EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 5 DECEMBER 2017 at 10.00 am

Present Councillors John Barnes MBE, Matthew Beaver, Colin Belsey, Nick Bennett, Bill Bentley, Phil Boorman, Bob Bowdler, Charles Clark, Martin Clarke, Godfrey Daniel, Philip Daniel, Angharad Davies, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Stuart Earl, Simon Elford, David Elkin, Nigel Enever, Michael Ensor (Chairman), Kathryn Field, Gerard Fox, Roy Galley, Keith Glazier, Carolyn Lambert, Tom Liddiard, Laurie Loe, Carl Maynard, Ruth O'Keeffe MBE, Sarah Osborne, Peter Pragnell (Vice Chairman), Pat Rodohan, Phil Scott, Jim Sheppard, 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

39 Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2017

39.1 RESOLVED – to confirm the minutes of the previous meeting of the County Council held on 17 October 2017 as a correct record subject to paragraph 31.6 being amended to read Ringmer Library rather than Lewes Library.

40 Apologies for absence

40.1 Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Tania Charman and Darren Grover.

41 Chairman's business

TREVOR MAY

41.1 The Chairman paid tribute to Trevor May, who had represented the Old Hastings and Mount Pleasant Division from 1997 to 2001, following his recent death. On behalf of the Council the Chairman offered condolences to Trevor's family and friends.

41.2 The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect for their former colleague Trevor May.

CHAIRMAN'S ACTIVITIES

41.3 The Chairman reported that he had attended a number of engagements since the last meeting including: the visit of guests from Blois at Lewes Town Hall, the Eastbourne Silver Band Concert of Remembrance, the Remembrance Day Parade in Lewes, the East Sussex Prayer Breakfast and the British Empire Medal investiture ceremony at Brighton Town Hall. The Vice Chairman also attended a number of events.

PRAYERS

41.4 The Chairman thanked the Reverend Steve Daughtery of Southover Church, Lewes for leading the prayers before the meeting.

PETITIONS

41.5 The Chairman informed the Council that immediately before the meeting the following petitions had been received:

Councillor Philip Daniel	- calling on the County Council not to close Ringmer Library
Councillor Godfrey Daniel	- calling on the County Council to replace the crumbling and dangerously uneven roadway, pavements and kerbs, and to enhance the street lighting in the area of York Gardens, Hastings
Councillor Lambert	- calling on the County Council to withdraw the Get a Grip campaign and issue a public apology
Councillor O'Keeffe	- calling on the County Council to install a pedestrian crossing on the Offham Road, Lewes
Councillors Daniel Shing and Stephen Shing	- calling on the County Council not to close Polegate and Willingdon Libraries
Councillor Shuttleworth	- calling on the County Council not to close Langney Library
Councillor Swansborough	- calling on the County Council not to close Willingdon Library
Councillor Tutt	- calling on the County Council to improve footways in St Anthony's ward

42 Questions from members of the public

42.1 Copies of the questions asked by Richard Moore from Lewes, Esme Needhan from Hastings, Hugh Dunkerley from Brighton, Anna Reggiani from Forest Row, Gabriel Carlyle from St Leonards on Sea, Arkady Johns from St Leonards on Sea, Arnold Simanowitz from Lewes, Dirk Campbell from Lewes, Fran Witt from Lewes, John McGowan from Lewes, Greg Lewis-Brown from Forest Row, Simon Lewis from Seaford, Jo Nye from Bexhill on Sea, Emma Lynch from Seaford, Layla Dyer from Lewes, Karen Wilkinson from the Parents Union, Stephen Keogh from Willingdon, Ella Lewis from Seaford, Judy Lewis from Lewes, Lorraine Heugh from Robertsbridge, Julie Ryan from Hastings, Felicity Bull from Lewes and Nick Swift from Forest Row and the answers from Councillor Stogdon (Chair of the Pension Committee), Councillor Standley (Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability) and Councillor Bentley (Lead Member for Communities and Safety) are attached to the minutes. Supplementary questions were asked and responded to.

43 Declarations of Interest

43.1 There were no declarations of interest

44 Petition

44.1 Ella Lewis (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.

44.2 The following motion was moved by Councillor Standley and seconded:

That the Council, whilst noting the petitioner's comments:

1. *Recognises the need for action to reduce avoidable absence from schools in East Sussex;*

2. *Agrees that the Get A Grip campaign successfully highlighted the concerns regarding attendance; and*

3. *Agrees that the Council continue to work with teachers and parents to improve attendance as part of the policies to improve educational attainment in all schools across the County.*

44.3 The following amendment was moved by Councillor Lambert and seconded:

Delete Councillor Standley's wording and replace it with:

Responsible parents are well aware of the need to ensure maximum school attendance by their children. We all want the best results from education for our children – they are our future.

Parents acknowledge the concerns of the County Council in wishing to highlight the importance of regular school attendance. However, the Get a Grip campaign has been detrimental in achieving this. Responsible parents feel under attack, and it is unlikely that those less committed to their children's education will be motivated by the campaign which is viewed by many people as patronising and aggressive in tone.

This Council resolves to request the Executive to:

- *pause the campaign*
- *acknowledge the concerns of large numbers of parents about the nature of the communications they have received from the Council*
- *establish a forum with volunteer parents and other appropriate stakeholders to find a more constructive way on engaging with this issue to enable the campaign to move forward on a constructive and positive basis that engages and motivates, rather than alienates, parents.*

44.4 The following amendment to Councillor Lambert's amendment was moved by Councillor Stephen Shing and seconded. The amendment was LOST:

Insert the following point at the end of Councillor Lambert's amendment:

- *Council should use its resources to work with the 5% of children missing school to help those vulnerable children to attend school*

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

FOR THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Philip Daniel, Field, Lambert, O'Keeffe, Osborne, Rodohan, Daniel Shing, Stephen Shing, Shuttleworth, Swansborough, Tutt, Ungar and Wallis

AGAINST THE AMENDMENT

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

ABSTENTIONS

Councillors Godfrey Daniel, Scott and Webb

44.5 A recorded vote was requested on the motion moved by Councillor Standley as follows:

That the Council, whilst noting the petitioner's comments:

1. *Recognises the need for action to reduce avoidable absence from schools in East Sussex;*

2. *Agrees that the Get A Grip campaign successfully highlighted the concerns regarding attendance; and*

3. *Agrees that the Council continue to work with teachers and parents to improve attendance as part of the policies to improve educational attainment in all schools across the County.*

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

FOR THE MOTION

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

AGAINST THE MOTION

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

ABSTENTIONS

Councillors Godfrey Daniel, O'Keeffe, Scott and Webb

45 Questions from County Councillors

ORAL QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

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

Questioner	Respondent	Subject
Councillor Philip Daniel	Councillor Simmons	Support for restoration of Lewes to Uckfield railway line in light of the Government's strategic vision for rail
Councillor Field	Councillor Glazier	Number of children in East Sussex living in absolute poverty and plan to tackle this issue
Councillor Ungar	Councillor Maynard	Plans to ensure continuity of care in the event of the closure of any care homes in the county
Councillor Webb	Councillor Maynard	Funding for adult social care arising from government settlement
Councillor Scott	Councillor Bennett	Plans for severe winter weather and provision of 'Hippo' bags in local areas
Councillor Belsey	Councillor Simmons	Impact of decision by ferry operator to continue service from Newhaven for a further 5 years
Councillor O'Keeffe	Councillor Elkin	Role of County Council in determining the policy of the District and Borough Councils in East Sussex regarding discretionary council tax rebate or relief
Councillor Stephen Shing	Councillor Bennett	Programme of dropped kerb installations
Councillor Lambert	Councillor Bennett	Policy for installation of electric charging points for vehicles in East Sussex
Councillor Daniel Shing	Councillor Bennett	Standard of work undertaken by highway contractor
Councillor Stephen Shing	Councillor Bennett	Cost of repair of potholes

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

45.2 Two written questions were received from Councillors Shuttleworth and Field for the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development and the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability. The questions and answers are attached to these minutes.

45.3 The Lead Members responded to supplementary questions

THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 12.30 pm

The reports referred to are included in the minute book

QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Question from Richard Moore, Lewes, East Sussex

Earlier this year the East Sussex Pension Committee amended its Investment Strategy Statement to recognise that "The Fund believes that climate change poses material risks to the Fund but that it also presents positive investment opportunities". What positive investment opportunities have the Committee and its fund managers identified to date?

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

The Pension Committee believes that the UBS Climate Aware World Equity fund (currently being considered among other opportunities) will provide a positive investment opportunity.

2. Question from Esme Needham, Hastings, East Sussex

On 31 October 2017, on the eve of this year's UN Climate Summit in Bonn, the world's leading global environmental authority, the UN Environment Programme, published its latest Emissions Gap report, in which it noted that there is still a large gap between the pledges made by governments to cut greenhouse gas emissions and the reductions scientists say are necessary to avoid dangerous levels of climate change. What note has the East Sussex Pension Committee and its Fund Managers taken of this report and its contents?

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

The Pension Committee is aware of climate issues and their potential to affect the Fund and there will be ongoing discussions with its investment managers on how they are considering this in their investment decisions.

3. Question from Hugh Dunkerley, Brighton

In a written answer to a question from a member of the public, submitted to the 17 October 2017 Full Council meeting, Councillor Stogdon asserted that: 'Simply disinvesting from a particular category or group of companies is likely to reduce the Fund's ability to secure the best realistic return over the long-term whilst keeping employer contributions as low as possible.' Does Councillor Stogdon, in his role as the chair of the East Sussex Pension Committee, believe that disinvesting the East Sussex Pension Fund from fossil fuel companies 'is likely to reduce the Fund's ability to secure the best realistic return over the long-term whilst keeping employer contributions as low as possible', and, if so, what analytic work (by Hymans Robertson or others) has he drawn upon to reach this conclusion?

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

The Pension Committee believes that disinvesting from a particular category or group of companies has the ability to increase the volatility of the Fund. An increase in volatility will impact on the contribution rates that employers in the Fund will be required to pay.

The Pension Committee believes climate change presents a financial risk to the future investment returns from the Fund. The Committee recognises that climate change issues can impact the Fund's returns and reputation. The impacts of climate change on the returns from the Fund in the future are unknown at this point. The Committee recognises that they need to allocate sufficient time and resource to monitor the possible risks and also identify any investment opportunities which may become available as a result.

4. Question from Anna Reggiani, Forest Row, East Sussex

Is the Pension Committee familiar with the work of Professor Benjamin Sovacool, Director of the Sussex Energy Group at the University of Sussex, which concludes that, while past energy transitions have usually been protracted affairs, owing to the scarcity of resources, the threat of climate change and vastly improved technological learning and innovation, the worldwide reliance on burning fossil fuels to create energy could, in principle, be phased out in a decade?

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

The Pension Committee welcomes research into this area. Work is continuing to increase the understanding of the Committee of the many complex interdependencies that a structured withdraw from burning fossil fuels will have on the Fund.

5. Question from Gabriel Carlyle, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex

In answer to a written question submitted by Arnold Simanowitz at 21 March 2017 Full Council meeting, Councillor Stogdon stated that the East Sussex Pension Fund engages with fossil fuel companies through the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF), which 'meet[s] with companies and participates in collaborative investor initiatives including filing and supporting relevant shareholder resolutions.' During the last two years, which fossil fuel companies has the LAPFF met with, what shareholder resolutions have they filed and / or supported at fossil fuel companies AGMs, and what have been the outcomes, if any, of these activities?

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

The LAPFF Annual Reports contain details of all the engagement activities that they undertake on behalf of members. These can be found along with more detailed reports on their activities on their website http://www.lapfforum.org. A recent historic shareholder victory that LAPFF have been involved with on climate risk disclosure is the 62% of shareholders that voted in favour of a climate change disclosure resolution at ExxonMobil. LAPFF has engaged with many 'fossil fuel' companies over the past two years.

In 2016, LAPFF member funds co-filed shareholder resolutions at Glencore, Anglo-American and Rio-Tinto on strategic resilience for 2015 and beyond. The resolutions were highlighted to members, as well as others such as to ExxonMobil for a report on the impacts of climate change policies and on two resolutions to Chevron; one for a climate change impact assessment and another to commit to increasing the total amount authorized for capital distributions to shareholders in light of the climate change related risks of stranded carbon assets.

There are a whole range of company outcomes, and it should be borne in mind that engagement is often long-term and should therefore be viewed over a longer time-frame than two years. The following are not comprehensive, but provide an example of some outcomes.

LAPFF has been engaging with Royal Dutch Shell and other energy companies about how they can move towards a low carbon future for several years. This included the successful 2015 resolution on reporting strategic resilience where the company agreed to increase transparency and engagement on climate change. As reported in early 2017, Shell, in divesting most of its oil sands interests in Canada, appears to be taking action to mitigate its exposure to climate risk. Chief Executive Ben van Beurden has been reported as saying that it was his intention to make Shell into a company of the future and that his industry risked losing public support without a move towards cleaner energy.

6. Question from Arkady Johns, St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex

Is the East Sussex Pension Committee aware of the recent decision by MediBank, Australia's largest private health insurer, to shed tens of millions of dollars in fossil-fuel investments because of the effects of climate change on human health?

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

The Pension Committee's fiduciary duty is to ensure it has sufficient funds available to pay pensions when they fall due. In light of that obligation, and in order to maximise investment return, the Fund has a diverse range of investments and does not restrict investment managers from choosing certain stocks taking into consideration that the Fund investment strategy is regularly monitored. It does not comment on the investment decisions of others.

7. Question from Arnold Simanowitz, Lewes, East Sussex

In his written answer to a question that I submitted to the 21 March 2017 Full Council meeting Councillor Stogdon noted that, as regards oil and gas companies 'an important engagement focus [for the East Sussex Pension Fund] is the restriction of capital expenditure on high cost resource extraction'. What, if any, examples can the East Sussex Pension Committee give of such engagement being successfully used (by the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum, for example) to restrict such wasteful capital expenditure by these companies?

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

The Pension Committee believes that an important first step is to understand to what extent the fossil fuel companies exposure to high cost resource extraction is. This is why LAPFF's support of the climate change disclosure resolution at ExxonMobil where 62% of shareholders voted in favour is so important.

As in the answer to question 5, Royal Dutch Shell withdrawing from Canadian oil sands, is one example of a company withdrawing from high cost resource assets. LAPFF is

able to focus particularly on capex in its one-on-one engagement with companies, for example at a recent meeting with OMV, an Austrian oil and gas company.

This is one aspect of LAPFF's support for a 'managed decline' of oil companies. Rather than companies investing in high cost resource extraction, LAPFF considers that additional cash-flow could be returned to investors as higher dividends. LAPFF therefore uses mechanisms such as shareholder resolutions to support this strategy. An example is the resolution to the 2016 Chevron AGM asking the Company to commit to increasing the total amount authorized for capital distributions to shareholders. This was viewed as a prudent use of investor capital in light of the climate change related risks of stranded carbon assets, in the context of the company having cut total capital distributions to shareholders in the previous year by over one quarter.

8. Question from Dirk Campbell, Lewes, East Sussex

Is the Pension Committee aware of the recent decision by forty Catholic institutions - including Germany's Bank for the Church and Caritas – to make commitments to Caritas, which has a balance sheet of €4.5 billion, has committed to divest from investments in coal, tar sands oil, and oil shale 'because it is both morally imperative and fiscally responsible'.

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

The Pension Committee's fiduciary duty is to ensure it has sufficient funds available to pay pensions when they fall due. In light of that obligation, and in order to maximise investment return, the Fund has a diverse range of investments and does not restrict investment managers from choosing certain stocks taking into consideration that the Fund investment strategy is regularly monitored. It does not comment on the investment decisions of others.

9. Question from Fran Witt, Lewes, East Sussex

Does the Pension Committee have an estimate as to how many of the East Sussex Pension Fund's 69,000 members are members of UNISON?

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

No. UNISON membership information is not required to be able to join the fund.

10. Question from John McGowan, Lewes, East Sussex

The Council's website states, 'Good reasons for missing school - there are none'. I appreciate that you are responding to pressures from central Government around attendance. However, alienating parents with a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach based on a blanket judgment of reasons for absence does not seem the best way to go about that. What advice would the Council give to parents whose child has a legitimate reason for missing school? What policy is applied in such circumstances, and how is it implemented?

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

The campaign is not aimed at parents of children who have a legitimate reason for missing school. We would advise all parents who have concerns around how their child's illness might impact on their education to speak to the school and discuss strategies to support them. The law states that parents must secure regular attendance for their children and schools will have attendance policies that reflect this. These will detail how they work with parents and the Local Authority to establish and maintain patterns of good attendance.

11. Question from Greg Lewis-Brown, Forest Row, East Sussex

At the 21 March 2017 Full Council meeting Councillor Stogdon explained that the East Sussex Pension Fund was "engaging" with fossil fuel companies through its membership of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum, and that the latter's approach is "to undertake robust engagement on aligning their business models with limiting climate change to a [two degrees Celsius] increase in global temperatures and to push for an orderly low carbon transition." What historical examples, if any, can the Committee or its Fund Managers provide of an entire industry completely transforming itself in the face of major challenges while the bulk of the individual (pre-transformation) companies continue to provide a decent return to investors?

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

The Pension Committee's believes that encouraging development of low carbon align business model across the entire oil industry is in the best interest of the Fund. The Fund does not comment on the investment performances and decisions of others. However, in the face of major challenges, the Fund delivered an absolute return of 20.3% over the twelve month period to 31 March 2017, outperforming its customized benchmark by 1.4%. Results are considered by the Committee on a quarterly basis.

12. Question from Simon Lewis, Seaford, East Sussex

In relation to the Get a Grip Campaign:

a) Was the local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) or any other representative health body consulted prior to implementing a policy of medical absences from school requiring evidence from a GP or hospital as currently stipulated on the 'Get a Grip' campaign website?

b) Did the consultation with the CCG (or other health body) identify any concerns with such a policy and what were they?

c) Were pressures on local health and GP services and the potential impact of this policy / campaign considered prior to implementation?

d) Has there been any consideration on how parents can obtain evidence from local health services in instances where appointments are unavailable, or where local health service policy prevents attendance e.g. symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting

e) Has the Council considered that requiring evidence for all medical absences contradicts the guidance on school attendance issued by the Department for Education which clearly states that 'Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. [...] Schools are

advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily.' If so, then what was the justification for diverging from government policy?

f) Was the 'Get a Grip' campaign subjected to either an equality impact assessment or any other form of risk assessment? What issues were identified and what steps have been taken to mitigate these?

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

All the medical advice that is used aligns with NHS guidelines and so there was no separate consultation with the CCGs. Attendance is the responsibility of the LA, not health. It is individual schools and not the County Council who require evidence for absences as it is schools who are responsible for authorising them. Where we are in legal proceedings with a parent, we may ask for evidence where they are citing mitigating circumstances. Schools have individual policies with regard to the evidence they require before they authorise an absence, many of these do have requirements for parents to show medical evidence. We would welcome the opportunity to explore matters of children's health, school attendance and education provision with the BMA on behalf of the Local Authority and schools. This would enable all parties to understand the interplay between the issues and perhaps create guidelines for practice on the respective roles of professionals with regard to decisions about need, provision and funding for children and young people.

ESCC has paid due regard to equality in its 'Get a Grip' campaign by explicitly stating in its publicity that the campaign does not target children and young people who are absent from school for legitimate long term illness or other conditions which may prevent them attending school. The analysis of data in relation to a range of education and other outcomes for children and young people in East Sussex, showed that there is a high proportion of children and young people with additional needs and children who are looked after who were persistently absent. We are continuing to monitor the data to better understand which groups have high absence rates, and to identify support for pupils so their absence rates can reduced.

13. Question from Jo Nye, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex

In light of the council's Get a Grip campaign, which is designed to improve attendance, I would like to know what action the council is taking to address attendance issues among children with SEND. Children on the autism spectrum, for example, are at high risk of missing out on education. In many cases, this is because the child is too anxious to attend school, often due to social exclusion and emotional issues in a mainstream setting. Autistic children are also more likely than their peers to be put on a reduced timetable or to be excluded from school as mainstream schools are unable to meet their needs (A report by the NAS found 17% of autistic children had been suspended from school, 48% of them 3 or more times). In other cases, parents choose to home educate their autistic children as no suitable local placement is available. It is clear that school attendance is a significant issue for children on the autism spectrum. I would like to know how many children with autism live in the ESCC area, how many appropriate specialist school placements are available for children with autism and anxiety, and also what social, emotional and mental health support is being provided to children with autism and anxiety to enable them to access education.

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

There are a very broad range of needs within the population of children on the autistic spectrum which could impact differently on their attendance, we hold the same ambitions in terms of attendance for all children. It is the legal responsibility of parents to ensure that their child attends and the responsibility of schools to work with parents to ensure regular attendance, or highlight cases where parents are not fulfilling their responsibilities to the Local Authority. We do not hold the number of children with ASD across ESCC area as the majority of these will thrive in their local mainstream school who are well equipped to meet their needs; only those with the most significant of needs will require specialist education and, therefore, identified to the Local Authority. We have supported the development of the special Free School programme in East Sussex, which will see over 130 new places for children with ASD created in the next few years. A range of support services are available, both through the Local Authority and Health, to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children with additional needs and ensure that they are able to attend school regularly. For example, the Communication, Learning and Autism Support Service (CLASS) help schools broaden their expertise for supporting children with ASD and the Teaching and Learning Provision Service support children experiencing mental health difficulties.

14. Question from Emma Lynch, Seaford, East Sussex

With regard to the Get a Grip campaign can you confirm:

a) Who signed off the 'Get a Grip' campaign at East Sussex County Council?

b) Who created it?

c) Before the campaign and leaflet was signed off, was there any quantifiable market research or focus group activity done to test out the campaign messages within it and the tone of voice used? If so, what were the findings?

d) Were any parents of primary school children in East Sussex part of the research / focus groups? Any secondary school parents?

e) Which councillors previewed the campaign? Who voted for it? Where there any objections raised by anybody?

f) How much has East Sussex County Council spent on the campaign to date – advertising, posters, leaflets including all the creative and printing costs?

g) How does the Council intend to measure and evaluate the campaign?

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

The campaign was signed off at all levels of the County Council and all councillors were made aware of the campaign before it was started. As lead member I was aware of and endorsed the strategy and campaign as had the lead member prior to me. A range of officers had input into the creation of the campaign which also included focus groups

with parents and young people to identify the best options to be taken forward. No objections were raised to the campaign. The total costs for the campaign, so far, have been just over £10k which is the equivalent cost of intervention programmes for 20 children and their families by our support services. In contrast this campaign has reached the families of over 60,000 children. We will evaluate the campaign through our local attendance data.

15. Question from Layla Dyer, Lewes, East Sussex

According to the most recent report from The Department for Education on 'The Link Between Absence and Attainment at KS2 and KS4' (published 2016), the children that make up the highest percentage of those that are persistently absent are those in receipt of Free School Meals, or those with a Special Educational Need and/or Disability. Is this also the case for East Sussex, and if so, in what way does the get a Grip campaign encourage increased attendance for those two categories.

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

Those children with FSM and SEN across East Sussex do have some of the worst levels of overall attendance. However, children who do not fall within these vulnerable groups within East Sussex also contribute to the county's poor attendance figures and, therefore, it was important that the campaign raised the issue for all parents. The campaign has provoked a serious debate around attendance across East Sussex, which the County Council has endeavored to do for a number of years through previous campaigns but received very limited or no response. During that time attendance rates have remained stubbornly low.

16. Question from Karen Wilkinson, The Parents Union

In relation to the Get a Grip Campaign I ask the Council to confirm:
a) whether officers and relevant Councillors were aware that there is no proven causal link between attendance and attainment before the campaign was launched;
b) whether the relevant policy officers and Councillors will meet with parents campaigners to discuss the evidence base for the policy;
c) whether the Council will please withdraw the campaign; and
d) whether the Council will write to schools in East Sussex reminding schools they cannot ask for medical evidence as a matter of course and must have genuine reason for doubting the veracity of the illness before doing so.

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

It is clear from the DfE research that those children whose attendance is poorer attain less well in school across all Key Stages. The campaign has been successful in achieving its aim of raising awareness of high levels of absence across East Sussex and the importance of securing regular attendance at school. Although the message is tough and the language is robust, we do not see the need to withdraw the campaign, especially if it results in more children attending more regularly. The council is not responsible for individual schools' attendance policies or their implementation but does work with them to ensure that they are compliant with statutory guidance and to help them to secure the best outcomes for their children and young people. The Supreme

Court ruling on attendance this year made it clear that parents must comply with school rules on regular attendance and our campaign will help schools enforce this.

17. Question from Stephen Keogh, Willingdon, East Sussex

How do you defend the proposed closure of Willingdon library in the face of cuts to education, concerns over literacy levels in young people and the potential discrimination of vulnerable members of our community?

Response by the Lead Member for Communities and Safety

Thank you very much for your question. I know that the concerns you have for Willingdon are shared in other parts of the county.

Our draft Libraries Strategy is proposed in a climate where, unfortunately, we are required to make significant savings from all of our services in order to meet our obligation as a council to deliver a balanced budget.

The decision to consult on a strategy which includes proposals for the closure of libraries is not one which I and my Cabinet colleagues have taken at all lightly. And it represents, I would say, a good example of the importance of our 'Stand Up for East Sussex' campaign, which calls on Government to give our county a fairer deal.

It is also why such a careful and thorough commissioning process has been undertaken – to make sure that we continue to meet our statutory duty for the service, but also that we use our limited resources ever more wisely to meet the particular needs of our residents.

We know that, on the whole, residents in East Sussex are becoming increasingly less dependent on our library buildings in the way that they once were. This is true here as it is elsewhere.

But this is not just a strategy concerned with the closure of libraries. It is a strategy which, through its vision, places and promotes literacy – a love of reading and learning – at the heart of fulfilling lives in East Sussex.

It proposes working more closely with other parts of the council and partners across the county, to use limited resources better together to deliver common aims and priorities.

It proposes doing more than before to make sure that residents and schools in some of our more deprived communities benefit directly from the library service, its expertise and its resources.

It is not suggested for a moment that there are not people who currently use Willingdon and the other libraries who will be affected by the proposals.

What has been set out, however, is that those people are a relatively small percentage of all library users in East Sussex and that there would remain an appropriate and high level of access to library buildings across the county.

In Willingdon there will remain good access to libraries in Eastbourne and in Hampden Park. The eLibrary increasingly offers services in modern ways that people expect, not

only to download eBooks but to browse our county-wide catalogue and 'click and collect' from a library. For those who cannot get to a library – whether they are frail, or disabled, or care for someone full-time – we do and would continue to offer our Home Library Service.

Officers have been and will continue to talk to local communities – through Town and Parish Councils and other bodies – to see whether there would be a viable alternative to preserve a library presence within those communities affected, if they wish to do so.

We await the outcome of the public consultation, which will be presented to Cabinet with the amended proposed Libraries Strategy in March next year. A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be presented to Cabinet at that time, to ensure our Public Sector Equality Duty is exercised at the time that any final decision is taken.

18. Question from Ella Lewis, Seaford, East Sussex

Has the council undertaken any research as to why East Sussex has lower attendance rates than much of the country? If so, what were the findings?
What approaches has the council previously tried for improving attendance?

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

There is no obvious reason or evidence as to why attendance in East Sussex is so poor. Previously, the council has circulated information on the importance of securing good attendance and what can be done to help; this has included leaflets and postcards sent home to parents, posters and articles in local media. This has had little or no impact on overall attendance. This is in addition to targeted work with a small sector of the population where attendance is very low.

19. Question from Judy Lewis, Lewes, East Sussex

Does ESCC agree that it would be good to engage and work *with* parents and carers of children who are frequently absent from school for reasons other than illness or for reasons where compassionate leave of absence is clearly needed. If so, what ways are being considered to engage with them?

If not, how realistic does ESCC think it is that the kind of approach reflected in the Get a Grip campaign will, in and of itself, engage people who may very well already be disaffected from the education system?

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

The county council always aims to work with parents and those children who have very poor levels of attendance will be allocated direct support from one of our central services. However, these do not account for all of the children whose attendance is poor – there are many children who would not meet the requirements for direct support, but whose attendance regularly drops below 95% and is, therefore, a cause for concern. It is important to remember that the Get A Grip campaign is just one arm of our revised

approach to improving attendance this year and central services have been using these wider approaches as ways of working with families in different ways across the board. It is important to remember that engaging with attendance legislation from a parental perspective is not a choice.

20. Question from Lorraine Heugh, Robertsbridge, East Sussex

ESCC's and iSEND's response to the Get a Grip campaign stated that it was not aimed at children who have medical conditions or who are genuinely unwell. Why then do many parents of SEND children, and those with medical and mental health conditions, receive letters and threats of court action. Is this a blanket policy to target all SEND and medical needs children?

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

The local authority has a statutory duty to support parents to fulfil their obligation to send their children to school. A differentiated approach will always be taken with parents whose children have SEN or mental health concerns, but if these do not work then legal interventions will be the last course of action to secure improvements. This is not a blanket policy but a legal duty. It also reflects our high aspirations for all children and young people for full participation in education.

21. Question from Julie Ryan, Hastings, East Sussex

Why is early intervention for children with SEN denied in many cases causing a longer term cost to the local authority and the child. In addition, why in situations when the placement and support is appropriate are decisions taken to reduce or remove the placement and or support which has a great impact on the child and family often resulting in the placement and/or the child failing. Secondly, why it is that East Sussex wishes sick children to attend school and spread infection which potentially creates a greater issue in relation to attendance and greater financial impact on families – rather than having a couple of days off work parents/carers require longer off as the infection has become more serious

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

Early intervention is encouraged as part of the approach to supporting children with SEN across all our schools. Support would only be amended if it has been successful in achieving progression for an individual child, at this stage we would want to support the child's journey to their next goal as an independent learner. Placements might be changed where they are not meeting individual needs. Where children have minor ailments (such as a cough or a cold) we do expect them to attend school; there is no evidence that schools struggle with the spread of infections in these cases.

22. Question from Felicity Bull, Lewes, East Sussex

Does ESCC have evidence or data that shows that parents are keeping children out of school for excessive periods? I submitted a freedom of information request and discovered that ESCC spent £10,497 on the Get a Grip Campaign. Do you really feel that such expenditure is justified when school budgets are being cut?

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

This reflects a very small percentage of the amount that is spent on addressing protracted poor attendance across our schools. Spending this figure on individual support would have reached just 20 children; this campaign has reached 63,000 children and their families and, therefore, represents very good value for money. Some parents are choosing not to send their children to school, for example by taking holidays, family visits etc in term time, and we have a statutory duty to intervene where this is the case. Ensuring your child goes to school is not an option, it is a legal requirement and this was reinforced by the Supreme Court this year. School budgets are tight and I welcome the extra funding for schools announced early this year by the Government.

23. Question from Nick Swift, Forest Row, East Sussex

Is the East Sussex Pension Committee aware of the recent open letter, signed by dozens of Church of England clergy, including five bishops, calling on the Church of England – and by implication, other institutions to immediately divest from ExxonMobil***?***

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

The Pension Committee is aware of climate issues and their potential to affect the Fund and there will be ongoing discussions with its investment managers on how they are considering this in their investment decisions. This provides an opportunity for the Fund to influence companies' environmental, human rights and other policies by positive use of shareholder power, a role the Committee takes very seriously

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

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

Since the start of the Conservative administration of the County Council following the County Council election in May 2017, please can the Leader of the Council state how many Council committee meetings and Lead Member meetings have been cancelled? Can he also provide a list of these together with the relevant dates.

Answer by the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

The list of cancelled Council Committee and Lead Member meetings from 5 May – 30 November 2017 is shown below.

The majority of cancelled meetings are Lead Member meetings where there has been no business. The approach to setting up these meetings is for Member Services to timetable regular meetings for the year ahead in advance, so that they are in Members' diaries, and cancel if there is a lack of business; rather than schedule meetings as required at short notice which can lead to difficulties in terms of availability. Member Services will keep under review the frequency of scheduled meetings in 2018/19 particularly for those meetings where there have been a number of cancellations.

Meeting	Number cancelled	Dates of cancelled meetings 2017
East Sussex Music Service Management Committee	1	9/6/2017
East Sussex Schools Forum	1	31/10/2017
Education Performance Panel	1	23/06/2017
Orbis Joint Committee	1	10/07/2017
Orbis Public Law Joint Committee	1	10/07/2017
Planning Committee	2	16/8, 13/9
Cabinet	1	14/11/2017
Lead Member for Adult Social Care & Health	5	15/6, 20/7, 28/9, 19/10, 23/11
Lead Member for Children & Families	5	19/6, 17/7, 26/9, 30/10, 20/11
Lead Member for Communities & Safety	2	24/10, 29/11
Lead Member for Economy	1	5/9/2017
Lead Member for Education & Inclusion, SEND	2	17/7, 20/11
Lead Member for Resources	2	27/6, 12/9
Lead Member for SMED	1	27/11/2017
Lead Member for Transport & Environment	1	20/11/2017

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

How many pupils with ISEND are being home educated? How does the figure compare with previous years? How many of these began at school and were removed later? Is there a pattern of withdrawals relating to phase of education at which pupils leave?

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

As there is no legal requirement for a parent to inform the Local Authority when they are electively home educating (EHE) their child, we do not know how many children who are EHE have SEN. Last academic year, we were aware of 1054 children who were EHE; this was up from 857 in 2015/16 and 763 in 2014/15. Of the 1054 children, 462 were 'new' cases (i.e. notified to the LA within that year) and 46 parents stated that the reason for EHE was 'unmet SEN'.

We do know the total number of children with EHCPS/Statements who are EHE – 53 (down from 61 in 2016/17 and 59 in 2014/15).

92% of the new cases last year were previously on roll of a school (7.8% had never attended a school prior to being EHE).

Over the last three years, the pattern has remained the same: the largest number of new cases is in KS2, then KS3, then KS1, then KS4. Last year the number in KS2 was significantly higher than the other key stages.