and Development Ltd - better known by its trading name of SeaChange Sussex. ESCC is a Class A Member of the Company and has a nominated Director on the Board. ESCC is a Contracting Authority with the Company, primarily acting for SELEP. ESCC is a significant multi million pound Creditor of the Company. ESCC is registered as a Person of Significant Control in the Company at Companies House. The question is in 3 Parts.

1. When, as required under the Articles of Association, will the Council's appointed Director be reporting back on the latest results and the current and future activities of the Company to the Members of East Sussex County Council?

2. Can the Council assure residents a) that a formal Risk Assessment exists on the question of the exposure faced by ESCC in relation to the Company and b) when and how that Risk Assessment was reported to Council Members?

3. Given the history of the predecessor of the Company having had a wholly owned subsidiary, Coastal Innovations Ltd, compulsorily wound up and liquidated with debts of some £2m (to an external funder) and given the Credit Risk Assessment currently published by outside Credit Agencies, what is the Risk-Rating East Sussex County Council have applied to this Company.

#### **Response by the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development**

1. Under the Articles of Association, there is no requirement as such on individual Directors to provide reports on the Company within a specified timescale. However the appointed Director does ensure that ESCC officers report back on behalf of the County Council to the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development (SMED) for individual projects from SeaChange Sussex (SCS), which County Council members and the public are entitled to attend in relation to decisions made by the County Council. In addition, once projects are approved, ESCC reports quarterly to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and on all SELEP funded projects including the SCS projects. The reporting also includes an annual report to SELEP on those SELEP funding projects including the SCS projects together with a year- end annual financial statement being provided to the Lead Member for SMED

2. Risk assessments are undertaken on the individual projects loans and grants provided to SCS by ESCC. Risk assessments are included in the reports to the Lead

Member for approval prior to entering into the legal contract agreements on each project. The legal contracts reflect risks such as financial, deliverability, reputation, termination and recovery of grant.

3. ESCC and the external funder SELEP undertake a risk based assessment on a project by project basis following the submission of the full business cases. These are reported to the Lead Member for SMED and SELEP Accountability boards following an Independent Technical Evaluation of the project and the organisation.

## **5. Question from Laurie Holden, Burwash, East Sussex**

Pension Fund members are no doubt pleased to see that the East Sussex Pension Fund (ESPF) has gradually started to disinvest from some of the more controversial companies that have been in its portfolio, such as oil and armaments companies. This has been through the movement of funds to ESG (environmental, social and governance) entities Storebrand Global ESG Plus, WHEB Sustainability Fund and the Wellington Global Impact Fund. These constitute approximately 20% of the Fund's equity allocation. That means that the ESPF has 80% of its funds that do not take into consideration ESG factors. So clearly there is more work to be done before the ESPF can be said to adhere to its Statement of Responsible Investment Principles which states: "RI (Responsible Investment) is an approach to investing that aims to incorporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors into investment decisions, to better manage risk and to generate sustainable, long-term returns (according to Principles for Responsible Investment)?"

There are moves within the investment industry to take a serious response to companies that supply the Israeli military and/or are complicit in Israel's illegal settlement industry. This has come about because of the recent Human Rights Watch report which concluded that Israel is guilty of the crimes of both apartheid and persecution. The HRW report shows that these are crimes against humanity which "stand among the most odious crimes in international law." It calls for sanctions, travel bans, even prosecutions against "those credibly implicated in the crimes of persecution and apartheid...."

It is as a result of this report that the London CIV (Collective Investment Vehicle) has drawn up a list of its investments in companies that are complicit in Israel's crimes. London CIV is the asset pooling company involved with 32 London Local Authority pension schemes with £11.2 billion of assets.

The CIV has stated that it will "commit to engaging with investee companies" and has stated that it is prepared to use "escalation measures if required." This can mean divestment.

In the CIV's list are 17 companies that are in the East Sussex Pension Fund. Some of these are armaments companies which provide Israel with the means to bomb the Palestinian population. The Pension Fund has more than half a million pounds invested in one of these companies: Northrop Grumman. This company supplies the Israeli Air Force with the Longbow missile delivery system for its Apache helicopters and with laser weapon delivery systems for its fighter jets. So when Israel targets homes, schools and hospitals in blowing up and incinerating men, women, children and babies – it is only made possible by firms such as Northrop Grumman. And by

its investors. For the record, there are more than 20 companies that supply the Israeli military in the ESPF.

There are other recent developments on this issue. Norway's largest pension fund KLP – which manages £69 billion of assets – has just announced it has divested from 16 companies because of their links to Israel's illegal settlements economy.

Also, Lancaster City Council has recently passed a motion calling on Lancashire Pension Fund to divest from companies active in illegal Israeli settlements or that supply weapons to Israel.

Clearly there are other agencies that are taking this seriously. Will the ESPF, in conjunction with its associates, follow the lead of these organisations? Will the ESPF implement screening and due diligence procedures to pinpoint investments in companies that are complicit in Israel's violations of international law? Are you prepared to carry out “escalation measures if required” including divestment?

Will you adhere to the ESG principles that are stated in your Responsible Investment Principles?

The ESPF has, or is about to, take a position in the Baillie Gifford Global Alpha Growth Fund. There are no indications to suggest that it is an ESG fund. This fund follows the MSCI ACWI Index. This index has numerous armaments companies which supply the Israeli military such as Northrop Grumman, Honeywell, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Elbit and Thales. It also has oil companies such as Exxon Mobil and Chevron. Has the ESPF carried out due diligence procedures to ascertain whether this fund has incorporated ESG factors?

We are moving into a situation similar to the 1970s and 1980s where there were large moves to divest from companies complicit in South Africa's crimes of apartheid. The difference now is that people generally are more in tune with how their pension contributions are used. Hopefully the ESPF can work in the interests of its contributors and recipients on this issue and become on the right side of history.

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

The Pension Fund investment strategy is published on the Fund's [website](#) which explains the asset allocation of the portfolio, which includes a wide range of assets to diversify risk to protect our members' pensions. The Fund does not invest solely in shares. The 20% noted in the question is in relation to a decision to invest specifically in impact equity funds and the Fund's new smart beta passive fund. All investment managers have screens when structuring the underlying portfolios and have large responsible investment teams to carry out research in each underlying asset or company. The Fund invests its portfolio through investment managers and not as direct holdings. The Pension Committee papers from September 2021 can be found on the [Council's website](#) which discusses the ongoing implementation of its investment strategy into a resource efficient product and the Baillie Gifford Paris aligned fund, these changes are still being implemented and much of the exposure to companies relating to this question will drop out of the portfolio once complete. The Pension Committee has previously made a statement relating to occupied territories which can be found on its [website](#). Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) is taken into account in all investment decisions as outlined in the Statement of Responsible Investment Principles and the Fund carried out an impact assessment of the ESG capabilities of each of the Fund's investment managers in



July 2021, with the aim of considering these assessments when performing future stewardship or ESG activity and for future reference if considering future investment strategy changes. This impact assessment will be updated and reviewed annually to track where managers are making changes to improve the stewardship of the portfolios. The investment work plan in the Committee papers shows ESG work streams that are planned over the next 12 months.