

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL held at COUNTY HALL, LEWES on TUESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2014 at 10.00 am.

Present Councillors Barnes, Belsey, Bennett, Bentley, Birch, Blanch, Butler, Carstairs, Charlton, Clark, Davies, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Earl, Elkin, Ensor, Field, Forward, Galley, Glazier, Hodges, Howson, Keeley, Lambert, Maynard, O'Keeffe, Phillips, Pragnell, Pursglove, Rodohan, Scott, Sheppard, D Shing, S Shing, Shuttleworth, Simmons, Standley, Stogdon, St Pierre, Taylor, Tidy, Tutt, Ungar, Wallis, Webb, Whetstone and Wincott.

51 Minutes of last meeting

51.1 RESOLVED – to confirm the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 3 December 2013 as a correct record.

52. Apologies for absence

52.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Buchanan and Daniel

53. Chairman's Business

OFSTED INSPECTION

53.1 On behalf of the Council the Chairman thanked officers in Children's Services for their time and effort in relation to the recent Ofsted Inspection. The detailed judgments will be published in March but the initial feedback was positive outlining many strengths together with a few areas for development. This reflects the dedication and commitment of staff to young people and their families and the impact made to the lives of children in East Sussex.

NEW YEAR'S HONOURS

53.2 On behalf of the Council the Chairman congratulated all who work or live in East Sussex who were recognised in the New Year's Honours. In particular he congratulated Matt Dunkley (the Council's former Director of Children's Services) who has been awarded a CBE for services to children, young people and families.

APETITO

53.3 The Chairman announced that Apetito, the Council's meals on wheels provider, were to provide lunch today in order to showcase a selection of dishes currently provided to residents in East Sussex

CHAIRMAN'S ACTIVITIES

53.4 I have attended a number of engagements since the last County Council meeting including: the Lewes Prison carol service, the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Awards at Herstmonceux Castle, the new Youth Hostel at Southease, the Activities, Respite, Rehabilitation and Care centre in Rye and the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance Service, the 56 Signal Squadron Freedom Parade at Eastbourne, the opening of the Woodingdean to Falmer cycle route, the visit of HRH the Duchess of Cornwall to Emmaus Hastings and Rother, the visit of HRH the Duke of York to Working Rite, Hastings and attended the Lord Lieutenant's presentation of Commonwealth flags at County Hall at which I hosted the refreshments, and a number of Citizenship Ceremonies at Eastbourne and Uckfield. The Vice Chairman also attended a number of events. The Vice Chairman and I undertook 32 engagements in total since the last County Council meeting

CHINESE NEW YEAR

53.5 The Chairman indicated that the Chinese New Year began on 31 January and this year was the year of the Horse. The Chairman wished all present a very happy Chinese New Year.

PRAYERS

53.6 The Chairman thanked Reverend John Kimberley leading the prayers before the meeting.

PETITIONS

53.7 The Chairman informed the Council that immediately before the meeting he had received petitions from members as follows:

Councillor Butler	- calling on the County Council to improve road safety for children at Harbour Primary School
Councillor Webb	- calling on the County Council not to introduce parking restrictions around the Mosque, 12 Mercatoria, St Leonards on Sea

54 Questions from Members of the Public

54.1 Copies of question asked by Roger Foxwell from Newhaven and the answer by Councillor Elkin (Lead Member for Resources) are attached to these minutes. A supplementary question was asked and responded to.

55. Declarations of Interest

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

<i>Member</i>	<i>Position giving rise to interest</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Whether interest was prejudicial</i>
Councillor Wallis	Member of the Badger Trust	Lead Member for Resources report, paragraph 1	No

56. Reports

CALLOVER

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

Cabinet	- paragraph 1
Governance Committee	- paragraph 1
Lead Member for Resources	- paragraphs 1, 2 and 3
East Sussex Fire Authority	- paragraph 2

NON-RESERVED PARAGRAPHS

56.2 On the motion of the Chairman of the County Council, the Council ADOPTED those paragraphs in the reports of the Committees that had not been reserved for discussion.

57. CABINET REPORT – RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES

57.1 Under Standing Order 23, the Council agreed that the speeches of the Leaders of the six groups (or their nominees) on paragraph 1 of the Cabinet's report should be extended beyond five minutes.

57.2 In moving this paragraph of the Cabinet's report, Councillor Elkin also moved an amendment which was duly seconded (see minute number 57.8)

57.3 The following amendment was moved by Councillor Tutt and seconded:

Replace paragraph 1.32 with:

- (1) *approve the Council Plan subject to any subsequent implications from recommendation (3) below and to authorise the Chief Executive to finalise the Plan in consultation with the relevant lead members*
- (2) *approve, including any amendments required as a result of changes made by recommendation (3) below, the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/15 to 2015/16 and the release of £10m from contingency from 2013/14 to be used as set out in paragraph 1.8 of the report of the Cabinet and to note the forecast presented in Appendix 2 Annex 2 of the Cabinet report*
- (3) *approve the net revenue estimates for 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 2 Annex 5 with the following amendments:*

a. Additional reductions of £3.17m found from:

- i. Personnel budgets, £1.0m**
Managed vacancy factor on staff turnover (noting underspends on salaries and wages last year and those predicted for this year)
Note: Less than 1% of £111m budget
- ii. Treasury management. £0.45m**
To place £5m surplus contingency identified in paragraph 3.5 of the Cabinet report into capital reserve, to offset continuing debt charges and repayments on the forthcoming £100m loan.
Note: Alternative provision of additional £5m for unclassified roads might later be found from spare contingencies on the Bexhill Relief Road`
- iii. Income Generation. £0.35m**
Note: To set a forward stretch target for the 2014 Income Generation Report at ½% of the annual c£60m fees and charges budget.
- iv. Communications. £0.5m**
Note: Current consolidated service £1.47m pa. (32.5 FTE) In addition to planned £155k budgeted reductions target 2014; additional reductions target from 2014
- v. Policy Strategic Planning and Performance. £0.27m**
Note: Current provision across Council £2.7m, 74 FTE. Reduce net cost by 10%
- vi. External venue hire costs £0.3m**
Note: Halve current provision
- vii. External training costs. £0.3m**
Note: Current provision £3m. Target 10% reduction from corporate oversight and prioritisation

b. Additional items of growth, withdrawn planned reductions and restored budgets totalling £2.365m (£2.115m from 2016/17)

Growth

- i. Elected members locality budgets. £0.5m**
This represents a new strategy for empowering councillors to be able directly to support community initiatives in their divisions with a budget of £10k pa each. Following approval, the administration would be reviewed and the whole scheme delivered within the allocated budget
- ii. Looked After Children Employment Opportunities. £0.1m**
A budget to fund transition of LAC into employment, through work experience and apprenticeships (including with ESCC)
- iii. Loneliness Partnership Project. £0.1m (one year only)**
One year project with Third Sector and stakeholders, and in association with the BCF, to assess and make policy proposals for

an integrated council-wide and sector approach to tackling loneliness and social isolation. Budget may be used to employ researcher and support staff or to commission external work.

iv. Organisational Development.

£0.15m pa (two years only)

Funding for management development to achieve cultural transformation (two years only)

Withdrawal of the following savings proposals:

v. Young People at Risk

£0.143m

(ASC S35) in SP by “removing an intensive service” with an impact on “young people presenting as homeless or leaving care”. Delete this “saving”

vi. Scale back fostering and adoption services

£0.25m

(CSD S38) Risk of reduced placements and higher agency foster and adoption costs (Agency cost for adoption £27k) Delete this “saving”

vii. Closure of LAC Rapid Response Team

£0.12m

(CSD S36) This team works to reduce LAC admissions of children aged 13+ “on the edge of care Delete this “saving”

viii. Targeted Youth Service / CAMHS

£0.31m

(CSD S16). Significant implication for vulnerable youth. Delete “saving”

ix. Standards and Learning Effectiveness

£0.3m

(CSD S18) Delete 2014/15 “saving” for “reprioritisation of resources for school Improvement”

Restoration of funding for schemes (recently reduced by Cabinet) in response to consultation:

x. ASC Pine Hill Reinststate funding

£0.229m

xi. Seaford HWRS Reinststate funding

£0.103m

xii. Road safety.

£0.06m

Reinststate funding of school crossing patrols at 13 schools (£50k) plus “opportunity fund” of £10k to establish arrangements at other schools

c. Additions to revenue reserve as contingency against 2016 reductions

2014/15 £ 0.805m

2015/16 ££0.905m

2016/17 on £1.055m pa

- (4) *in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to agree that:*
- (i) the net budget requirement is £373.8m and the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as its requirements for the year 2014/15 is £219.6m;*
 - (ii) the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as the basic amount of its council tax (ie for a band D property) for the year 2014/15 is £1180.89p and represents a 1.95% increase on the previous year;*

(5) *advise the Borough and District Councils of the relevant amounts payable and council tax in other bands in line with the regulations and to issue precepts accordingly in accordance with an agreed schedule of instalments as set out at Annex 6 of Appendix 2;*

(6) *authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Finance Officer, Leader and Deputy Leader to make adjustments to the budget to reflect the final settlement;*

(7) *approve those fees and charges set out in Appendix 2 Annex 4 which relate to functions which are not the responsibility of the Executive;*

(8) *note the views on the RPPR proposals from engagement feedback; and*

(9) *approve the Capital Programme including further investment in Core Programme Need 2014/15 to 2017/18 at Appendix 3.*

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

FOR THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Birch, Blanch, Butler, Carstairs, Charlton, Field, Forward, Hodges, Lambert, Rodohan, Scott, D Shing, S Shing, Shuttleworth, St Pierre, Tutt, Ungar, Wallis, Webb and Wincott

AGAINST THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Barnes, Belsey, Bennett, Bentley, Clark, Davies, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Earl, Elkin, Ensor, Galley, Glazier, Howson, Keeley, Maynard, Phillips, Pragnell, Pursglove, Sheppard, Simmons, Standley, Stogdon, Taylor, Tidy, and Whetstone

ABSTENTIONS

Councillor O'Keeffe

57.5 The following amendment moved by Councillor Birch and seconded was LOST:

Replace paragraph 1.32 with:

1) *approve the draft Council Plan at Appendix 1 subject to any subsequent implications from recommendation (3) below and to authorise the Chief Executive to finalise the Plan in consultation with the relevant lead members*

2) *approve, including any amendments required as a result of changes made by recommendation (3) below, the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/15 to 2015/16 and the and the release of £10m of contingency from 2013/14 to be used as set out in paragraph 1.8 of the report of the Cabinet and to note the forecast presented in Appendix 2 Annex 2 of the Cabinet report*

3) approve the net revenue estimates for 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 2 Annex 5 with the following amendments:

1. Make the following temporary changes that will impact on the 2014/15 and 2015/16 financial years only

Add	£
Two year programme (£300,000pa) to introduce a new community based service prevention	600,000
Two year programme (£300,000 pa) for early Intervention – THRIVE	600,000
TOTAL	£1,200,000
<p>This would be funded by Reducing the revenue contribution to fund the capital programme by £1,200,000 . This could be achieved by reducing the revenue contribution to the ‘Unclassified Roads’ schemes from £10m to £8.8m</p>	

2. To make the following permanent changes in the proposed budget.

Add	Total £
Children’s services – reverse the savings proposal (CSDS38) being made to scale back the fostering and adoption service	250,000
Children’s services – reverse some of the savings proposals (CSDS16 and CSDS20) being made to the targeted youth services by	130,000
Children’s service – reverse the savings proposal (CSDS36) to close the Rapid response team.	120,000
TOTAL	500,000
<p>This would be funded by Reducing the revenue contribution to fund the overall capital programme by £500,000pa. Within the Capital Programme this could be accommodated by reducing the investment in the Roads.</p>	

- (4) in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to agree that:
 - (i) the net budget requirement is £373.8m and the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as its requirements for the year 2014/15 is £219.6m;
 - (ii) the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as the basic amount of its council tax (ie for a band D property) for the year 2014/15 is £1180.89p and represents a 1.95% increase on the previous year;
- (5) advise the Borough and District Councils of the relevant amounts payable and council tax in other bands in line with the regulations and to issue precepts accordingly in accordance with an agreed schedule of instalments as set out at Annex 6 of Appendix 2;
- (6) authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Finance Officer, Leader and Deputy Leader to make adjustments to the budget to reflect the final settlement;

(7) *approve those fees and charges set out in Appendix 2 Annex 4 which relate to functions which are not the responsibility of the Executive;*

(8) *note the views on the RPPR proposals from engagement feedback; and*

(9) *approve the Capital Programme including further investment in Core Programme Need 2014/15 to 2017/18 at Appendix 3.*

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

FOR THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Birch, Blanch, Butler, Field, Forward, Hodges, Lambert, O'Keeffe, Rodohan, Scott, Shuttleworth, St Pierre, Tutt, Ungar, Wallis, Webb and Wincott

AGAINST THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Barnes, Belsey, Bennett, Bentley, Carstairs, Charlton, Clark, Davies, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Earl, Elkin, Ensor, Galley, Glazier, Howson, Keeley, Maynard, Phillips, Pragnell, Pursglove, Sheppard, D Shing, S Shing, Simmons, Standley, Stogdon, Taylor, Tidy, and Whetstone

57.7 The County Council agreed that the vote on the Cabinet recommendation and the amendment moved by Councillor Elkin should be taken together.

57.8 The following motion moved by Councillor Elkin, to adopt paragraph 1 of the Cabinet report as amended was CARRIED:

1) *approve the draft Council Plan at Appendix 1 subject to any subsequent implications from recommendation (3) below and to authorise the Chief Executive to finalise the Plan in consultation with the relevant lead members*

2) *approve, including any amendments required as a result of changes made by recommendation (3) below, the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/15 to 2015/16 and the and the release of £10m of contingency from 2013/14 to be used as set out in paragraph 1.8 of the report of the Cabinet and to note the forecast presented in Appendix 2 Annex 2 of the Cabinet report*

3) *approve the net revenue estimates for 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 2 Annex 5 with the following amendment:*

	£
<i>To remove the savings requirement in Appendix 2 Annex 3 of a recurrent £250k in respect of "Scale Back Fostering and Adoption Services" for 2014/15 and 2015/16 only</i>	500,000
<i>This would be funded by reducing the contingencies being transferred to the Capital reserve in 2014/15 and to make any consequential amendment to the budget estimates and MTFP to reflect this</i>	

- (4) *in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to agree that:*
(i) the net budget requirement is £373.8m and the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as its requirements for the year 2014/15 is £219.6m;
(ii) the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as the basic amount of its council tax (ie for a band D property) for the year 2014/15 is £1180.89p and represents a 1.95% increase on the previous year;
- (5) *advise the Borough and District Councils of the relevant amounts payable and council tax in other bands in line with the regulations and to issue precepts accordingly in accordance with an agreed schedule of instalments as set out at Annex 6 of Appendix 2;*
- (6) *authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Finance Officer, Leader and Deputy Leader to make adjustments to the budget to reflect the final settlement;*
- (7) *approve those fees and charges set out in Appendix 2 Annex 4 which relate to functions which are not the responsibility of the Executive;*
- (8) *note the views on the RPPR proposals from engagement feedback; and*
- (9) *approve the Capital Programme including further investment in Core Programme Need 2014/15 to 2017/18 at Appendix 3.*

57.9 A recorded vote on Councillor Elkin's motion was requested and taken. The votes being cast as follows:

FOR THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Barnes, Belsey, Bennett, Bentley, Clark, Davies, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Earl, Elkin, Ensor, Galley, Glazier, Howson, Keeley, Maynard, Phillips, Pragnell, Pursglove, Sheppard, Simmons, Standley, Stogdon, Taylor, Tidy, and Whetstone

AGAINST THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Birch, Blanch, Butler, Carstairs, Charlton, Field, Forward, Hodges, Lambert, Rodohan, Scott, Shuttleworth, St Pierre, Tutt, Ungar, Wallis, Webb and Wincott

ABSTENTIONS

Councillors O'Keeffe, D Shing and S Shing

58. Governance Committee Report – Reserved paragraph – Proposal for formation of the East Sussex Education Performance Panel

58.1 Councillor Glazier moved the reserved paragraph of the Governance Committee's report.

58.2 The motion was CARRIED after debate

59 Lead Member for Resources report – Notice of Motion: Badger Culling on Council owned land

59.1 The following amendment was moved by Councillor Scott and LOST

To replace paragraph 1.12 (2) with:

Noting the start of the badger cull in Somerset and Gloucestershire and the possibility that Defra may roll out the badger cull across the rest of the UK, East Sussex County Council agrees not to allow the badger cull to take place on any of its County owned or leased land given that the science is not proven nor conclusive that a cull of badgers is the answer to eradicating Bovine TB from the countryside.

59.2 The following motion, to adopt paragraph 1 of the Lead Member's report, was moved by Councillor Elkin and CARRIED

(1) note the contents of the report in relation to Councillor Scott's Notice of Motion; and

(2) await the review of evidence from the current pilots by the Independent Panel of Experts in 2016 before expressing a view as to whether or not to allow badger culling on County Council land.

60. Lead Member for Resources Report – Remaining Reserved paragraphs

60.1 Councillor Elkin moved the remaining reserved paragraphs of the Lead member for Resources report.

60.2 The motions were CARRIED after debate.

61. Questions from County Councillors

ORAL QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

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

Questioner	Respondent	Subject
Councillor Field	Councillor Bennett	Early years settings that are rated good or better and can accept 2 year olds entitled to free places
Councillor St Pierre	Councillor Bentley	Staffing levels and redundancies at the Phoenix Centre, Lewes
Councillor Tutt	Councillor Maynard	Pot hole repairs

Questioner	Respondent	Subject
Councillor Birch	Councillor Bennett	Ways to raise attainment in schools
Councillor Forward	Councillor Glazier	Admissions policy of the Hastings Academy Trust
Councillor Howson	Councillor Maynard	Repair of potholes on the C7
Councillor Scott	Councillor Maynard	Funding provision for installation of dropped kerbs
Councillor Shing	Councillor Maynard	Contingency plans to assist residents in the Alfriston area in the event of flooding
Councillor Whetstone	Councillor Maynard	Responsibility for clearance of gullies

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

61.2 Three written questions were received from Councillor Lambert for the Lead Member for Transport and Environment. The questions and answers are attached to these minutes.

61.3 The Lead Member responded to supplementary questions by the questioner for the purposes of clarification.

62 Report of the East Sussex Fire Authority

PARAGRAPH 2 – SERVICE PLANNING UPDATE 2014/15 – 2018/19

62.1 Members commented on paragraph 2 of the East Sussex Fire Authority's report and Councillor Howson, the nominated spokesperson for the Fire Authority, responded.

THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 3.40 pm

The reports referred to are included in the minute book

WRITTEN QUESTION PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

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

At its meeting on 28 January 2014, Cabinet took the decision to reduce the opening hours at the Seaford Household Waste Re-cycling Site to three days a week from the current seven.

This decision was made for financial reasons, but the figures on which the decision was made were indicative only.

When will the final figures be ready and will these be in the public domain?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Following the Cabinet's decision in relation to the Household Waste Re-cycling Sites, officers have started negotiations with our contractor and as I am sure you will appreciate the financial information will have to remain confidential until these negotiations have been concluded in order not to affect the Council's commercial position. I anticipate that these negotiations should be concluded in the next few months and shortly after this we would be able to make information publicly available.

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

Will the Lead Member please confirm the statement made on Twitter on 28 January 2014 by the Lead Petitioner, Councillor Sam Adeniji that he has assurances that if the Cabinet decision to close the Seaford Household Waste Re-Cycling Site four days a week is causing a problem it will open one or two more days.

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

We have had to make some difficult budget decisions to find significant savings and realise that keeping the Seaford site open for three days a week will not fully meet all residents' expectations. However, the Cabinet has listened to local views to develop a revised plan which balances the requirement to make savings with local need for services. Reducing the number of days the site is open may well result in some additional queuing at busy times and it may take residents some time to adapt to the change in service. Like all council services we continue to review the long term service needs against other priorities within our available budget. However, no assurances have been given to Councillor Adeniji that the Seaford site would open for more than the 3 days that we have agreed.

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

East Sussex County Council's Highway Maintenance Contract comes to an end in September 2015 and is therefore up for re-tendering. West Sussex County Council's contract finishes in 2016 and Surrey's in 2017. Given the extensive promises made for savings by work with the South East Seven Partnership, what opportunities are there for working with our neighbours to achieve joint contractual arrangements?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Officers have been exploring a number of opportunities for joint working with neighboring authorities, and specifically with Surrey County Council, West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council. These initiatives range from exploring joint contracting opportunities through to establishing our new joint permitting scheme.

There are a number of joint contract arrangements and other initiatives developed as part of the wider South East 7 (SE7) working and these are described below:

Procurement Partnership between ESCC and Surrey CC

ESCC and Surrey County Council procurement teams have entered into a strategic partnership under the control of a shared head of procurement with the aim of developing and delivering improved procurement.

The key objectives of the arrangement are to drive significant improvements in procurement and to deliver increased savings and efficiencies.

The principles of joint working and collaboration between the organisations have enabled the sharing of best practice for the benefit of both organisations.

Highway Construction Frameworks

Two new highway works frameworks have been developed through the SE7 which were set up to deliver Highways projects utilising local and regional contractors. The use of these frameworks has resulted in reduced procurement costs for SE7 members as well as the District and Borough who have opted in.

To date £12m of works on major projects have been delivered through the framework agreements.

Consultancy Framework

SE7 have developed a regional highways professional services framework which is designed to support the delivery of Local Transport Plans. Use of the framework results in reduced procurement costs and focuses on performance management through developing longer term collaborative relationships with the framework consultants. To date ESCC has avoided approximately £150k of procurement costs through using the framework.

Supply Chain Initiatives

SE7 Councils and our key contractors, have been working closely on a project to maximise the use of recycled construction waste in highways.

An outline SE7 business case has identified the following opportunities:

- SE7 highways activities generate in excess of 1,000,000 tonnes of waste per year. Generally, responsibility for these waste materials lies with the

contractors, who usually either sell it on to a third party, or pay for disposal in landfill. Landfill charges are significant (around £140/tonne for 'tar-bound materials') and as a solution, landfill is unsustainable and should be avoided wherever possible.

- In the SE7, as across the rest of the UK, there is an established market for highways waste, and much is already 'reused'. However, they are generally used in low value applications, for example road planings are often used by farmers to build tracks in fields

Maintenance Construction Matrix

A bespoke SE7 tool is being developed that once scheme information is entered, will suggest to engineers the best recycling-based outcome. For example this will encompass latest materials information (SE7 Standard Specifications), latest design information, and indicative scheme costs and previous experience/trial information – to suggest what approach will be most appropriate for the scheme type; which will give the longest design life; and lowest whole life cost.

SE7 Standardised Specifications

SE7 technical specialists are working on developing standardised material specifications that will offer the best engineering solution, balanced against expected design life and appraisal of whole life costs. This will include an SE7 certification scheme, to provide quality assurance.

Joint Permitting Scheme

ESCC and Surrey CC have implemented a Common Permit Scheme to provide greater control of utilities works on highways. Details of lessons learnt are being shared across the SE7. The South East Permit Scheme prevents work starting on the county's busiest roads during rush hour, encourage companies to carry out work at the same time using the same trenches therefore reducing disruption for drivers.

MSc in Highway Engineering

As part of a national initiative through the Department for Transport sponsored Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP), it has been recognised that skills within the highways sector could be enhanced. In parallel, SE7 have been considering how they can best work together to improve services to the public, in particular highway engineering and management. Through these two initiatives, and in partnership with their suppliers and the University of Brighton, the SE7 has developed a postgraduate MSc course in Highway Engineering.

This MSc, the first of its kind in the UK, is designed to equip the future senior managers of our organisations with the right mix of technical and managerial skills

that will help ensure we have the capability to deliver high quality highway services in the future.

The MSc is the first part of a wider plan for the SE7 members to develop skills and capability collectively. We are also working with Construction Skills, the Sector Skills Council for Construction, to ensure that our contractors are also investing in developing their people, including apprenticeships and local employment opportunities.