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Committee Manager - Jane Fulton (Ext 37611)

17 September 2021

CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Corporate Support Committee will be held in **The Council Chamber at the Arun Civic Centre, Maltravers Road, Littlehampton, BN17 5LF** on **Tuesday 28 September 2021 at 6.00 pm** and you are requested to attend.

Members: Councillors Dendle (Chair), Roberts (Vice-Chair), Bennett, Buckland, Clayden, Mrs Cooper, Huntley, Madeley, Oppler, Seex and Warr.

PLEASE NOTE: Subject to Covid-19 Risk Assessments members of the public are advised of the following:

Where public meetings are being held at the Arun Civic Centre, in order to best manage safe space available, members of the public are in the first instance asked to watch the meeting online via the Council's Committee pages – the meeting will be available to watch live via the internet **Watch: Arun District Council Corporate Support Committee_001**

a) Where a member of the public has registered a request to take part in Public Question Time, they will be invited to submit the question in advance of the meeting to be read out by an Officer. There will be limited public access to this meeting and admission for public speakers will be by ticket only, bookable when submitting questions. Attendees will be asked to sit in an allocated seat in the public gallery on a first come first served basis. Only one ticket will be available for per person.

b) It is recommended that all those attending take a lateral flow test prior to the meeting.

c) All those attending the meeting will be required to wear face coverings and maintain safe distancing when in the building/meeting room.

d) Members of the public must not attend any face to face meeting if they or a member of their household have Covid-19 symptoms.

Any members of the public wishing to address the Committee meeting during Public Question Time, will need to email Committees@arun.gov.uk by 5.15 pm on **Monday, 20 September 2021** in line with current Committee Meeting Procedure Rues. It will be at the Chief Executive's/Chair's discretion if any questions received after this deadline are considered.

For further information on the items to be discussed, please contact Committees@arun.gov.uk.

A G E N D A

1.   APOLOGIES

2.   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

     Members and Officers are invited to make any declaration of pecuniary, personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on this agenda, and are reminded that they should re-declare their interest before consideration of the items or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.

     Members and Officers should make their declaration by stating:

     a)   the item they have the interest in
     b)   whether it is a pecuniary/personal interest and/or prejudicial interest
     c)   the nature of the interest

3.   MINUTES   (Pages 1 - 8)

     The Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record the minutes of the corporate Support Committee held on 10 June 2021, as attached.

4.   ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIR OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASONS OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

5.   PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

     To receive questions from the public (for a period of up to 15 minutes)

6.   UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH THE COUNCIL'S DIGITAL   (Pages 9 - 16)
     STRATEGY [30 MINUTES]

     The Councils Five Year Digital Strategy was adopted by Full Council approximately 18 months ago and this report is an update on progress so far and provides insight into the next phase of the programme.

Since starting delivery of the programme, we have been faced by a worldwide pandemic and in response to the changing landscape have re-focused some areas of the programme.

This report is an information update and the Committee is being asked to note the progress of the programme and its future direction.

7. UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH THE COUNCIL'S CLOUD FIRST POLICY [20 MINUTES] (Pages 17 - 22)

The Council's Five-Year Information & Communications Technology (ICT) Services Strategy was adopted by Full Council approximately 2½ years ago and confirmed the adoption of a Cloud First Policy. This report is an update on progress so far and provides insight into the next phase of the programme.

This report is an information update, and the Committee are being asked to note the progress of the programme and its future direction.

8. CUSTOMER SERVICES ANNUAL UPDATE - 2020/2021 [30 MINUTES] (Pages 23 - 46)

This report provides Members with a brief overview of Customer Services. It specifically considers the operation of the services over the last financial year ending March 2021 and identifies emerging trends of operation comparing this with the operation over the previous 3-5 years.

The report looks in some detail at the numbers of customers contacting and accessing services offered by the council either by phone by coming into the two reception areas or making inquiries using the Council's website and webchat.

9. BUDGET 2022/23 - PROCESS [20 MINUTES] (Pages 47 - 50)

This report provides a summary of the Budget process for 2022/23 which the Committee is asked to note.

10. REVIEW OF THE ELECTIONS HELD ON 6 MAY 2021 [20 MINUTES] (Pages 51 - 74)

The report reviews the arrangements for the Elections which took place on 6 May 2021. It provides information, feedback and considers lessons learned.

OUTSIDE BODIES - FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS

There are no items for this meeting.

11.   WORK PROGRAMME   (Pages 75 - 76)

A copy of the Committee's Work Programme for the remainder of 2021/22 is attached for the Committee's information.

Note :   If Members have any detailed questions, they are reminded that they need to inform the Chair and relevant Director in advance of the meeting.

Note :   Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings – The District Council supports the principles of openness and transparency in its decision making and permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. This meeting may therefore be recorded, filmed or broadcast by video or audio, by third parties. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with guidelines agreed by the Council and as available via the following link PART 8 - CP - Section 5 Filming Photographic Protocol.pdf (arun.gov.uk).

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CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE

10 June 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Dendle (Chair), Roberts (Vice-Chair), Clayden, Mrs Cooper, Huntley, Madeley, Oppler, Gregory (Substitute for Bennett) and Jones (Substitute for Purchese).

Councillors Bower, Brooks, Cooper, Coster, Dixon, Edwards, Goodheart, Gunner, Oliver-Redgate and Pendleton were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

69.   WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to this first and virtual meeting of the Corporate Support Committee.

The Chair confirmed that this meeting was being held in accordance with the resolution made at the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 12 May 2021 (Minute 551) which continued Section 5 Part 5 of the Constitution (The Virtual Meeting Procedure Rules) and declared the use of Council powers, under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, and the general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, for making advisory decisions, as appropriate.

70.   APOLOGIES

Apologies for Absence had been received from Councillors Bennett and Purchese.

71.   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

72.   PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that there were no questions submitted for this meeting.

73.   START TIMES

The Committee

RESOLVED

That its start times for meetings during 2021-22 be 6.00 pm.

74.   TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE; MATTERS RESERVED; AND DELEGATION TO OFFICERS

The Interim Monitoring Officer presented his report briefly explaining the Committee's Terms of Reference which had been defined by Full Council. He drew Members' attention to the appendices attached to the report, in particular Appendix 2, the 'Reserved Matters', which Officers had reserved to the Committee. It was explained that this appendix listed a number of matters which were 'reserved' to the Committee, meaning that if a matter was not reserved, then the appropriate officer could make the decision by default. This was an opportunity for the Committee to highlight any request for change which would then be considered by the Constitution Working Party before being recommended onto Full Council to consider.

Questions were then invited from Members. In discussing the Committee's reserved matters, concern was expressed over Procurement and the value set for awarding contracts which was £100k. There were several Members who felt that this figure was too high and suggestions were made for the figure to be set to a lower level of £50k, especially as this proposed lower level had been discussed and agreed at some of the other Service Committees. It was highlighted that should this lower limit prove to be unworkable, then the Committee could revisit it and make further recommendations for change.

Following some discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Clayden and seconded by Councillor Roberts that the £100k limit be reduced to £50k.

As there was no debate on this amendment, it was put straight to the vote and declared CARRIED.

The Chairman then invited debate on the substantive recommendations. Following some discussion, it was agreed to revisit the procurement limit at the next meeting of the Committee to assess how this was working in reality and to decide if there was the need to increase the limit back up to a higher figure.

The Committee then

RESOLVED – That

(1)   The general Terms of Reference for Committees in Part 3, Paragraph 3 of the Constitution be noted and that the specific Terms of Reference for the Corporate Support Committee, as established by Full Council on 19 May 2021, as set out in Part 1 and Part 2 of Appendix 1 also be noted;

(2)   Suggestions for change in respect of the Terms of Reference be made through the Constitution Working Party for Full Council;

(3)   The schedule of Committee meetings as set out in the Calendar of meetings, provided as a background paper, be noted; and

(4)   The 'matters reserved' scheme whereby matters not reserved by Committee are delegated to Officers by default as set out in Appendix 2 are agreed, subject to the amendment made at the meeting in relation to Procurement in that the contract value for Procurement be revised from £100k to £50k.

75.   OFFICER DECISION IN RELATION TO THE RENEWAL OF A THREE-YEAR MICROSOFT LICENCE SUBSCRIPTION USING THE KENT COMMERCIAL SERVICES FRAMEWORK

The Chief Executive presented his report which explained the reasons behind him needing to take a decision under the Officer Scheme of Delegation to renew the Council's Microsoft Licence Subscription for three years using the Kent Commercial Services Framework. It was explained that the decision had been made in full consultation with the five Political Group Leaders and the Chair of this Committee.

A range of questions were asked by the Committee. It was interested to receive a breakdown in terms of costs and how much money was spent on window licences and how much was being spent on office products. The Head of Technology and Digital explained that the breakdown covered a mixture of things, the Council had Windows licences which covered PCs, there were Office products covering Word and Excel and there were database server licences which absorbed about a third of that cost. In addition to that there were corporate Microsoft licences that provided a whole range of other products such as mobile device management through Microsoft products so a third of this were for servers; database operating systems with the rest being down to computers or end point devices not just for products such as word. This made it very difficult to compare like with like.

Other queries related to the need to consider using alternative products, market testing and obtaining better value for money. Questions were asked as to how this might affect cost and disruption to services. A request was made to undertake market testing earlier when the licences would be up for renewal in three years' time. The Head of Technology and Digital explained Microsoft's pricing structure and that through the contract frameworks discounts were passed onto local government. Testing to assess what other frameworks were offering was and had been undertaken.

Having had the recommendation proposed by Councillor Dendle and seconded by Councillor Roberts,

The Committee

RESOLVED

That the decision taken by the Chief Executive to renew the Microsoft Licences for three years be ratified.

76.   JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE PANEL

The Chief Executive presented this report outlining some background in terms of how new arrangements had been established since 2015/16 to undertake informal consultation with staff; Human Resources and UNISON for the purpose of consultation to discuss both policy and operational issues.

This report, in view of the new Committee structure in operation, sought approval to continue with conducting informal and formal Unison Staff Consultation Panel meetings. It was confirmed that the Chair and Vice-Chair of this Committee would be members of the formal Unison Staff Consultation Panel and that instead of reports or policies being referred to Full Council for approval, they be reported direct to this Committee for consideration.

Having had the recommendations proposed by Councillor Dendle and seconded by Councillor Roberts,

The Committee

RESOLVED – That

(1)   The continuation of the informal and formal Unison Staff Consultation Panel meetings be supported in the existing format; and

(2)   The proposal that this Committee give approval of formal policies and reports being submitted to them from the formal Unison Staff Consultation Panel meetings also be supported.

77.   OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE - 23 MARCH 2021 - EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

The Chair introduced this item explaining that at Minute 509 [Equality and Diversity] there were three recommendations for this Committee to consider. The Group Head of Policy explained that the Overview Select Committee had requested a review to be undertaken of equality and diversity across the Council. That Committee had received a detailed report outlining what the Council had in place to create and sustain equality and diversity.

Having had her report fully debated by the Overview Select Committee it had agreed three recommendations which were:

(1)   that a consultant is appointed carry out an in-depth Equality and Diversity Survey and advise on a best practice action plan for the Council;

(2)   that the Group Head of Policy be given delegated powers to appoint this resource within the available budget; and

(3)   that the Council takes full account of Equalities and Diversity in the development of the new Corporate Plan 2022- 2027.

These three recommendations had been due to be reported to Cabinet on 17 May 2021 for consideration. As this meeting had been cancelled, under the new Committee structure, it was this Committee that was now responsible for this area of work. It was explained that the Council did not have an Officer that held this level of expertise to compile and conduct such an in-depth quality audit. A budget was in place to undertake this work, subject to this Committee approving delegated powers to the Group Head of Policy to appoint this resource.

In discussing the recommendations, concern was expressed over the potential cost for this work. The report had confirmed that a budget of £10,000 was available for this purpose. The Committee felt that £10k was excessive for such a project and that it should be reduced to £5k. If this then proved to be an impossible figure to work with, a further report could be brought back to the Committee and the budget revisited. This amendment was then formally proposed by Councillor Clayden and seconded by Councillor Madeley.

The Chief Executive provided reassurance in that the £10k budget in place for this project did not mean that the full budget would need to be spent. The matter had already been fully debated by the Overview Select Committee with that Committee agreeing to the three recommendations outlined. To reduce the budget to £5k could potentially cause a serous delay in procuring a consultant to move this important work forward, if this could not be achieved within a £5k budget, with the matter then having to be resubmitted to the Committee for further debate.

Questions were asked over the timing in place to conduct this review. As the Council was still recovering from the pandemic, was it the right time for it to take place now, or should the Council wait until it knew more about the shape of its workforce first.

Other Councillors expressed concern at the amendment put forward. This was because the need to produce a best practice action plan addressing equality and diversity was a matter of great importance and had been a project identified to progress for a long time. A budget of £10k had been approved, this did not mean that £10k had to be spent. There were concerns that Councillors were wanting to micro-manage the issues of the Council instead of allowing its professional Officers to proceed with important projects.

The Group Head of Policy responded to the points raised confirming that the £10k budget was to also cover any remedial action such as training for staff and Councillors that the survey might identify as an action for the Council to undertake.

The Committee Manager was asked to confirm the full wording of Councillor Clayden's amendment. This was to change the wording in recommendation (1) – additions have been shown in **bold** and deletions shown using ~~strikethrough.~~

Corporate Support Committee - 10.06.21

"~~That~~ a consultant is appointed to carry out an in-depth Equality and Diversity Survey, **at a cost of no more than £5k**, and advise on a best practice action plan for the Council **and if the results of that work cost more than £5k then this matter be brought back to the Committee for further consideration"**.

Councillors Clayden and Madeley confirmed their agreement to this wording.

Having undertaken a named vote on the amendment the result was split (4) voting for and (4) voting against. The Chairman then used his casting vote and the amendment was declared CARRIED.

The Chairman then returned to the substantive recommendations, as amended, and the Committee

RESOLVED - That

(1)   a consultant is appointed to carry out an in-depth Equality and Diversity Survey, at a cost of no more than £5k, and advise on a best practice action plan for the Council and if the results of that work cost more than £5k then this matter be brought back to the Committee for further consideration;

(2)   the Group Head of Policy be given delegated powers to appoint this resource within the available budget; and

(3)   the Council takes full account of Equalities and Diversity in the development of the new Corporate Plan 2022- 2027.

78.   WORK PROGRAMME

The Chief Executive introduced the Committee's draft Work Programme for 2021-22 confirming that this was work in progress.

The Chair outlined that the work programme provided the Committee with an opportunity to drive innovation and change within the Council and so it needed to think carefully about suggesting appropriate items. How the public contacted the Council was important whether this was using IT, the telephone or face to face communication. It was issues such as this that the Committee needed to think carefully about.

As a way forward, the Chair asked Councillors to have a think about future items and to email suggestions to him so that he could discuss these with Officers and at the Committee's next agenda prep meeting which was confirmed for 9 July 2021. He therefore asked for suggestions to be emailed to him by the end of June 2021.

A request was made to not forget the Equality and Diversity Policy debated earlier.

Having received no further suggestions, the Chair thanked Members for their input.

(The meeting concluded at 7.19 pm)

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ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF THE CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE
ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

SUBJECT:

Update on progress with the Council's Digital Strategy.

REPORT AUTHOR: Paul Symes, Head of Technology & Digital

DATE: 27 August 2021

EXTN: 01903 737585

PORTFOLIO AREA: Corporate Support

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Councils Five Year Digital Strategy was adopted by Full Council approximately 18 months ago and this report is an update on progress so far and provides insight into the next phase of the programme.

Since starting delivery of the programme, we have been faced by a worldwide pandemic and in response to the changing landscape have re-focused some areas of the programme.

This report is an information update and the Committee is being asked to note the progress of the programme and its future direction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

i.   The Corporate Support Committee is asked to endorse this report.

2.   PROPOSAL(S):

Since starting delivery of the digital programme, we have been faced by a worldwide pandemic and in response to the changing landscape have re-focused some areas of the programme.

DIGITAL PROGRAMME PROGRESS

Pandemic work

As we started moving towards a pandemic situation, we recognised having a Council that could work remotely would be key to continue delivering services.

We had the technical infrastructure in place for homeworking however this was not designed to support everyone working at home at the same time.

The IT teams built and deployed additional homeworking capacity, made changes to the core technical infrastructure, and improved remote connectivity.

We accelerated a number of internal projects to provide collaboration facilities, video conferencing, a remote back-office and virtual Council meetings.

A few weeks before lockdown we were ready to meet the challenge of operating the Council with remote working Officers and Councillors.

During the pandemic the Council saw a significant increase in workloads for many staff including running new government schemes to support customers and businesses, we extended the supported IT operating window allowing staff to work longer hours.

A recent survey indicated 98% of staff working at home felt they were as effective as when office based and 85% of services are now using more digital channels.

Having proved we were able to operate differently and deliver more services digitally, a programme called "Future Ways of Working' is now looking at how we can take this forward and maximise opportunities.

Website

Our main website receives around 860,000 visits a year and was identified as a key area in the digital strategy requiring improvement.

The Technology and Digital Team have been working for the last 8-9 months on building a brand-new website and this went live in July.

The new site has been designed around how and why customers contact us, usage trends, best practice and working with service colleagues across the council.

Throughout the pandemic more and more of our residents have been accessing our services online and telling us that in this digital age having a good website is just as important to them as having council buildings, if not more.

The team have been rewriting content specifically for the web as people read very differently online.

The content has been rewritten to make sure things are easier to find, content is clear and simple to read, we promote transactional services and improve usability for mobile device users (about 50% of our visitors).

We have removed departmental silos and 'council speak' so that the content is more logically structured and easier to use without the need to understand council services or structures.

With at least 1 in 5 people in the UK having a long-term illness, impairment, or disability and many more with a temporary disability we saw making digital services available for 'everyone' really important.

We have made improvements to the site reducing usability and accessibility issues and a recent independent audit shows we have reduced these from around 15,000 (on the old site) to about 600, work is ongoing to improve this further.

To ensure consistent branding and style across all of our digital channels we have introduced a corporate design guide based on Government Digital Services (GDS) standards and best practice.

Work still continues to re-write some of the lower priority content, and this should be completed by the end of the year.

We are also actively looking at customer feedback and user journeys to further improve usability of the site and take-up of digital services.

Webchat

With the pandemic lockdown reducing the number of ways customers can communicate with us we wanted to offer new digital alternatives and so accelerated our webchat project.

Webchat is now available 24/7 and customers are able to chat with a 'live' adviser during office hours and use an automated bot at other times.

We have eleven service lines available and in the last six months had around 1,300 chats, about a third of these being out of office hours.

The contact centre continues to work on adding new services and also monitoring of the automated chat history so that the knowledge base can be fine-tuned and improved.

Transactional services

We have around 90 interactive e-forms along with a number of service specific web portals where customers can access transactional services.

To maintain our digital branding and keep it consistent with the new website we have been worked on re-writing these and changing over the brand.

As part of the analysis of customer journeys we identified a number of areas where digital services could help users of our services.

The inhouse development team have been building new transactional services based on Government Digital Services (GDS) shared technologies and open source code.

The first service to be implemented was a planning notification service where customers can find new planning applications based around a chosen geographical location and signup for personalised weekly alerts.

The inhouse development team have adopted Government Digital Services (GDS) shared technologies and open source code as their preferred development platform and will continue building transactional services in this way.

Digital newsletters

With the pandemic upon us we felt it important to keep customers informed with what was happening in the district and accelerated our project to introduce an email newsletter.

This was developed by our inhouse development team again using Government Digital Services (GDS) shared technologies and open source code.

Customers are able to sign up to receive regular electronic newsletters. These are not glossy newsletters but contain factual news snippets allowing a user to maximise their time and drill down on items of interest.

We are also working on using this platform to provide SMS (text) messaging to service users and integrating it into some of our back-office systems.

This same technology has been used successful this year by the Elections Team to send out over 100,000 electronic annual canvas notifications, streamlining the process.

Surveys

Listening to our customers and understanding what they think is an important part of customer engagement, digital can offer new opportunities to widen that potential audience.

Until recently the council did not have a central survey package and relied upon individual services to source their own. We felt this extra step could create a barrier to undertaking more customer engagement and so have made available a corporate survey package.

This allows any service area to create their own electronic survey or poll quickly and easily then publish it to the web, send email links to it and use QR codes.

These are much easier for a customer to complete as they are able to access them via any web browser and then submit it back online. The results are stored in an electronic database making it easier and quicker for staff to carry out post survey analysis.

Video Conference Rooms

With new ways of working and the pandemic changing how we use our office space we needed to make sure our buildings were fit for the future and can be used more flexibly.

We have equipped a number of meetings rooms to enable multi-use and installed video conferencing facilities allowing them to be used for hybrid meetings, presentations, and webinars as well as still hosting normal roundtable meetings.

There are now ten multi-use meeting spaces and we are working on increasing these over the next few months.

Appointment bookings

Although our website aims to help as many customers as possible there will be occasions where they still need to talk to us or see someone.

During the pandemic we have seen a change across many sectors in service offerings with a reduction in drop-in services and an increase in electronic appoint booking.

We have also seen many sectors changing to video calling. Although this may not suite everyone there are segments of our customer base where this is preferable especially for those where travel may be difficult, have to isolate or they want to fit a meeting into their busy lives.

To make it as easy as possible for customers to book appoints, we have been working with the customer services team on an online booking system.

This will allow customers to book a video meeting, phone call or drop-in appointment online or through an officer brokered booking.

The project is still in the early stages and we hope to start offering online bookings in the near future.

A connected Arun

As part of a county wide government programme we have connect around twenty-five of our council buildings to new ultrafast gigabit capable fibre (very fast internet). We are now working on connecting over a hundred public assets across the district to the same ultrafast network.

We are also working with multiple telecom providers trying to encourage the rollout of ultrafast capable internet to more areas in the district.

Having ultrafast fibre across the district will help to future proof it for residents, businesses, and visitors. This could then open up new opportunities for things like the 'Internet of Things' (IoT), this is where you can connect physical objects such as smart devices to a network and providing real time information, monitoring and automation.

Work is underway to survey the district for mobile network connection strengths and to identify areas with poor connections or 'not spots', this information will be useful for potential utility providers when considering new capability in the district.

FUTURE DIRECTION & WORK

We need to finish off some of the things we have already started like the low priority web pages, flexible meeting spaces and online appointment bookings.

Having looked at user journeys and how customers access services we no longer feel a 'My Arun' central portal will deliver significant benefits to the customer. We know there is not a demand from customers for this, having run a 'My Arun' promotion on our website for almost 12 months we did not have a single person want to use that service.

In some respects, making a customer sign up for a 'My Arun' account before they can access services would add an extra hurdle, which is in conflict with our digital strategy that says we want to provide frictionless services to encourage greater take-up.

Developing a 'My Arun' would also involve significant expenditure and development time and so we are looking to drop this in favour of building more interactive 'frictionless' digital services using Government Digital Services (GDS) shared technologies and open source code.

To ensure we target our development resources to areas that can provide the biggest improvement for customers and allow them to do more online we will carry out further research and journey mapping before creating new services.

As our new website beds-in and we deliver more interactive services we will also undertake work to measure changes in digital take-up.

Some of our programme is dependent on third parties particularly telecom providers and we will actively work with them to encourage works to progress in these areas.

Outside of the digital programme we will continue to actively work with our internal service colleagues and encourage the adoption of new and improved digital services and ensure they fit with our overall digital vision.

Hopefully this update gives you a good feel for the progress being made with the digital strategy and how we have responded to the changing landscape of the pandemic and customer needs.

We are now looking to build on the work already completed by the Digital and Technology Team and our service colleagues and continue delivering improved digital offerings for our customers.

3. OPTIONS:

The Corporate Support Committee and being asked to note this report.

4. CONSULTATION:		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	**YES**	**NO**
Relevant Town/Parish Council		X
Relevant District Ward Councillors		X
Other groups/persons (please specify)		
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	**YES**	**NO**
Financial		X
Legal		X
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		X
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		X
Sustainability		X
Asset Management/Property/Land		X
Technology		X
Other (please explain)		X

6. IMPLICATIONS:

None

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

The Corporate Support Committee and being asked to note this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Arun District Council Digital Strategy 2020 – 2025 – to view the strategy – please click on this link:

Digital Strategy

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ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF
THE CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE
ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

SUBJECT:

Update on progress with the Council's Cloud First Policy.

REPORT AUTHOR: Nigel Quinlan, ICT & Digital Manager

DATE: 31 August 2021

EXTN: 01903 737809

PORTFOLIO AREA: Corporate Support

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Council's Five-Year Information & Communications Technology (ICT) Services Strategy was adopted by Full Council approximately 2½ years ago and confirmed the adoption of a Cloud First Policy. This report is an update on progress so far and provides insight into the next phase of the programme.

This report is an information update, and the Committee are being asked to note the progress of the programme and its future direction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Corporate Support Committee is being asked to endorse this report.

1.   BACKGROUND:

CLOUD FIRST PROGRESS

a)   Hosted Solutions
  i.   Since the adoption of the Cloud First Policy, the team initially concentrated its efforts on migrating a number of our major line-of-business applications to hosted solutions. These opportunities have been taken primarily based on a system's procurement life cycle or the system's failure to meet the needs of the service.

ii.   Currently the following systems have been migrated to a hosted service: –

- Committee Services – Civica (Modern.Gov)

- Revenues & Benefits – NEC Software Solutions

- Environmental Health - Idox (Tascomi)

- Geographical Information System – Cad Corp (Web Map)

- Legal Services – The Access Group (DPS Spitfire)

- Parking Services – Chipside Limited

iii.   Some of the benefits from these migrations are the reduction in on-premise hardware and storage requirements. Along with the shifting of responsibility for patching, backing-up & upgrading these systems to the supplier and improved Business Continuity.

iv.   To assist in this process, we have also developed an ICT Cloud Security Questionnaire to ensure that, when hosted solutions are being considered, all aspects of the hosted system are evaluated.

b)   Cloud Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) Solution

v.   Having established the process for migrating systems to a hosted solution, we then turned our attention to reviewing those systems with no hosted option and establishing a Cloud Tenancy they could be migrated to.

vi.   We reviewed the major players in this arena taking into consideration: security, geographical location, system availability / performance, business continuity, sustainability, and value for money.

vii.   We established there was very little to choose between them, however we were able to leverage our existing Microsoft license agreement to secure funding of £50k to assist in planning, designing, and creating a Microsoft Azure Cloud Tenancy along with an 85% discount on Azure Cloud training for staff.

viii.   It was agreed to take up this offer and create an Azure Cloud Tenancy as a proof of concept to ensure we could achieve the required levels of security and performance whilst establishing the real costs.

ix.   This initial phase has now been completed having created both a primary and secondary site to enable business continuity and we are now running 12 servers and 10 virtual PCs live in the environment. We have been monitoring these closely and also commissioned a security vulnerability test and the results have been very positive.

x.   There are a number of benefits we are already harnessing from this Azure Cloud Tenancy: -

- Increased agility & flexibility to deploy solutions - this has been evident as part of the inhouse development team's work on new transactional services such as the planning notification service which have been deployed on this technology.

- Only paying for what you use - as part of the initial deployment we have already created policies to shutdown systems when they are not required such as overnight.

- Security built-in - as part of the initial build we have been able to ensure IT security is front and centre in the on-boarding process ensuring the safety of the Council's and its customers' data.

- Improved Business Continuity - by ensuring the tenancy included a secondary site we can identify those systems and services that are critical to the Council and ensure they are protected at the secondary site as part of the disaster recovery plan.

- Improved sustainability - the current estimates show a minimum 40% reduction in carbon emissions for those systems running in our azure tenancy compared to running in our own data centre

xi.   Currently the monthly costs for this initial deployment of Arun's Azure Tenancy is £1.5k per month and has already been identified in this year's ICT revenue budget.

xii.   On-going costs of this Cloud First Policy will be self-financing and, in conjunction with Finance, we have already identified reductions in both the infrastructure refresh, and annual maintenance budgets, along with future cost avoidance to achieve this.

xiii.   It is also anticipated that once the transition of all identified systems and solutions has been completed, we will be able to demonstrate an on-going reduction in costs to the Council.

FUTURE DIRECTION & WORK

c)   **Hosted Solutions**

xiv.   We will continue to identify line of business applications that can be migrated to hosted solutions and we have already identified the following 4 systems to be migrated during the next 18 months: -

-     Finance – Advanced (E5)

-     ICT Helpdesk – Richmond (ServiceDesk)

-     Housing – Civica (Cx)

-     Telephony & Contact Centre – Unknown

d)   **Cloud Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) Solution**

xv.   Firstly, before we can migrate any large line of business applications to Azure we will need to procure an Azure ExpressRoute connection. This is a connection that extends Arun's on-premise networks into the Azure Tenancy and will create a fast and reliable connection to Azure from the Internal Arun network ensuring no loss of performance for the applications.

xvi.   At the same time, we will begin creating and testing our disaster recovery procedures for the Azure tenancy at the secondary site and configure those critical systems identified.

xvii.   Once these tasks have been completed, we will begin the next phase of migration. 30 servers have already been identified as candidates for migration into our Azure tenancy including a number of major line of business applications. The migration of these servers would be carried out as mini projects with servers being grouped together by application and we anticipate these to be completed over the next 12-18 months.

xviii.   We will also be identifying those servers in Azure that we can commit to a 3-year subscription to leverage further server cost reductions of between 30% - 50%.

e)   On-Premise Consolidation

xix.   Whilst we continue to consolidate our Cloud First Policy, we will begin to de-commission some of our on-premise infrastructure as the demand reduces and workloads are redirected.

xx.   Our first target will be to remove our equipment from the WSCC Power Place Data Centre by July 2022. This will create some of the revenue savings we have already identified with Finance, but achieving this target date will be dependent on both significant success with the migration of already identified systems and an alternative Disaster Recovery solution to be in place for any remaining on-premise systems.

xxi.   Once all these works are completed, we estimate that we will have reduced the on-premise virtual machine numbers from 165 to 35, a reduction of 79%.

Hopefully, this update gives you a greater insight into the progress being made with the Cloud First Policy and how this will enable us to create a more sustainable ICT Infrastructure. This will be required to deliver against our customers' expectations and their greater reliance on digital solutions over the coming years.

2. PROPOSAL

That Corporate Support Committee note the progress made on this project.

3.   OPTIONS:

This is an update report and does not contain any options.

4.   CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	**YES**	**NO**
Relevant Town/Parish Council		X
Relevant District Ward Councillors		X

Other groups/persons (please specify)		X
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: **(Explain in more detail at 6 below)**	**YES**	**NO**
Financial	X	
Legal		X
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		X
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		X
Sustainability	X	
Asset Management/Property/Land		X
Technology		X
Other (please explain)		X

6. IMPLICATIONS:

Financial – the implications are the move away from the current infrastructure refresh cycle to a subscription-based revenue model, however this change is self-financing.

Sustainability – As we move to a Cloud First Policy the current estimates show a minimum 40% reduction in carbon emissions compared to our on-premise environment.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

The Corporate Support Committee are being asked to note this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Information & Communications Technology (ICT) Service Strategy 2019-2023

Service Strategy

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ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF COPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE
ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

SUBJECT: Customer Services Annual Update – 2020/2021

REPORT AUTHOR: Lisa Emmens – Customer Services Manager
DATE: August 2021
EXTN: 37465
PORTFOLIO AREA: Neighbourhood Group, Customer Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides Members with a brief overview of Customer Services. It specifically considers the operation of the services over the last financial year ending March 2021 and identifies emerging trends of operation comparing this with the operation over the previous 3-5 years.

The report looks in some detail at the numbers of customers contacting and accessing services offered by the council either by phone by coming into the two reception areas or making inquiries using the Council's website and webchat.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is requested to:

(1) Endorse the report acknowledging the work of the Customer Services Team and implementation of the digital improvements; and

(2) To record its thanks to the Customer Services Team for ensuring that customers continued to receive a high level of service during the Pandemic.

1. BACKGROUND:

1.1 Arun District Council delivers a wide range of services, from waste and recycling collection impacting all resident, to much more specialist services which may affect a smaller number of residents, of equal importance, and may be to the more vulnerable members of the community. Services are provided to residents, businesses and visitors who make different demands, but all will require a responsive service that delivers consistently and aim to 'get it right first time'.

1.2 Arun Direct (AD) was set up in 2006 to respond to the telephone inquiries made to the Council becoming a focal point for the customer. This began with the 2 services growing today to 10 services within Arun Direct and incorporating face to face enquiries both at Littlehampton and Bognor receptions; the service comes under the banner of Customer Services within the Neighbourhood Group.

1.3 The following services are dealt with by Customer Services who will aim to deal with the customer inquiry at the first point of contact. The services are listed below:

• Cleansing

• Environmental Health

• Revenues

• Benefits

• Planning

• Building Control

• Elections

• Car Parks

  Housing Support

• General inquiries & Switchboard

1.4 Switchboard calls is a 'sign posting' service which directs external calls to the organisation. More in-depth enquiries are passed to the general enquiries line managed by AD.

2.   COVID-19 Global Pandemic

2.1 In March 2020 due to the Pandemic we closed our face to face operation in line with Government Guidelines forcing all of us to work from home. Our telephony system had to be recalibrated to enable the team to work from home and initially there was a lot of work arounds , in order to handle telephone enquiries effectively and for almost 12 months we were unable to obtain system reporting, relying on the team to provide manual statistical information daily to the Management Team.

2.2 Since March 2020, most of our team have been working from home.

2.3 In August 2020 we introduced a system within our reception areas to respond to customers still attending the building and signpost our customers to use our alternative contact channels. With the exception of Homelessness customers who are seen by the Housing Team as a priority.

2.4 Our face to face customers have been required to use different channels to contact us and we worked closely with back office teams, for parking services, to put new ways of working in place in order to deliver a seamless service to our customers.

2.5 Our website is still the most preferred method for our customers to obtain Council information. The figures for our customers using the website during the pandemic remain steady, however there is a significant decrease in customers using our planning pages, due to the building trade being significantly impacted due to Covid.

2.6 We introduced webchat in August 2020. This provides another–channel for our customers to contact us and provides auto answers outside office hours.

2.7 Tascomi, the Environmental Health Portal available on our website, has seen an increase in use during the past year. This system allows customers to log queries and questions directly on to the Environmental Health System.

2.8 We have seen an increase in customers contacting us via email and we deal with these emails within 24 hours Monday to Friday.

2.9 The majority of our customers who required parking permits and visitor books previously attended Bognor Town Hall and during the pandemic we changed the procedures, requiring customers to contact us via email or phone. The new process has worked successfully and will continue in the future.

2.10 We will continue to respond to our customer who contact us via telephone from home. A new appointment system is being implemented later this year to allow customers who need to access Council Services face to face. They will be able to make a timed appointment to visit our Council buildings, for some Services in a phased approach.

3.   Review of Service

3.1 – Telephony
3.1.1 Customer Services dealt with 174,104 calls during 2020/2021. This is compared to 154,458 calls during 2019/2020, however in 2019/2020 up to 22 March we also dealt with 55,594 customers face to face.

3.1.2 During 2020/21 we also dealt with 6723 emails, 3799 webchats from implementation date of August 2020. This is compared to 3838 emails in 2019/2020.

3.1.3 This demonstrates customers are contacting us using different channels

3.1.4 Our volumes for Council Tax and Business rates have seen a significant increase in 2020/21, along with Benefits, Housing Support and Car Parks. Whereas significant decreases are seen in Planning, Building Control and Elections.

3.1.5 Annual billing – March each year Revenues team send out 80,000 Council Tax bills and this has a significant increase on call volumes during the month, with volumes reaching 1000 calls a day at times.

3.1.6 Local Elections and any General Election has seen an increase in call volumes, with the telephony team working the same hours as the opening times of the polling stations to give additional support to our presiding officers and poll clerks.

Appendix 1 - provides further information

3.2 - Come in

3.2.1 Customer Services have provided support for our customers who come in, both at the Civic Centre and Bognor Town Hall.

3.2.2 Previously Civic Centre customers visited the Main Reception for all General Enquiries and Appointments. We also operated a separate Housing Support Desk to support Housing related customers

3.2.3 At Bognor Regis Town Hall all customers were handled under the General Enquiries tab, this includes all Housing related enquiries as well.

3.2.4 Due to the Pandemic all our customers are have been dealt with via telephone, email, or webchat. Housing continued to see customers who are homeless face to face.

Appendix 2 - provides further information

3.3 - Website

3.3.1 The Website continues to support our other methods of contact. There has been a change in usage over the past year, with a decrease in our Planning customers using our website and an increase in our Council Tax and Business Rates customers using this method of contact.

3.3.2 The sharp increase is due to our customers seeking information and support for various grants the Council has provided during the Pandemic, for example Business Grants.

3.3.3 A new style website has been introduced in July 2021 and Customer Services has been integral to assisting with the layout of the website for ease of customers use.

Appendix 4 - provides further information

3.4 - Webchat and Emails

We have also implemented a new webchat service and continue to support customers via our e-mail service to allow customers to seek support through alternative methods. In 2020/2021 we supported 6,723 customers via E-mail & the Environmental Health Tascomi Portal and an additional 3,799 via our Webchat.

Appendix 3 - provides further information

3.5 - Overall

In five years from 2016-2021 customer services have deal with 1,018,259 customers both coming in to talk to us and via the telephone.

Appendix 5 - provides further information

4.0 - Customer Services Strategy

4.1 Before the pandemic, we had started to work on the Customer Service Strategy. We held a very successful workshop in November 2019 where our team came up with some great ideas, some of which we were able to implement as immediate changes to our procedures.

4.2 Our Customer Service Strategy was adopted by Cabinet earlier this year, this includes a new customer charter, where customers can clearly see what they can expect from us as a council and in return what we expect from them.

4.3 Since the adoption of the Strategy we have made it available on our website for our customers, we have also set to work on promoting it throughout the business.

4.4 A couple of small Teams have been set up to look at this feedback and create bitesize workshops tailor made and service area specific. We hope these workshops will assist in improving the customer journey and the business working together as a whole for the same goal.

2. PROPOSAL(S):
The Corporate Support Committee and being asked to note this report.

3. OPTIONS:
The Corporate Support Committee and being asked to note this report.

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	**YES**	**NO**
Relevant Town/Parish Council		No
Relevant District Ward Councillors		No
Other groups/persons (please specify)		
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	**YES**	**NO**
Financial		No
Legal		No
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		No
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		No
Sustainability		No
Asset Management/Property/Land		No
Technology		No

Other (please explain)		No

6. IMPLICATIONS:

None

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

The Corporate Support Committee is asked to note this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

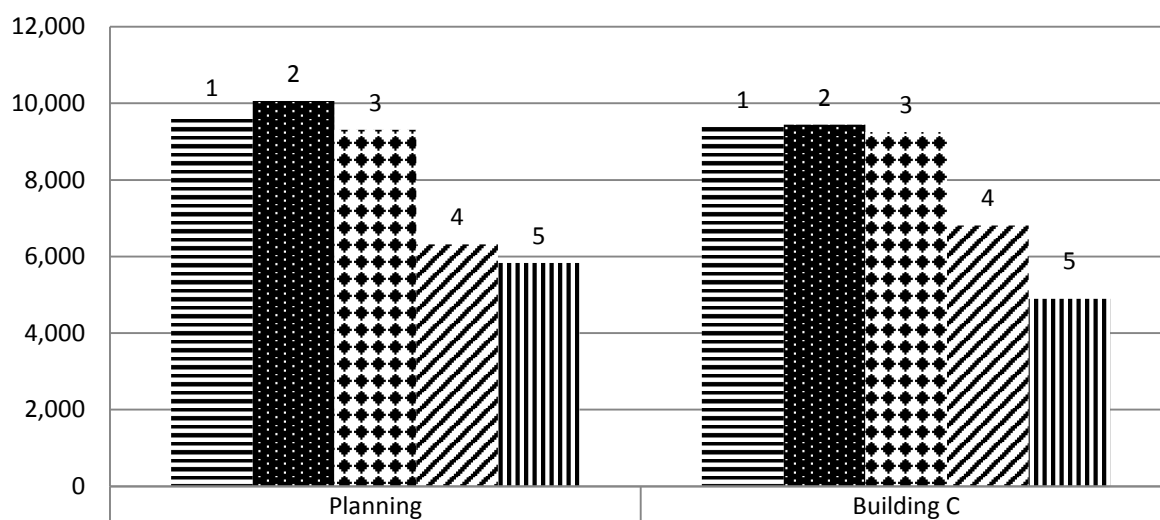Arun District Council Customer Services Strategy 2021-26

Arun District Council Telephony Figures 2016 - 2021

Overall Call Volume 2016 - 2021

	Total Call Volumes
1)2016/2017	178,054
2)2017/2018	170,726
3)2018/2019	178,153
4)2019/2020	154,458
5)2020/2021	174,104
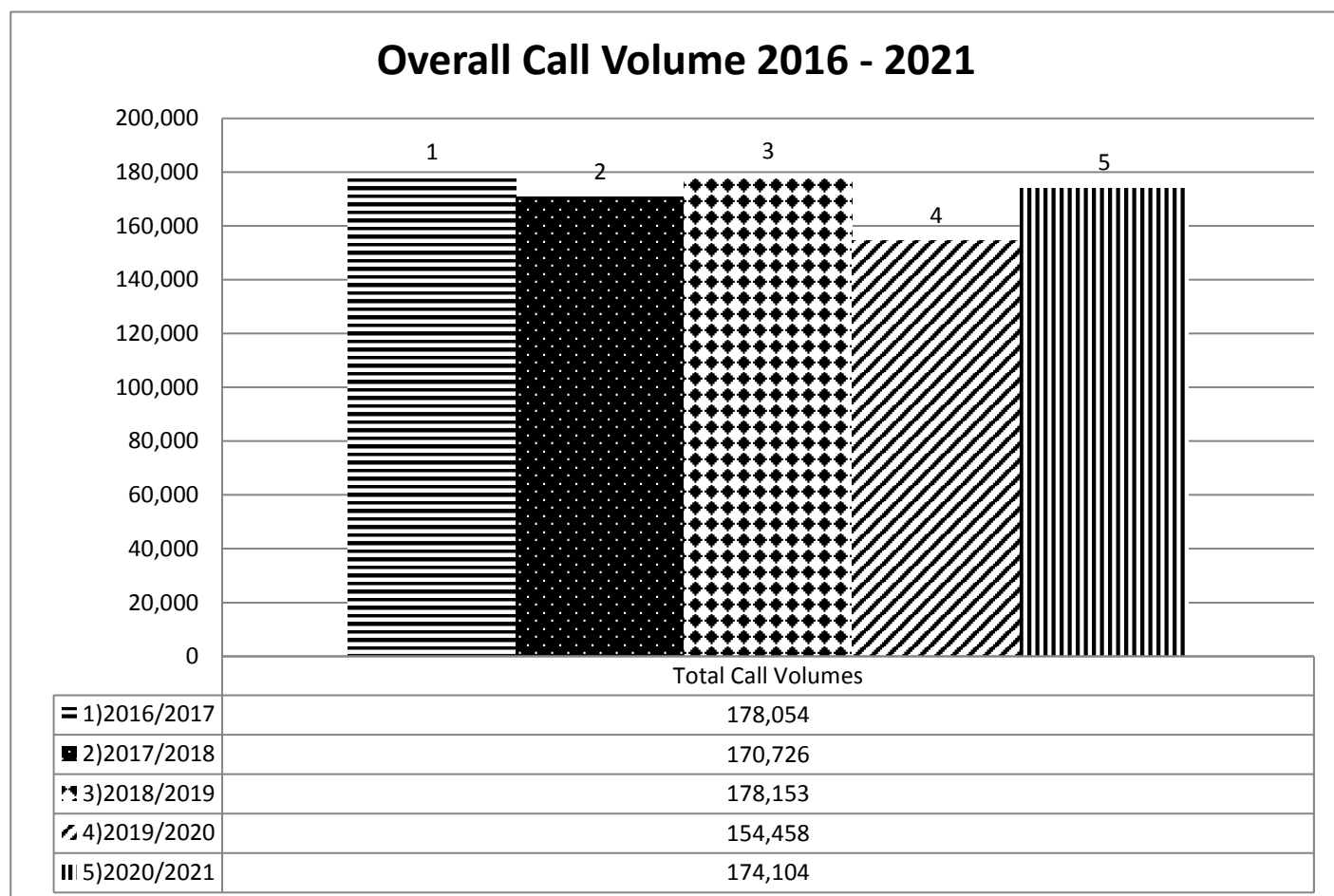
Planning & Building Control Total Volumes 2016 - 2021

	Planning	Building C
≡ 1) 2016/2017	9,694	9,389
▦ 2) 2017/2018	10,064	9,442
⚬ 3) 2018/2019	9,311	9,252
◿ 4) 2019/2020	6,321	6,810
‖ 5) 2020/2021	5,836	4,893

General Enquiries & Elections Total Call Volumes 2016 - 2021

	General Enquiries	Elections
≡ 1) 2016/2017	2,444	12,010
▦ 2)2017/2018	1,293	8,112
▯ 3) 2018/2019	959	9,798
◿ 4) 2019/ 2020	2,801	7,218
‖ 5) 2020/ 2021	3,372	3,415
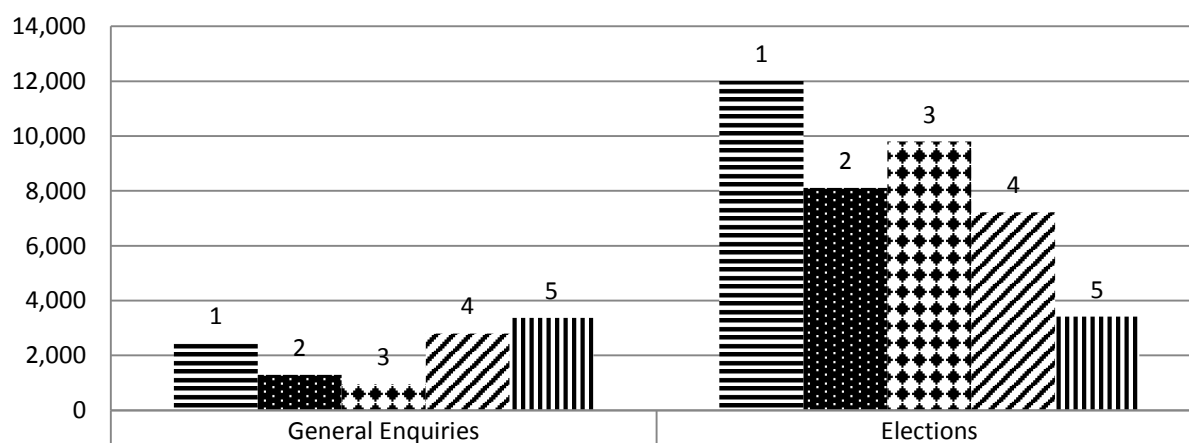
Switchboard & Revenues Total Call Volumes 2016 - 2021

	Switchboard	Revs
1) 2016/2017	55,834	40,969
2) 2017/2018	57,391	41,713
3) 2018/2019	59,316	43,121
4) 2019/ 2020	53,296	37,453
5) 2020/ 2021	54,898	47,110
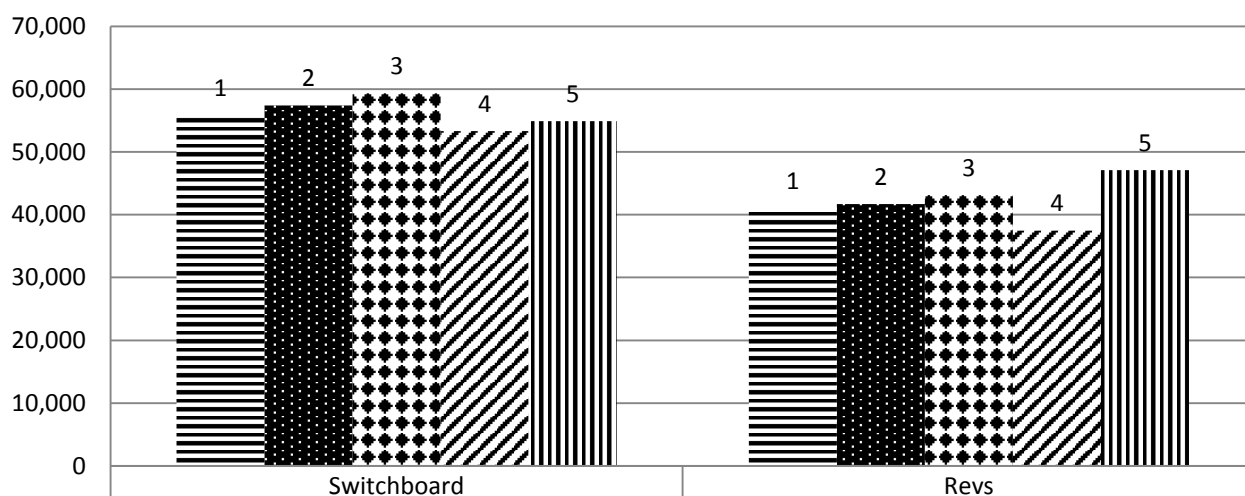
Car Parks & Environmental Health Total Call Volumes 2016 - 2021

	Car Parks	Environmental Health
1) 2016/2017	2,607	11,405
2) 2017/2018	5,770	11,594
3) 2018/2019	4,354	11,767
4) 2019/ 2020	3,360	7,218
5) 2020/ 2021	5,146	5,852
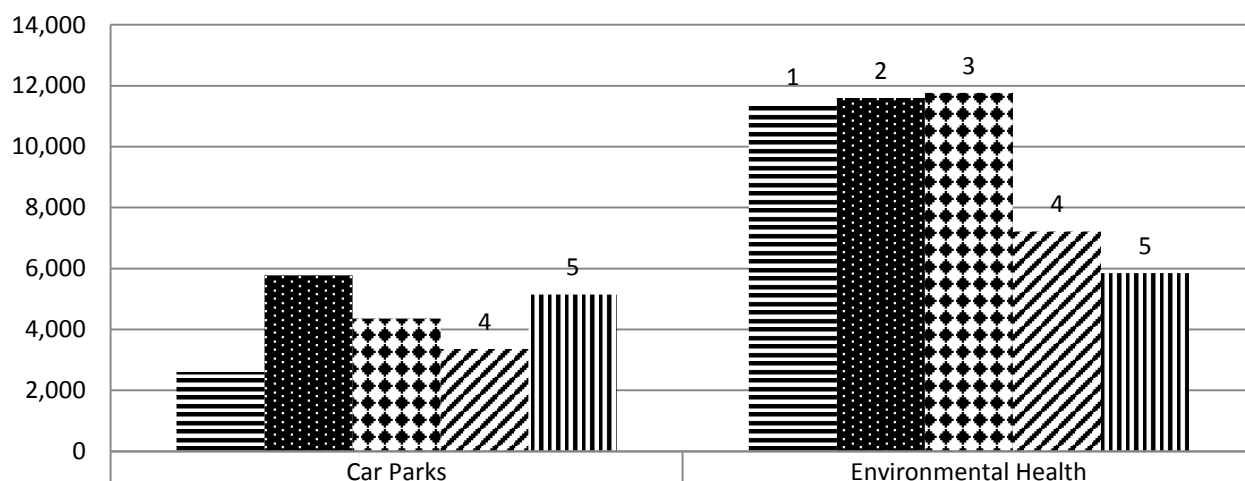
Benefits & Cleansing Total Call Volumes 2016 - 2021
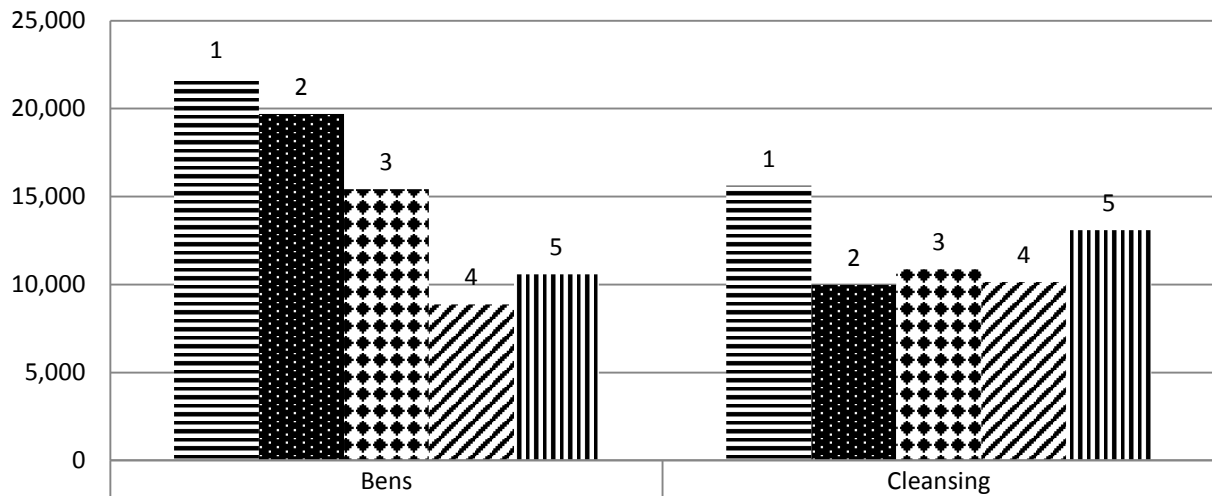
	Bens	Cleansing
≡ 1) 2016/2017	21,788	15,611
▦ 2) 2017/2018	19,693	9,977
⊠ 3) 2018/2019	15,416	10,863
⁄ 4) 2019/ 2020	8,875	10,143
‖ 5) 2020/ 2021	10,570	13,098

Housing Support Total Call Volumes 2014 - 2019
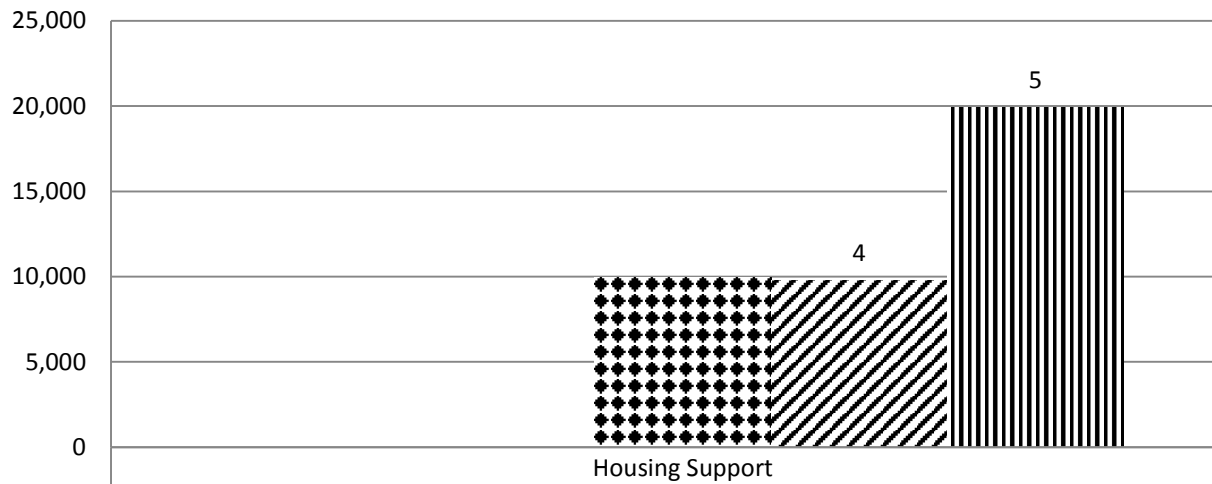
	Housing Support
≡ 1) 2016/2017	0
▦ 2) 2017/2018	0
⊳ 3) 2018/2019	9,957
⁄ 4) 2019/ 2020	9,784
‖ 5) 2020/ 2021	19,914

1. Overall calls are lower for the 2019/ 2020 year due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic requiring us to modify our working arrangements without a sufficient alternative phone system in place. New working arrangements were installed in April 2020 to prevent inaccuracies going forward.
2. Planning & Building Control calls have continued to decrease over the last five years. These are significantly lower in the 2020/ 2021 year due to the closure of several Planning & Building Control services due to the ongoing national lockdown. This includes services such as Building Control inspections, Planning applications and site visits which normally generate a larger amount of calls to our telephony service.
3. Elections calls have also halved since the 2019/ 2020 year. This is also due to the ongoing pandemic which lead to any Elections due in 2020 being postponed.
4. Environmental Health has seen a significant decrease in total calls over the previous 5 years. This is due to the implementation of the online Tascomi Portal which allows customers to self-serve rather than utilise our telephony service for support.
5. Revenues and Benefits have both seen significant increase in calls during the 2020/ 2021 year. This is due to the various grants Arun District Council has supported during lockdown (Including Business Grants, Self-Isolation Payments etc.) As well as concerns regarding customers paying Council Tax while furloughed.
6. The introduction of Universal Credit in the 2018/ 2019 year saw a sharp decrease in the total number of Benefit calls handled.
7. In May 2018 Arun Direct took over handling Housing Rent calls to support the Housing Rent team. This led to an additional 9,957 calls being handled by Arun Direct advisors. This has grown over the last few years and we now take around 19,000 calls per year for this service.

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Arun District Council Come In Figures 2016 – 2021

|	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/2021
1) Civic Centre	20,000	23,058	24,211	22,107	0
2) Bognor Regis Town Hall	20,360	18,346	17,982	16,148	0
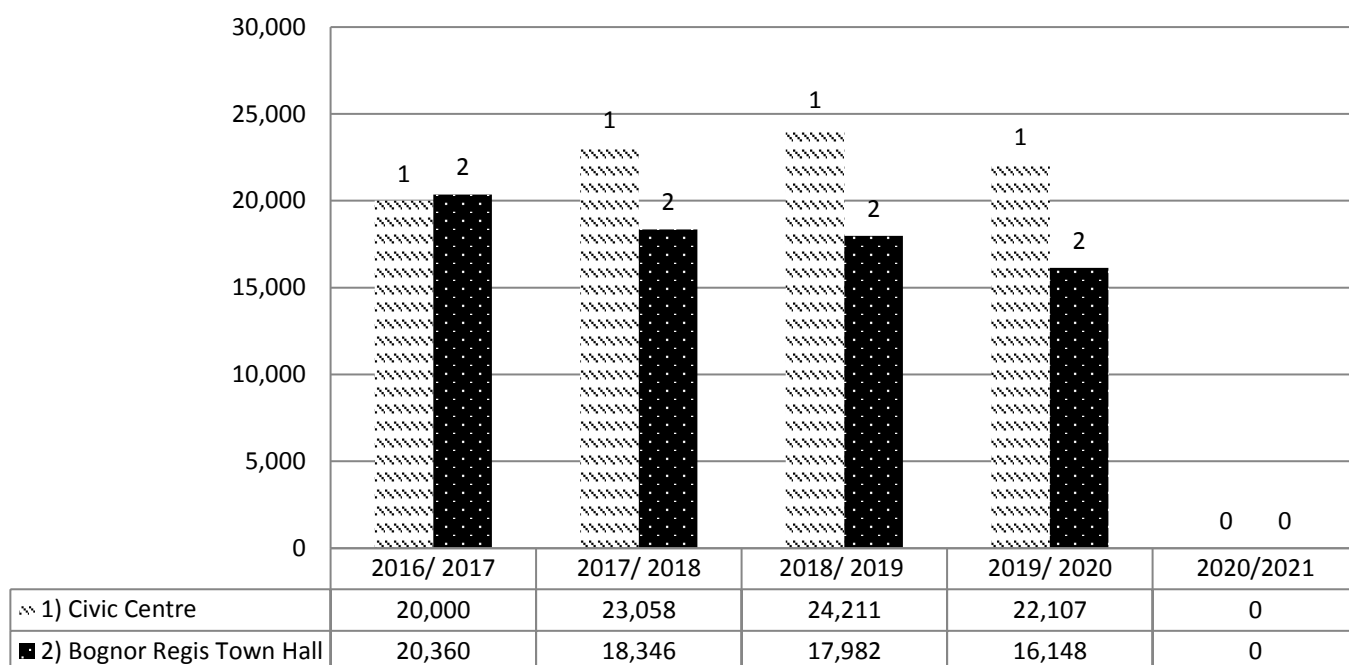
1. These figures exclude Revenues & Benefits and Homelessness Triage Service as these are not services that are currently handled by Arun Direct and Customer Services in a face to face manner.
2. These figures include Housing, General Enquiries, Meet & Greet Services and Appointments across both sites.
3. The total numbers of customers visiting the Littlehampton Civic Centre has continued to rise each year while the total visiting Bognor Regis Town Hall has steadily fallen by roughly the same amount. Both offices saw a decrease in the 2019/2020 year due to restrictions being put in place from February 2020 in response to the Coronavirus Pandemic.
4. As the offices have remained closed throughout the 2020/2021 year, due to the ongoing pandemic and restrictions, no customers were support through a Face to Face capacity. Any customers who did approach the offices were redirected to the telephony service or the website and have been included in the other appendixes.

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Arun District Council Webchat & E-Mail Figures 2019 - 2021
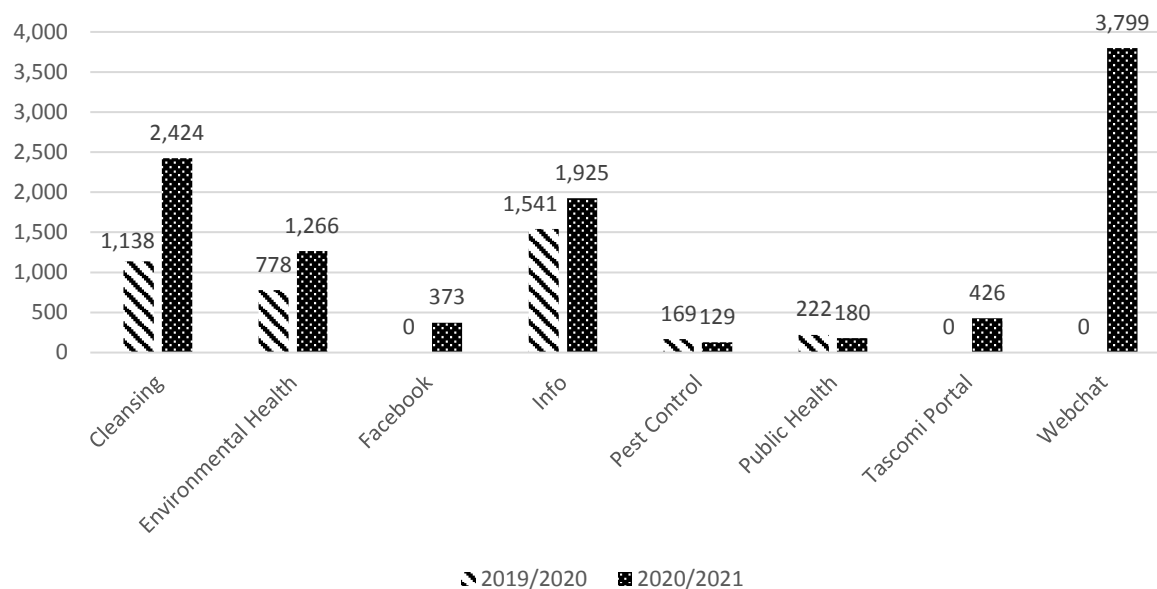
1. This is the total number of E-Mails and Webchat interactions handled by Arun Direct & Customer Services between 2019 – 2021.

2. Some services, such as Facebook, Tascomi Portal & Webchat, were only taken over, or created, by Arun Direct & Customer Services in 2020/2021 so we only have information for the last year.

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Arun District Council Website Figures 2016 – 2021

Total Website Figures 2016/2017
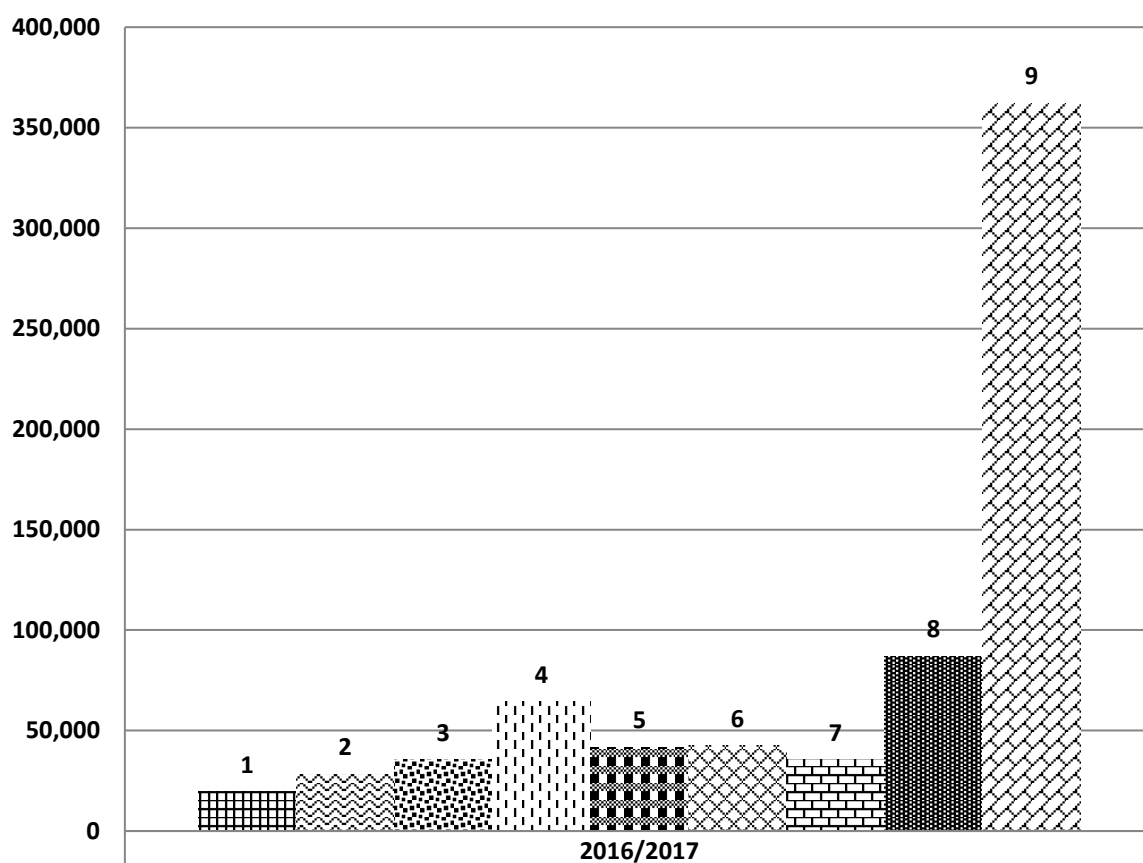
	2016/2017
⊞ 1. Benefits	19,450
≋ 2. Building Control	28,422
☺ 3. Car Parks	35,508
⌐ 4. Cleansing	64,396
⋈ 5. Council Tax	41,590
✕ 6. Elections	42,348
⌂ 7. Environmental Health	35,484
▦ 8. Housing	86,902
✂ 9. Planning	362,130

Total Website Figures 2017/2018
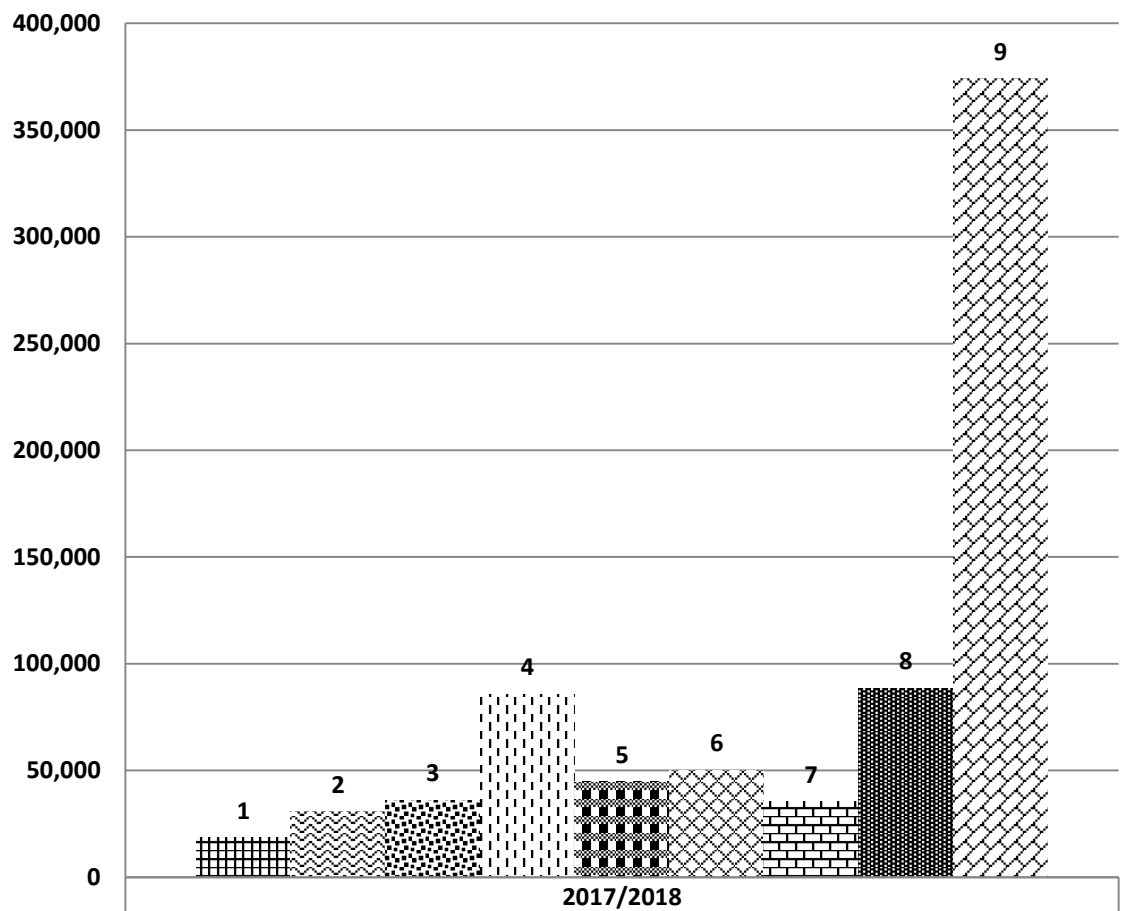
	2017/2018
⊢ 1. Benefits	18,501
⚆ 2. Building Control	30,677
⚇ 3. Car Parks	35,993
⚈ 4. Cleansing	85,603
⚉ 5. Council Tax	44,669
◇ 6. Elections	50,170
⊢ 7. Environmental Health	35,333
▦ 8. Housing	88,360
↺ 9. Planning	373,990

Total Website Figures 2018/2019
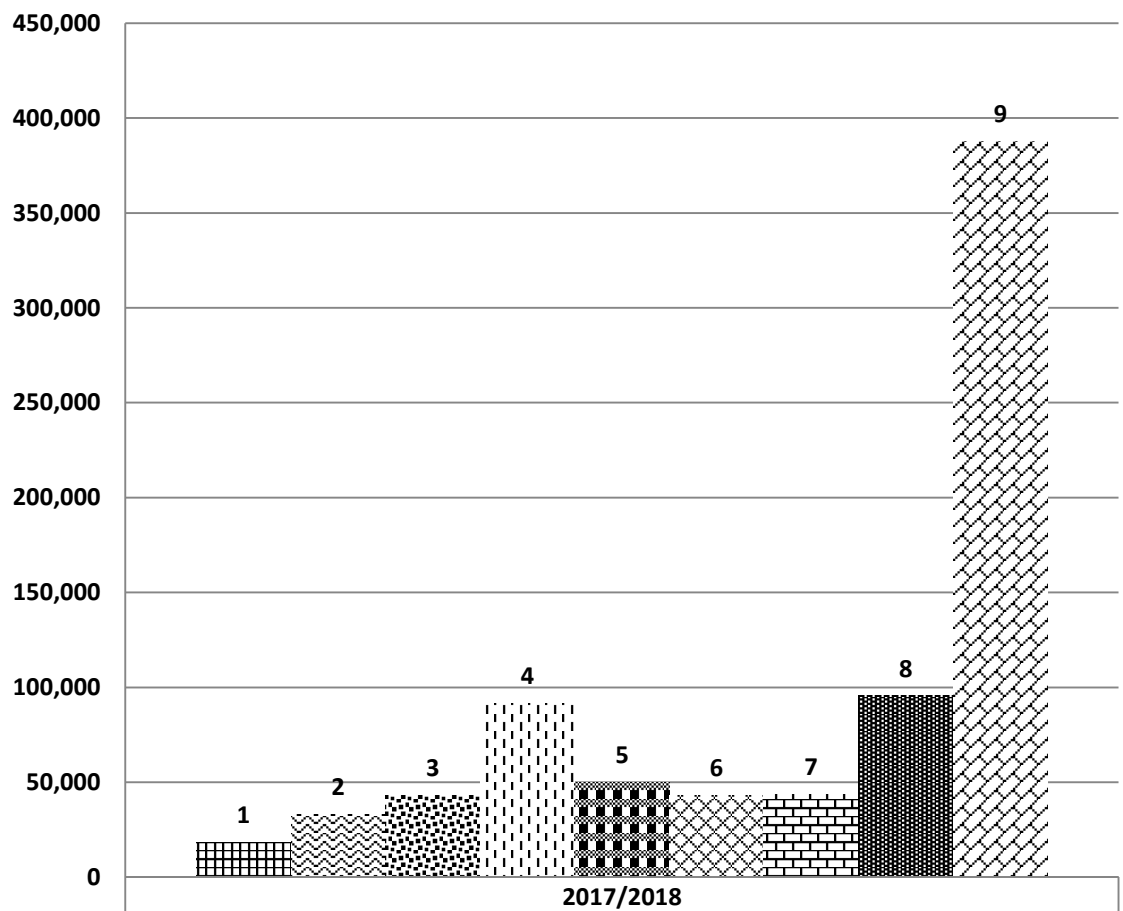
	2017/2018
⊞ 1. Benefits	18,457
≈ 2. Building Control	33,157
⋮ 3. Car Parks	43,261
⌐ 4. Cleansing	91,451
⚑ 5. Council Tax	49,996
✂ 6. Elections	43,187
⊐ 7. Environmental Health	43,756
▦ 8. Housing	95,461
☌ 9. Planning	387,949

Total Website Figures 2019/ 2020
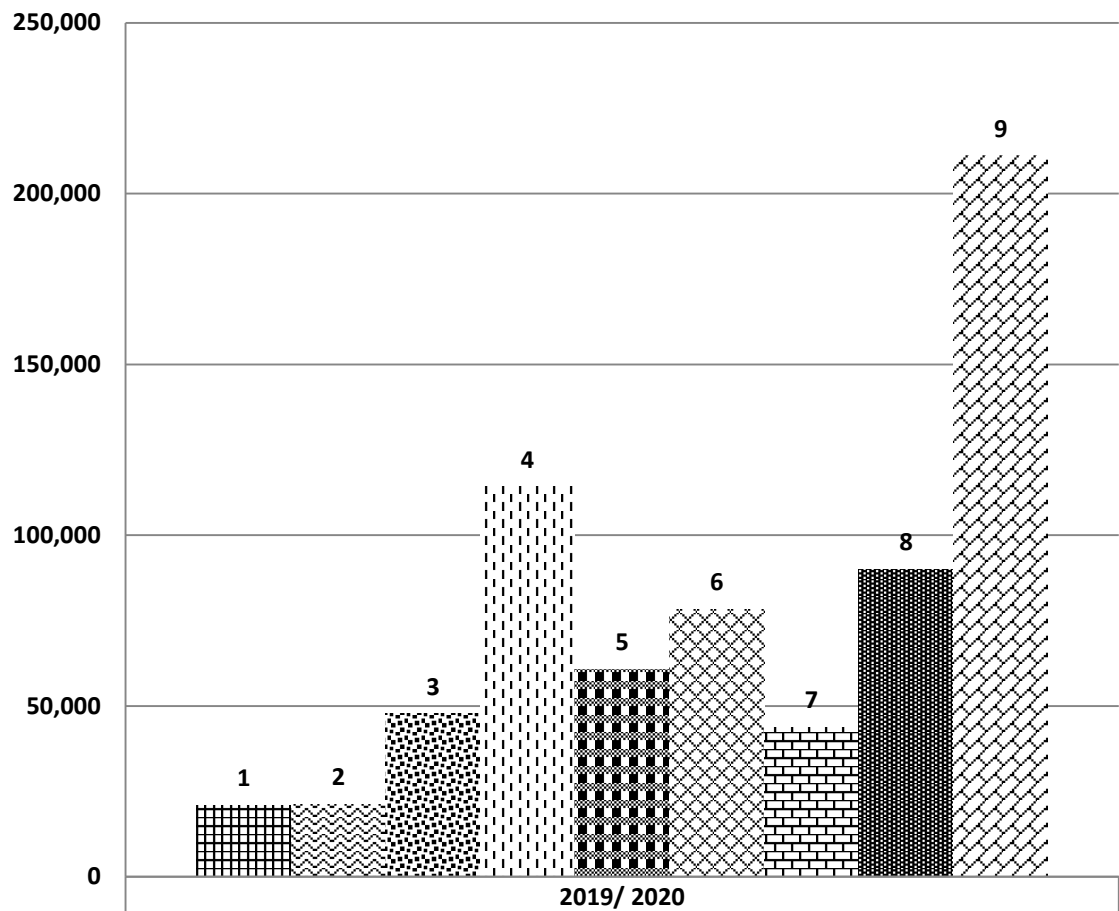
	2019/ 2020
⊞ 1. Benefits	20,933
≋ 2. Building Control	21,156
⚏ 3. Car Parks	47,713
⸽ 4. Cleansing	114,129
▦ 5. Council Tax	60,766
⚔ 6. Elections	78,339
⊐ 7. Environmental Health	43,668
▦ 8. Housing	90,026
⤫ 9. Planning	211,111

Total Website Figures 2020/2021
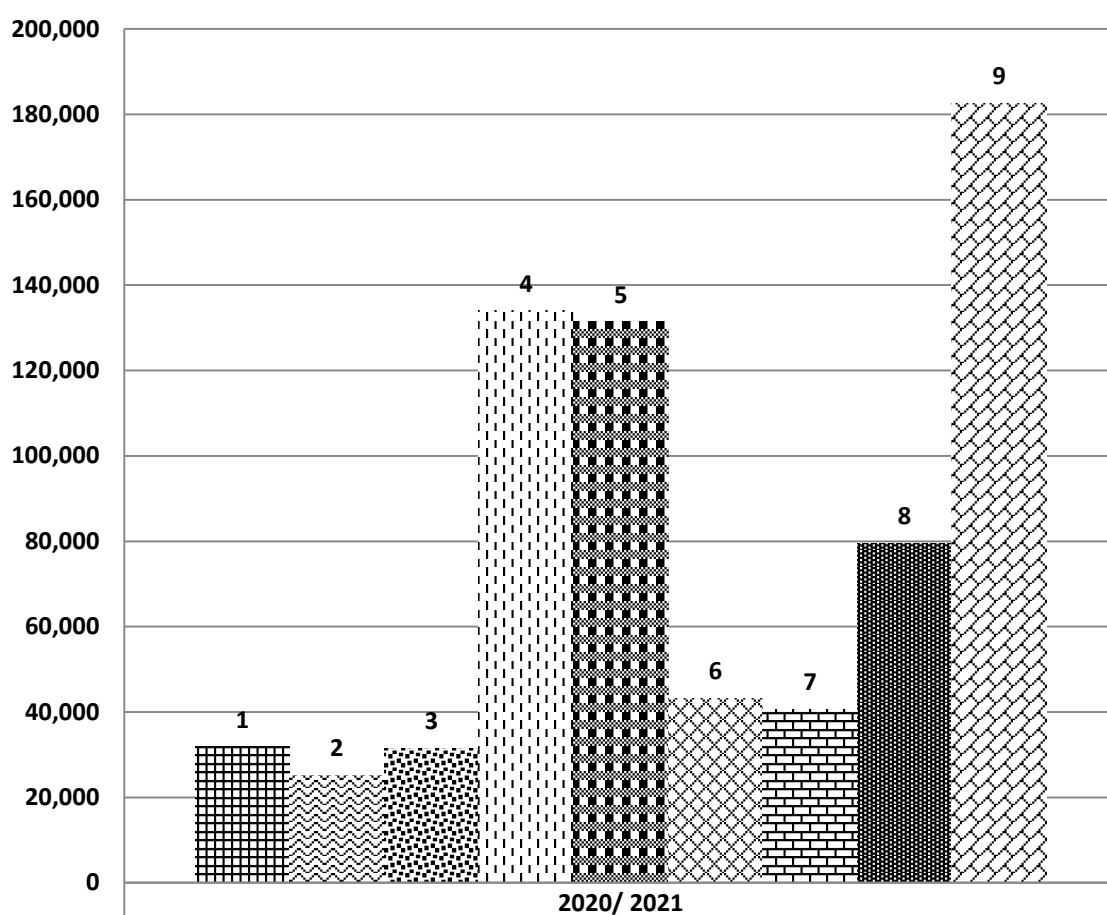
	2020/ 2021
1. Benefits	31,870
2. Building Control	25,227
3. Car Parks	31,548
4. Cleansing	133,949
5. Council Tax	131,369
6. Elections	43,227
7. Environmental Health	40,651
8. Housing	79,522
9. Planning	182,570

1. This is representative of the total hits our website had per service per year.
2. The surge in Cleansing hits is believed to be due to changes to Christmas collection starting in the 17/18 financial year with many checking the website to confirm their new collection day. The further increase is also most likely attributed to disruptions to the service during the Coronavirus lockdown in the 2020/2021 year.
3. As shown Planning continues to have the highest number of website hits, this is primarily down to planning applications and the open availability of documents and plans. Planning pages have all seen a significant decrease during the 2020/2021 year due to the disruption and suspension of several Planning services created by the ongoing pandemic. The total Planning figures for 2020/2021 are around half of those recorded during the 2018/ 2019 year.
4. Views to our Council Tax pages have doubled between the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 years. The sharp increase is most likely due to customers seeking information and support regarding the numerous grants Arun District Council has provided during the lockdown (Such as Business Grants, Self-Isolation Payments etc.) as well as customers providing information about furlough arrangements and payment issues.

Arun District Council Click, Call & Come In Statistics 16 – 21

	Click	Call	Come In
⧈ 1) 2016/2017	716,230	178,054	40,360
▪ 2) 2017/2018	763,296	170,705	41,404
⧉ 3) 2018/2019	806,675	178,726	42,193
⧄ 4) 2019/2020	687,841	154,458	38,255
⧩ 5) 2020/2021	699,933	174,104	0
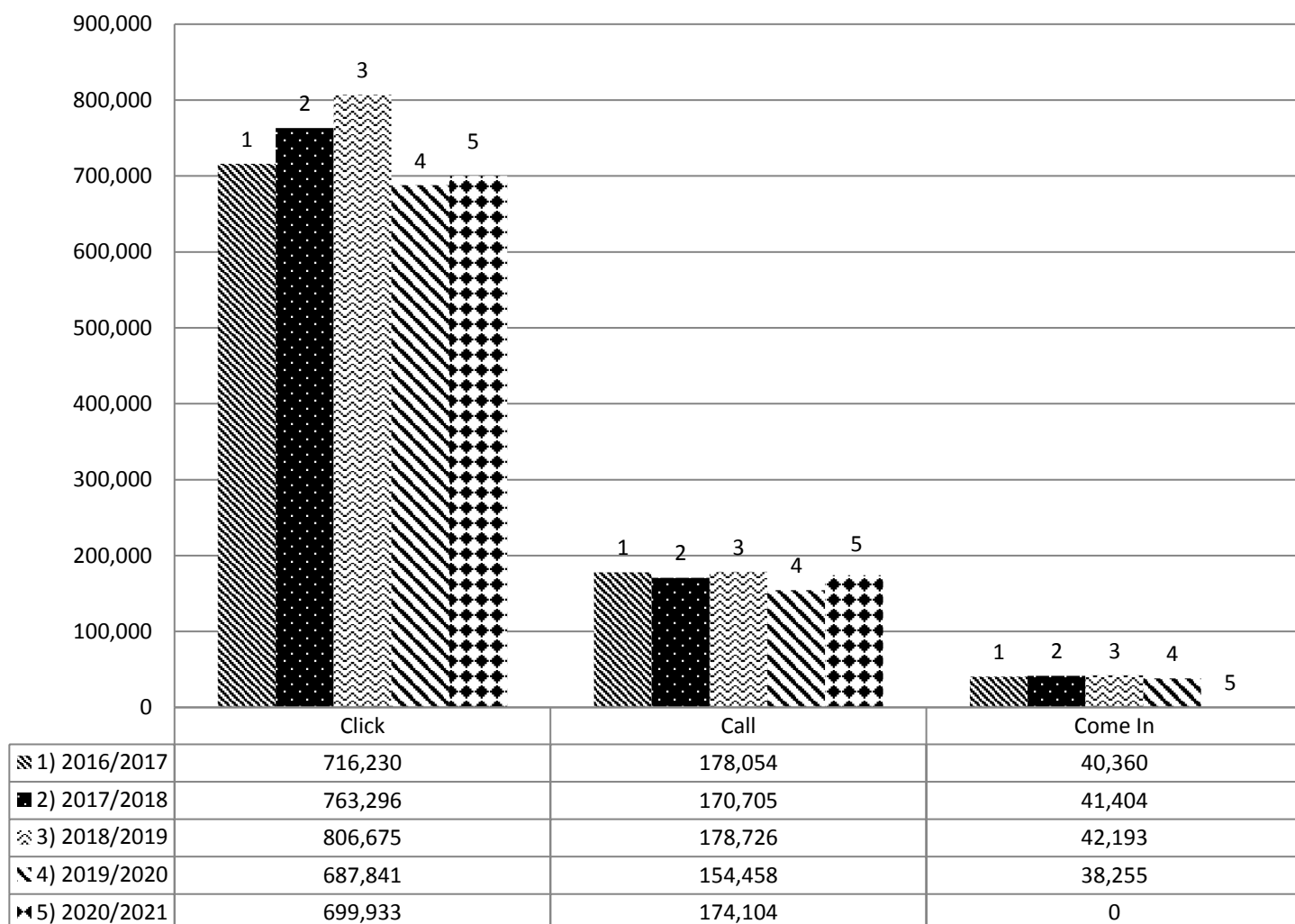
1. These are the total Click, Call & Come In figures for Arun District Council Customer Services from 2016 to 2021. They are broken down to via service.
   - Click – Total amount of Website hits per year.
   - Call – Total amount of calls received in our Telephony contact centre
   - Come In – Total amount of customers we served Face to Face.

2. As you can see the website still sees the highest number of customers each year with more services encouraging customers to self-serve online.

3. The total amount of customers using our telephony service have remained consistent and steadily increased over the previous five years.

4. The total amount of customers utilising our Face To Face offices remained consistent between 2016 – 2020 but have seen a sharp decline due to office closures and restrictions since then.

5. Due to the offices remaining completely closed throughout the 2020/2021 year, no customers were supported at either site. Any customers who did approach were redirected to the telephony service or the website and therefore have not be included to prevent double handling of the figures.

6. Telephony figures for the 2019/2020 year are also low due to the severe modification of the phone system needed to allow staff to work from home safely during the February & March. From April 2020 a new system was utilised to prevent this.

7. Overall, the website has seen a significant decrease of customer interactions since 2019. Part of this could possibly be attributed to the closure of several ADC services during the pandemic that meant customers had no reason to consult the website (Cancelling of Elections, Planning suspensions etc.)

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF THE CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE
ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

SUBJECT: Budget 2022/23 Process

REPORT AUTHOR: Carolin Martlew, Interim Group Head for Corporate Support
DATE: August 2021
EXTN: 37568
AREA: Corporate Support

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

 The report provides a summary of the budget process for 2022/23.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is requested to:

        To note the budget setting process for 2022/23

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1.   **BACKGROUND:**

    1.1. The budget for 2022/23 will be the first to be completed under the new Committee system form of governance. The relevant budget will therefore have to be considered by each Service Committee before the full budget is considered at the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee (CPPC) on 10 February 2022 before approval by Special Council on 23 February 2022.

2. **PROPOSAL(S):**

2.1   The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the budget process for 2022/23.

2.2   Members are aware that the Council continues to face net expenditure pressures due to the unprecedented financial uncertainty over Government funding, the economy which has been compounded by the COVID-19 crisis and also Brexit. Brexit continues to cause issues, especially since the UK's official departure from the EU on 31 December 2020.

2.3   It is accepted that within the resource constraints there is the requirement for some resource switching to enable the Council's priorities to be progressed and to meet new statutory requirements. Budget proposals

should be for the 2022/23 year and should take account of the medium term requirement to make savings. Any growth should be minimised and met from resource switching where possible. To be considered, any proposed growth proposal must clearly state the financial commitment, whether it is recurring, how it supports the Council's corporate objectives and the objective it supports. In addition, as explained above, the resource switching must be indicated and where this is not appropriate, how the growth is to be funded.

2.4   The budget guidelines issued will run parallel with any savings initiatives that are being worked on.

2.5   It should be noted that reports that require resource switching can be considered by Committees at any time during the year. However, significant permanent resource switching requires approval by Full Council as part of the formal budget setting process.

2.6   The budget resource switching parameters for 2022/23 are:

- Growth will only be allowed in essential/priority areas

- Proposals should aim to be cost neutral

- Proposals should clearly identify any expenditure savings and Income generating ideas where appropriate.

2.7   It should be noted that reports that require resource switching can be considered by Committees at any time during the year. However, significant permanent resource switching requires approval by Full Council as part of the formal budget setting process.

2.8   The key dates for this Committee for the Budget 2022/23 process are summarised below:

Budget Consultation Report	28 September 2021
Financial Prospect Report General Fund (CPPC) – confirms budget parameters	14 October 2021
Committee Budget Report – Service specific	18 January 2022
Corporate Policy and Performance Committee	10 February 2022
Special Council	23 February 2022

2.9   It should be noted that any budget proposals should be fully costed and feasible to be delivered for inclusion in the budget for 2022/23.

2.10 A summary of the budgets managed by this Committee and the out turn for 2020/21 is shown in the Appendix for information. This Committee's controllable budget for 2021/22 is £6.054m. The figures shown for controllable expenditure and income exclude items that are for accounting purposes only.

3. OPTIONS:		
N/A The budget has to be set within statutory deadlines.		

4. CONSULTATION:		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	**YES**	**NO**
Relevant Town/Parish Council		✓
Relevant District Ward Councillors		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify) • Leader of the Council • Group Leaders		✓

5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	**YES**	**NO**
Financial	✓	
Legal		✓
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		✓
Sustainability	✓	
Asset Management/Property/Land	✓	
Technology		✓
Other (please explain)		✓

6. IMPLICATIONS:
The budget will form the main reference point for financial decisions made in 2022/23 and the process has to comply with the Constitution.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:
To ensure that Members are fully informed about the budget process for 2022/23 as required by the Council's Constitution.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:
The budget 2022/23 Process CPPC 1 September 2021 Constitution

Actual 2019-20 £'000	Description	Budget 2021-22 £'000

Corporate Support - Direct

| 215 | Elections | 91 |
| 184 | Registration of Electors & Elections | 180 |

| **399** | **Total for Corporate Support:** | **271** |

Management & Support Services within Portfolio

139	Communications	119
697	Customer Services	790
640	Democratic Services	718
210	Design, Print & Post Services	274
1,058	Finance	1,216
318	Human Resources	331
1,545	Information & Communication Technology	1,594
447	Legal & Administration	502
266	Staff Support	239

| **5,320** | **Management & Support Services:** | **5,783** |

| **5,719** | **Committee Portfolio Total:** | **6,054** |

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE
ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

SUBJECT: Review of the Elections held on 6 May 2021

REPORT AUTHOR: Nigel Lynn – Chief Executive & Returning Officer
DATE: July 2021
EXTN: 01903 737707
CONTACT: Jackie Follis 01903 737580

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The report reviews the arrangements for the Elections which took place on 6 May 2021. It provides information, feedback and considers lessons learned.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Members of the Corporate Support Committee:

 (i) Review the information presented and make any comments.

1.   BACKGROUND:

Elections that took place

1.1   A number of elections took place on 6 May 2021 with a total of 21 individual polls:

- Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner
- West Sussex County Council
- District By-elections
- Bognor Regis Town Council By-election
- Littlehampton Town Council By-elections
- Walberton Neighbourhood Plan Referendum

1.2   The Police and Crime Commissioner election and a number of by-elections should have been held in 2020 but were postponed because of the pandemic. This is the most complex combination of elections ever managed by the District Council, not least because of the difference in responsibility/accountability for each election. This report will cover the differences, recognising the different jurisdictions and will look in detail at the overall arrangements which covered all elections, such as polling stations, the count and staffing.   It should also be noted that although the detail will have been different, the overall processes, particularly those introduced

to deal with the pandemic were very similar across all authorities.

<u>Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner</u>

1.3   This election was led by the Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) who was the Chief Executive of Brighton and Hove Council, Geoff Raw.   Nigel Lynn was the Local Returning Officer (LRO) and Jackie Follis was the Deputy Local Returning Officer (DLRO).   The PARO was responsible for all aspects of the election that could be carried out remotely, including information to candidates, nominations, consolidation of the count figures from each District/Borough etc.   The LRO was responsible for all aspects of the practical delivery of the poll and the count at Arun, from as soon as the nominations were notified to us by the PARO.   There were 5 candidates.

<u>West Sussex County Council</u>

1.4   There are 13 WSCC Electoral Divisions in the Arun District and the overall election was led by Tony Kershaw from West Sussex.   Nigel Lynn and Jackie Follis were both Deputy County Returning Officers (DCRO) for this election.   The DCRO at Arun was responsible for all aspects of the election, including the nominations process. Across the Arun electoral divisions there were 58 candidates.

<u>District, Town/Parish By-elections and Neighbourhood Plan Referendum</u>

1.5   Nigel Lynn is the Returning Officer (RO) for the Arun District and Jackie Follis is the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO), with other officers appointed as DROs for specific duties, eg overseeing postal vote opening sessions.   The RO is fully accountable for all aspects of these elections and as with all ROs is directly accountable to the Electoral Commission, rather than the local authority.   The local polls were:

- District Council By-elections – Brookfield Ward and Pevensey Ward
- Bognor Regis Town Council By-elections – Pevensey Ward
- Littlehampton Town Council By-elections – Beach Ward, River Ward and Wickbourne Ward
- Walberton Neighbourhood Plan Referendum (NPR)

1.6   There was a total of 23 candidates across these elections, with the NPR being a simple Yes/No response.

Election Planning

1.7   The pandemic has been the single most dominant factor throughout our preparations, starting with the delay to the polls in May 2020. The postponement was announced 6 weeks prior to the elections, meaning that a large proportion of the work had already taken place.   From the start of lockdown in March 2020 it became obvious that Covid would present many challenges.   What was clear is that we had to plan for the worst case scenario so a lot of the preparations took place during the Autumn/Winter prior to the elections when the restrictions were quite severe with considerable uncertainty around any vaccination programme that

might be in place at some future date. At every point we were having to carry out detailed risk assessments around the safety of staff, voters, candidates and postal vote and count observers, using sometimes conflicting advice from different agencies. We appreciate that candidates also had to deal with less than ideal circumstances for their campaigns.

1.8 The overall election timetable is attached as Appendix 1 for information

Staff and Training

1.9 We contacted known elections staff (480 on our database of staff who had worked for us in the previous 2 years) from late summer 2020 onwards to ask who would be willing to work under what level of restrictions. For many understandable reasons, not least uncertainties around vaccination, we had a mixed response, from 70% of those contacted: 150 said yes, 84 said no and 102 said maybe.

1.10 Knowing that we would get fallout even in a normal year we had to start recruiting and were able to recruit an additional 64 staff via our website, and 3 civil servants via a Cabinet Office scheme to support authorities with recruitment for the elections. From that point onwards the elections team was dealing with a constant stream of people changing their minds right up until a couple of days before the elections, with 43 staff in total 'dropping out', despite confirming that they were available. Staff availability was one of the reasons for reducing the number of polling stations.

1.11 We needed a total of 224 staff at polling stations and 35 count assistants on each count day, against a total of 320 required for the local elections in May 2019. Polling Inspectors and supervisory count staff who are not included in this total, were permanent Arun staff who fortunately did not have to be 'persuaded'. We were only able to accommodate 35 count assistants in a covid secure working environment, rather than the 60 used previously

1.12 Staff training sessions were delivered virtually, which went down well with the vast majority of people, reducing risk of transmission, time taken for staff to come into the civic centre and cost of mileage. Training involved a presentation recorded by us on all the normal processes and relevant electoral legislation and a separate session on the use of the tablets which we used in polling stations. We will deliver training this way in the future.

1.13 The core election team did what it could working from home in the run up to the election, but eventually moved into the Civic Centre at the start of April in order to deliver the election and manage postal vote opening. This was tightly managed with the team split into 2 groups to mitigate the risk of Covid transmission. It is not too dramatic to say that the whole team becoming sick would have been a disaster.

Poll Cards

1.14 Poll cards were hand delivered using the majority of our normal staff, with short term replacements where they were unable to carry out deliveries. We decided,

following a risk assessment, and providing them with suitable PPE this would be a safe activity for them to carry out.

1.15 For the first time poll cards had a map showing the location of the polling station and included a QR code to make voting in polling stations easier using tablets.

Nominations

1.16 Nominations for the PCC were dealt with by the PARO in Brighton, all other nominations, including WSCC were managed by the Arun elections team with information being passed back to the Returning Officer at WSCC as appropriate. As the Civic Centre was closed nominations were dealt with virtually except for the final submissions.   Candidates and agents were asked to contact the team initially by e-mail, or by post (either Royal Mail or through the letterbox at the Civic Centre) for a check of the nomination forms.   There were a significant number of errors on the forms as normal which confirmed the need for the checks, but all of the nominations were finally received and confirmed to be valid.   The view of the Elections team is that the e-mail checks worked well generally as a clear e-mail to candidates and agents appeared to be helpful on both sides.   We accept it won't work well for everybody but will review this again before the next elections.   The Team dealt with 81 nominations in May this year - the next elections are District and Parish in 2023 and we are likely to have around 400 nominations.

Postal Vote Opening

1.17 This took place in the Civic Centre and photographs are attached at Appendix 2 showing the layout, including one of the observers areas with the screen that was used to show observers postal votes that were considered to be invalid because signatures or dates did not match the original postal vote application.

1.18 In order to create a safe environment for staff and observers, staff were asked to work individually in screened areas, particularly important as the postal vote opening sessions lasted a number of hours.

1.19 Normally staff would work at one or two tables in larger teams.   The opening took longer than normal, and staff spent a lot more time 'waiting' than would be usual. This was because the supervisors were having to instruct up to 14 people individually as they got to the end of each stage for the bundle of envelopes that they were dealing with, rather than instructing people in larger groups.   The reconciliation process was also complicated due to the number of different ballot papers which people could have returned, but some of which they chose not to use.   One observer attended one session throughout the two-week postal vote opening period and was very complimentary about the arrangements.

1.20 Appendix 3 describes the process set out by the Electoral Commission so that members can understand its complexity and therefore the impact on the team.

Polling Stations

1.21 We were given health and safely instructions by the Electoral Commission, The Association of Electoral Administrators as well as directions by the Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) at Brighton and Hove Council and Public Health at West Sussex, as well as general government guidance for Environmental Health services. Some of this advice was in conflict at times, but the final decisions were for the Returning Officers working through their deputies if necessary, in different authorities.

1.22 The Government also strongly advised that authorities should not use schools as polling stations this year, not a problem for us, but a significant problem for some areas.

1.23 In Arun we initially contacted our normal polling stations in late summer 2020 with a survey about basic facilities and to ask questions related to availability and a covid secure working environment. Based on this elections staff visited venues to carry out detailed risk assessments and it was determined that we would have to reduce the number of polling stations across the District in order to be able to manage venues safely and be able to staff them. Part of this was a decision by the Returning Officer to use 2 venues for each of the 13 County Divisions in Arun. In fact, following consultation we ended up with 28 different venues. We used venues that were larger, so not only could they provide a separate entrance and exit, a one way system etc, they were big enough to accommodate more than one of our existing polling stations. This also enabled us to use additional staff for queue management and cleaning throughout the day.

1.24 The Returning Officer at WSCC and the PARO were consulted on the proposal, followed by political agents. We had feedback which resulted in a number of changes to our original proposals.

1.25 We wrote to all households in the Arun District in January. Firstly, this was to provide them with information on who was currently registered at the property, and secondly to confirm with them the voting method they had in place and encourage them to consider alternative methods. We also included an election leaflet to provide information on how voting in person would look and feel different, including the polling station they will be voting at, as well as the procedure should they wish to apply for a temporary or permanent postal vote.

1.26 We have had a small number of letters of complaint from electors who were unhappy with the voting arrangements, however most of them accepted the reason for the change and asked for reassurance that the normal polling stations would be used again in the future, which we were happy to confirm.

1.27 We provided an individual Covid secure polling station layout for the Presiding Officers at each venue and screens and appropriate PPE for polling station staff, which also ensured a safe environment for voters and observers.

Use of Tablets

1.28 The main change at polling stations was the use of tablets to access an electronic register. We investigated the use of these carefully having had the system recommended by another authority. Members will have seen them in operation when they voted themselves

1.29 There was an error with the tablets at the start of the poll as some electors were issued with ballot papers they were not entitled to. This issue was caused by the data used from the Management System due to the increase in the number of polling stations at each venue. Unfortunately, the data did not differentiate the polling districts that should have had 2 ballots only and those also voting in the district/town by-election and the NPR. This only occurred at 6 of the 28 polling stations where there were more than 2 polls taking place.

1.30 It was confirmed that this has never happened before with the software company and was caused by the Covid arrangements in the reduction of polling venues. Now the error has been identified we are working with both the tablet software company and our election management software company to make sure this does not happen in the future.

1.31 Once the issue was identified, all affected Presiding Officers were contacted so they were aware. (although most of them had already identified a problem). They then made sure that only the correct ballot papers were issued to the relevant people.

1.32 They were also told to seal the affected ballot box, so we knew which one had the incorrect ballot papers in at the verification.

1.33 We used a list of the affected ballot paper numbers for each box and then pulled these out at verification stage, with only one person sorting these papers. They were then removed to be shown to the observers and secured away from the valid ballot papers. This process was conducted in an open and transparent way and was agreed in advance with the Electoral Commission.

1.34 Overall, the polling staff and Elections management were very happy with the use of the tablets as it made the process more efficient. We are now going to be part of the software company's working group making suggestions on improvements to the system going forward.

Polling day

1.35 We had feedback from both staff and voters that they felt safe in the polling stations.

1.36 We did have to manage queues in some areas due to limits on the number of people allowed in the polling station at one time. We had warned voters that this might be the case, but they were understandably unhappy with having to wait in socially distanced queues and we did not have the capacity to provide chairs which would have meant having to sanitise them after each use. We had

instructed Presiding Officers that they could allow more people into speed things up if necessary, by allowing 2 people to be at the issuing desk and 2 at the ballot box, which they did where necessary.   Angmering Community Centre had the biggest problem with queues, not helped by poor weather. We were limited by having to use the smaller room there because the larger room was being used for testing/vaccinations.   We had agreed with Public Health England that they would not be working on polling day, to limit queues, but it was still not ideal.   We had not fully anticipated this.

1.37 We had a few problems with tellers in terms of having to remind them about social distancing, but these were limited.

Verification and Count.

1.38 Appendix 4 shows photographs of the count venue at Arun Leisure Centre, a wider picture taken during set up the night before and a picture showing one of the seven count tables.   All staff felt safe and observers were able to see more of the actual count, as we used full length screens and only therefore needed single width tables, so observers were closer to counters and ballot papers.

1.39 We had to ensure safe working for the elections team who would be spending three days counting together and for any observers.

- Friday 7 May - Verification and WSCC count, counting finished at approximately 7.45pm
- Saturday 8 May - District and Parish counts and Walberton NPR, counting finished at approximately 12.35pm
- Monday 10 May – PCC count, counting finished at 3.43pm and we cleared the venue by 5pm

1.40 The rules around social distancing and the way we could work were very strict and the team spent a huge amount of time agreeing a layout which complied with Covid guidance.

1.41 We used a camera and screen to show doubtful votes to candidates/representatives.   This worked well and reduced the number of observers clustered around count tables, which is normally very distracting for staff who are still counting. This is shown on the first page of Appendix 4.

1.42 Along with many other authorities we limited observers to candidates + one representative and also allowed agents to attend.   In practice very few observers attended any of the counts, however we had to assume that many of the 170 entitled to attend the verification, would do so.

1.43 Despite the very low numbers of observers and amount of space they did not follow 2m social distancing or the one way system.   When this became obvious the Returning Officer moved outside to make the declarations.

1.44 A marquee and toilets were provided behind the Arun Leisure Centre for observers due to the lack of space inside the Arun Leisure Centre, these were barely used, but we could not have predicted this.

1.45 No press attended any of the counts

Turnout

1.46 Appendix 5 summarises turnout and postal voting numbers for each election which took place on 6 May 2021.

1.47 Turnout for the PCC (Arun Counting Area) was considerably higher at 32.07% compared to the previous PCC election in 2016 at 19.92% when it was the only election taking place on that day. The overall turnout across the whole of Sussex was 35.77%. Further information on the PCC Elections can be found on the Brighton and Hove website.

https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2021/results-sussex-police-crime-commissioner-election

1.48 The overall turnout for the 13 WSCC Divisions within the Arun District was 32.27%, against 33.74% in 2017, with the turnout for individual divisions ranging from 21.13% to 41.32% The turnout range for West Sussex was 21.13% to 48.30% The overall turnout for West Sussex was 37% and further information can be found on the WSCC website.

https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/how-the-council-works/elections/county-council-elections-6-may-2021/

1.49 The results from the by-elections can also be found in Appendix 1. Full results for all Arun elections are on the website: Elections | Arun District Council

Postal and proxy voting

1.50 There were very few requests for proxy votes this year, with only 65 in total, including 7 emergency proxies, compared to 336 including 8 emergency proxies for the 2019 European elections. We do not know why this was, but it is possible that people found it more difficult to find a reliable proxy and either voted in person or requested a postal vote.

1.51 Due to the pandemic all voters were strongly encouraged by the Government downwards to request a postal vote due to the uncertainties around the elections. This was considered at all levels to be the safest and most convenient way to vote. In the run up to the elections 23,564 postal votes were issued, against 17,870 for the European Elections, that is a 25% increase. The postal vote turnout was 70% (16,428 verified votes) against 64% (11,399 verified votes) for the European elections.

1.52 It is reasonable to conclude that the encouragement to voters to request a postal vote worked. It should also be noted that given the socially distanced working arrangements and staff numbers, we would not have had the capacity to open more than 25,000 postal votes at the Civic Centre.

1.53 Royal Mail were under some pressure due to the much higher number of postal votes for all authorities. We were not able to secure our normal guaranteed delivery time for sorted postal votes to the Civic Centre, but we adjusted our processes to deal with this and Royal Mail improved their sorting after a couple of days so there were no major problems.

Electoral Registration

1.54 As we had sent a letter to all households in January 2021, we were able to encourage people to register significantly earlier then the deadline. This meant we were able to manage the increase in registrations across the election period and concentrate on processing the huge increase in postal vote applications. We did of course receive an increase in duplicate registration applications which is an ongoing problem, as well as duplicate postal vote applications caused by political parties sending out postal vote application forms without checking whether the elector had one in the first place.

Communications

1.55 Communications is always important with at an election, it was particularly important in May 2021 due to the complexity of the combination of elections and the additional measures to be observed because of Covid-19.

1.56 External communications included: an early letter to all households in January to explain how we would be working and to try to manage the expectations of voters; regular briefings and letters for candidates and election agents on how things would be different, press releases and answers to press enquiries and the Leader's VLOG. A number of changes were made to some of the practical arrangements following feedback from agents in particular.

1.57 Arun Direct has always provided excellent support to the Elections Team, without which it would not have been possible to deliver electoral registration or elections. This not only included their normal election tasks, which increased, but other activities which they were able to undertake to support elections in quieter periods. It is not possible to make a full comparison between elections contacts in 2020 and 2021 due to the lockdown and the different way of working particularly in 2020, but the table below gives an indication of the increased contacts which were mainly about absent voting, but also registration, both entirely expected.

	2020	2021
April	57	642
May	46	282

Improvements for future elections

1.58 There were a number of new ways of working which we had to use and will implement for future elections:

1.59 Staff training will be done remotely using video presentations with live Q&A sessions, saving cost and time for both the Council and casual elections staff. Not only does this also ensure absolute consistency for each session, but staff can watch the recorded session again later, which we understand a number of them appreciated.

1.60 We are reviewing the continued use of tablets in polling stations, working towards our next elections in 2023. In principle we would like to do this and are looking at financial implications v staff savings. We also recognise that with voter ID on the horizon we will almost certainly need similar system.

1.61 We will continue to use screens at the count. These enabled staff to feel safer, observers to get closer to the actual counting and seemed to reduce the overall noise level in the main count room. We are less sure about their continued use in polling stations because of some issues for people with hearing difficulties. We recognise that masks did not help with this either but would need to be very certain before using them again.

1.62 Although not mentioned previously in this report, communications of various kinds with hundreds of elections staff was done via google forms this year which worked very well and did help with administration.

1.63 We are likely to use a camera and screen at our next major elections to deal with doubtful votes

Conclusion

1.64 I am pleased with how our arrangements for these elections ran in practice and believe that we achieved a number of objectives:

- Avoiding challenge to the election and dealing with any problems in a professional way following full agreement with the Electoral Commission.
- Compliance with legislation and Electoral Commission Guidance and the many other requirements around running an election during the pandemic
- Ensuring a transparent and fair process for electors, both in terms of registration and voting
- Maximised voter turnout so far as was possible given the constraints around

the pandemic
- Ensuring a transparent and fair process for anyone wishing to stand as a candidate
- Accurate verification and results
- Professional delivery and consistency

1.65 Our project management approach was robust, we assessed the risks well ahead of the elections and continued to adjust this as new advice was published. It is due to a massive team effort from the whole of Arun's staff, who provided both front and back office support that we were able to successfully deliver all the Elections.

1.66 I would also like to thank our partners, in particular Freedom Leisure and those responsible for the venues which we use as polling stations for their co-operation and support.

1.67 I would like to record my thanks to all involved for the commitment, hard work and support which has enabled me as Returning Officer to deliver these elections. In particular, I would like to recognise the efforts of the core Elections Team who delivered the most complex of elections under very difficult circumstances.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

The Corporate Support Committee is asked to review the information presented and make any comments.

2. OPTIONS:

Members may wish to make recommendations

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		x
Relevant District Ward Councillors		x
Other groups/persons (please specify) The wider elections team and other services within the Council	x	

5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: **(Explain in more detail at 6 below)**	YES	NO
Financial		x
Legal		x
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		x
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		x

Sustainability			x
Asset Management/Property/Land – slow down progress on key sites			x
Technology			x
Other (please explain)			x

6. IMPLICATIONS:

None

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To make members aware of the arrangements for and outcomes of the elections held on 6 May 2021

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 - The overall election timetable

Appendix 2 – Photographs showing the postal voting layout, including one of the observer's areas

Appendix 3 - The postal voting process set out by the Electoral Commission

Appendix 4 - Photographs of the count venue at Arun Leisure Centre

Appendix 5 – Summary of the turnout and postal voting numbers for each election

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL
POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER ELECTION,
WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS, COMBINED WITH VARIOUS
BY-ELECTIONS ACROSS ARUN – 6 MAY 2021
[Shaded boxes are part of the statutory timetable]

Date	Note/Deadline	Electoral Event
Friday 15 January 2021		Mail out of Household Notification Letter (HNL) and election leaflet
Monday 22 February 2021	*3.30pm*	1st Election Control Meeting (Microsoft Teams)
Thursday 25 February 2021	*2.30pm*	Candidates and Agents virtual briefing
Friday 26 March 2021		Delivery of poll cards to the Civic Centre (Pink & Blue rooms booked from Friday 26 – Monday 29 March for sorting & collection)
Monday 29 March 2021		Publication of Notice of Election
Monday 29 March – Sunday 11 April 2021		Poll Card hand delivery
Tuesday 30 March 2021	Nominations must be delivered by hand within normal office hours	Police and Crime Commissioner election - 1st date to deliver nomination papers to the Regional Returning Officer at Brighton and Hove City Council West Sussex County Council elections - 1st date to deliver nomination papers to the Deputy Returning Officer at Arun District Council
Friday 2 April – Monday 5 April 2021		Easter bank holiday weekend
Thursday 8 April 2021	*Not later than 4pm*	Police and Crime Commissioner Election - Deadline for the delivery of nomination papers to the Returning Officer at Brighton and Hove City Council West Sussex County Council elections - Deadline for the delivery of nomination papers to the Deputy Returning Officer at Arun District Council
	Not later than 4pm	Deadline for withdrawals of nomination
	Not later than 4pm	Deadline for Appointment of Election Agents Publication of Notice of Election Agents (to relevant Returning Officer)
		Publication of 1st interim Notice of Alteration to Register of Electors
Friday 9 April 2021	*Not later than 4pm*	Publication of Statement of Persons Nominated In an uncontested election, Returning Officer to: Declare elected the person remaining validly nominated Give public notice of the name of the person elected
Thursday 15 April 2021	*2.30pm*	2nd Election Control Meeting Committee Rooms Followed by Count Training for Supervisors
Monday 19 April 2021	*- 12*	Deadline for registration applications to vote in the election
Tuesday 20 April 2021	*Not later than 5pm - 11*	Deadline for requests for new postal votes or to change or cancel an existing postal vote or proxy appointment

Wednesday 21 April 2021	*Publish between -18 and -6 days*	Publication of 2nd interim Notice of Alteration to Register of Electors
Wednesday 21 April 2021		Post out of postal vote packs – 1st issue (after providing cancellation list on 20/04/2021 and receiving audit pack on 21/04/2021)
Friday 23 April 2021	*11.30am* *1.30pm*	Postal vote opening test session Postal vote opening starts (1)
Monday 26 April 2021		Post out of postal vote packs – 2nd issue Post out of poll cards – 2nd issue
Monday 26 April 2021	*9.30am* *1.30pm*	Postal vote opening (2) Postal vote opening (3)
Tuesday 27 April 2021	*9.30am* *1.30pm*	Postal vote opening (4) Postal vote opening (5)
Tuesday 27 April 2021		Polling station ballot book deliveries, checking and allocating to ballot boxes
Tuesday 27 April 2021	*- 6*	Publication of Notice of Poll and Notice of Polling Stations
	Not later than 5pm - 6	Deadline for new applications to vote by proxy (except for emergencies)
Wednesday 28 April 2021	*9.30am* *1.30pm*	Postal vote opening (6) Postal vote opening (7)
Wednesday 28 April 2021	*- 5*	Publication of final Notice of Alteration of Register for late applications
	- 5	Deadline for appointment of Counting and Polling Agents
Thursday 29 April 2021	*9.30am* *1.30pm*	Postal vote opening (8) Postal vote opening (9)
29 - 30 April 2021		Training sessions for polling staff, Via Zoom/Teams or pre-recorded video • Monday 19 April: 4.30pm – 6.00pm (1) (JF) • Saturday 24 April: 10.00am – 11.30am (2) (JF) • Thursday 29 April: 10.00am – 11.30am (3) (JF & NL) 5.30pm – 7.00pm (4) (JF & NL) • Friday 30 April: 1.00pm – 2.30pm (5) (JF)
Thursday 29 April 2021	*- 4*	First day to issue replacement postal ballot papers where lost
Friday 30 April 2021	*9.30am* *1.30pm*	Postal vote opening (10) Postal vote opening (11)
Saturday 1 May 2021	*9.30am*	Postal vote opening (12) Ballot Box Filling
Monday 3 May 2021		Bank Holiday
Tuesday 4 May 2021	*11.30am*	Final Election Control Meeting (Committee Rooms)
Tuesday 4 May 2021	*9.30am* *1.30pm*	Postal vote opening (13) Postal vote opening (14)
Tuesday 4 May 2021	*6.00pm*	Ballot box collection & Presiding Officer final briefing (NL/JF)
Wednesday 5 May 2021	*9.30am* *10.00am*	Postal vote opening (15) Ballot box collection & Presiding Officer final briefing (NL/JF)

	1.00pm	Ballot box collection & Presiding Officer final briefing (NL/JF)
	1.30pm	Postal vote opening (16)
Thursday 6 May 2021	*Hrs of Poll -7.00am to 10.00pm* *Not later than 5pm* *Not later than 5pm* *Not later than 9pm*	POLLING DAY Deadline for new applications to vote by proxy on grounds of emergency Deadline to issue replacement postal ballot papers where lost or spoilt Deadline to make alterations to the Register due to clerical error
Thursday 6 May 2021	*9.30am* *1.30pm* *9.00pm – final session*	Postal vote opening (17), Civic Centre (JF) Postal vote opening (18), Civic Centre (JF) Postal Vote opening (Final) (19), Civic Centre (JF)
Friday 7 May 2021	*Staff to arrive for 8.30am for a 9.00am start*	VERIFICATION AND COUNT (Arun Leisure Centre) • Verification for all ballot boxes • WSCC & local by-election/NPR counts
Friday 7 May 2021		Election pack up in committee suite
Monday 10 May 2021		POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER ELECTION COUNT (Arun Leisure Centre)
Monday 10 May 2021		Election pack up in committee suite (Clear Pink Room)
Tuesday 11 May 2021		Election pack up in committee suite (Clear all rooms except Green Room)
Wednesday 12 May 2021		Election pack up in committee suite (Clear Green Room by the end of the day)
Tuesday 1 June 2021	*3.00pm*	Election Control Wash-Up Meeting (Committee Rooms)
Thursday 10 June 2021		Deadline for Returns of Election Expenses to County Returning Officer of West Sussex County Council
Friday 16 July 2021		Deadline for Returns of Election Expenses to Regional Returning Officer of Brighton and Hove City Council
Thursday 5 August 2021	*Within 3 months beginning with the date of poll*	Last day to send postal vote identifier rejection notices

Venue bookings:

- Election set up - Arun Civic Centre Committee Suite booked from Monday, 26 April to Wednesday,12 May 2021 inclusive
- Verification & Count - Arun Leisure Centre booked for:
    - Thursday 6 May 2021 – from 7.00pm onwards for count set up
    - Friday 7 May & Sat 8 May 2021 – Verification for all and WSCC, by-elections and NPR counts – daytime count
    - Monday 10 May 2021 – PCC election count - daytime count
    - Note Booking for whole weekend – venue to be secured on Sun 9 May

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What is Postal Vote Opening and how does it work?

Summary

1. Postal votes are delivered pre-sorted by Royal Mail to the Council offices each day. They are then placed into a ballot box which is sealed until they are ready to be processed.

2. When a postal vote is returned by the voter they include the ballot paper or papers for the election(s) they wish to vote in, and a postal vote statement which includes their signature and date of birth.

3. This matching is done automatically using scanners with manual adjudication where there is no match or information is missing.

4. At each opening session the Returning Officer (or the DRO) will decide whether or not the date of birth and signature provided by electors on their postal voting statements match the signature and date of birth held on their records (supplied as part of the postal vote application process. If there is a mis match, the postal vote will be rejected. This matching is done automatically using scanners with manual adjudication where there is no match or information is missing.

5. A very small number of voters do not need to sign their postal voting statement. These voters will have been granted a waiver because they are unable to sign or provide a consistent signature due to a disability or an inability to read or write. The postal voting statement sent to such electors will make this clear.

6. A postal voting agent has a right to observe, but not to interfere with this process. A postal voting agent can, however, object to the decision of a Returning Officer to reject a postal vote. It will not affect the Returning Officer's decision, but the Returning Officer will record any objections by marking the postal voting statement with the words 'rejection objected to'.

7. Ballot papers will be kept face down throughout a postal vote opening session. Anyone attending an opening session must not attempt to see how individual ballot papers have been marked. It follows therefore that it will not be possible for them to keep a tally of how ballot papers have been marked. This is also not allowed. In addition, anyone attending a postal vote opening must not attempt to look at identifying marks or numbers on ballot papers, disclose how any particular ballot paper has been marked or pass on any such information gained from the session. Anyone found guilty of breaching these requirements can face an unlimited fine, or may be imprisoned for up to six months.

8. Once ballot papers have been determined to be valid they are sorted into the various elections, counted (ballot papers not votes) and placed into ballot boxes by election and sealed at the end of each day to ensure that nobody can access them. These ballot papers will then be included with those from polling stations when votes are counted.

The detailed process:

A postal vote pack contains:

- **Envelope A** is the envelope that the elector returns their ballot paper in. It is marked with the letter 'A' and the words 'ballot paper envelope'

- **Envelope B** is the envelope that the elector will use to return the ballot paper envelope and the postal voting statement. It is marked with the letter 'B' and the address of the Returning Officer

- **The postal voting statement** contains the elector's name, the number of the ballot paper issued to them, instructions on how to vote by post and space for the elector to sign and provide their date of birth

- **The ballot paper**

Verifcation of postal votes

1. Postal votes are brought to the opening session in sealed ballot boxes.

2. The outer envelopes (envelope B) are taken out and counted.

3. The total number of covering envelopes is recorded.

4. Staff open each covering envelope (envelope B) and remove the postal voting statement (PVS) and the sealed ballot paper envelope (envelope A), keeping them in order.

5. Staff check that the number on the PVS matches the number on the ballot paper (BP) envelope. If any numbers do not match the PVS and the BP envelope are placed back into the covering envelope and placed in a query tray. If either the BP envelope or the PVS arrive without the other part they must also be placed into the query tray (these are called orphans).

6. The Returning Officer must verify the dates of birth and signatures (personal identifiers) provided on the statements which is done by scanning then manual adjudication for mis-matches.

7. The other purpose of scanning is to record the postal votes as received by the Elections Management System (EMS)

8. Any PVS with an incorrect DOB should be rejected immediately – the person scanning marks the PVS as rejected in the EMS, and retrieves the correct BP envelope. The PVS and BP envelope are put together and placed in the tray for provisionally rejected votes. Any PVS with a signature that doesn't match will be also be provisionally rejected.

9. When these are adjudicated by the DRO they are either accepted and placed in the correct ballot box of unopened postal votes to be opened at the next session or finally rejected. There is a process to record the rejected votes and the reason for rejection and as part of the final checks each day supervisors will check to see if they are able to 're-unite' any orphans from different tables.

10. After the elections we write to each elector whose PV was rejected at this verification stage giving the reason for rejection.

Count of postal ballot papers

11. Following verification of the signatures and dates of birth, postal voting statements are removed from the tables.

12. Staff open the BP envelopes and remove the ballot paper.

13. Staff check that the number on the back of the ballot paper matches the number on the BP envelope. Any that do not match or where the correct number of ballot papers have not been returned are placed in the queries tray.

14. Valid ballot papers (not votes) are counted face down the total number is recorded.

15. All valid ballot papers are placed into ballot boxes and stored securely before being delivered to the count.

16. The overall process is very detailed with cumulative verification spreadsheets being completed at the end of each day for each electoral area (21 separate elections)

Arun District Council Summary of Elections Statistics for 6 May 2021 Elections   **Appendix 5**

Election	Total Electorate	Total Verified Votes	Overall Turnout	Turnout at Previous Election	Postal Votes Issued	Total Verified Postal Votes	Postal Vote Turnout	% of Postal Votes Issued Overall
Police and Crime Commission Election (Arun Counting Area)	128,337	41,153	32.07%	19.92% (2019)	23,564	16,282	69.10%	18.36%
West Sussex County Council Elections	128,337	41,412	32.27%	33.74% (2017) 31.58% (2013)	23,564	16,428	69.72%	18.36%
District Council By-Elections	8,981	2,358	26.26%	N/A	1568	1037	66.14%	17.46%
Town Council By-Elections	16,403	4,521	27.56%	N/A	2825	1824	64.57%	17.22%
Walberton Neighbourhood Plan Referendum	1,805	760	41.11%	48.17% (2017)	368	293	79.62%	20.39%

Election Statistics by Individual Electoral Area

County Division	Total Electorate	Total Verified Votes	Overall Turnout	Turnout at Previous Election	Postal Votes Issued	Total Verified Postal Votes	Postal Vote Turnout	% of Postal Votes Issued Overall
Angmering & Findon	9118	2888	31.64%	34.46%	1681	1230	73.17%	18.44%
Arundel & Courtwick	8352	2594	31.05%	31.51%	1469	990	67.39%	17.59%
Bersted	10351	2788	26.89%	28.07%	1722	1114	64.69%	16.64%
Bognor Regis East	10362	2192	21.13%	25.86%	1741	1048	60.20%	16.80%
Bognor Regis West & Aldwick	10397	3453	33.21%	36.02%	1943	1337	68.81%	18.69%
East Preston	10496	4258	40.55%	41.16%	2272	1686	74.21%	21.65%
Felpham	9802	3160	32.24%	31.25%	1840	1269	68.97%	18.77%
Fontwell	10208	3267	32.02%	32.12%	1769	1210	68.40%	17.33%
Littlehampton East	10200	3404	33.38%	32.46%	1958	1419	71.47%	19.20%
Littlehampton Town	10293	2641	25.64%	29.40%	1547	987	63.80%	15.03%
Middleton	9203	3270	35.52%	33.91%	1686	1209	71.71%	18.32%
Nyetimber	9580	3375	35.23%	37.33%	1685	1198	71.10%	17.59%
Rustington	9975	4122	41.32%	44.07%	2251	1731	76.90%	22.57%

District Ward	Total Electorate	Total Verified Votes	Overall Turnout	Turnout at Previous Election	Postal Votes Issued	Total Verified Postal Votes	Postal Vote Turnout	% of Postal Votes Issued Overall
Brookfield	4759	1411	29.66%	28.53%	840	576	68.57%	17.65%
Pevensey	4222	947	22.37%	25.07%	728	461	63.32%	17.24%

Town Council & Ward	Total Electorate	Total Verified Votes	Overall Turnout	Turnout at Previous Election	Postal Votes Issued	Total Verified Postal Votes	Postal Vote Turnout	% of Postal Votes Issued Overall
Bognor Regis Town Council - Pevensey Ward	3858	910	23.52%	25.38%	701	451	64.34%	18.17%
Littlehampton Town Council - Beach Ward	3907	1530	39.16%	37.78%	857	645	75.26%	21.94%
- River Ward	5567	1448	25.96%	31.36%	922	545	59.11%	16.56%
- Wickbourne Ward	3071	632	20.60%	21.20%	345	183	53.04%	11.23%

Corporate Support Committee - Work Programme

Corporate Support Committee	Lead Officer	Date of Meeting	Time	Full Council Meeting Date
Committee TORs Joint Staff Consultation Panel Microsoft Licences Work Programme	**Solomon Nigel** **Paul Symes** **JRWCM/JF/MO**	**10 June 2021**	6pm	14-Jul-21
Reporting Back from the Elections held on 6 May 2011	**Jackie Follis**	**27 July 2021 – Meeting Cancelled**	6pm	15-Sep-21
Cloud Adoption Update Update on the Council's Digital Strategy Customer Services – Annual Update 2020-21 Election Review – following Elections held on 6 May 2021 Budget 2022/23 - Process Work Programme	**Nigel Quinlan** **Paul Symes** **Joe Russell-Wells** **Jackie Follis** **Carolin Martlew** **Nigel Lynn**	**28 September 2021**	6pm	10-Nov-21

		23 November 2021	6pm	12-Jan-22	
Committee Budget Report – Service specific Pay Policy Statement 2022 Annual Canvass 2021	**Carolin Martlew** **Karen Pearce** **Jackie Follis**	**18 January 2022**	6pm	09-Mar-22	
		24 March 2022	6pm	11-May-22	