

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Q1) David Tomlinson - Eastbourne, East Sussex.

Will the County Council stop adopting a retrospective approach to the need for traffic calming measures after accidents and even fatalities have occurred and start taking a positive approach by listening to the concerns of residents and undertake traffic surveys aimed at prevention rather than reaction to serious accidents after they have happened?

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment.

The County Council is committed to working with residents and stakeholders to improve road safety across East Sussex. All road safety concerns that are raised are assessed by a member of the Road Safety Team and where appropriate improvements introduced.

Each year the County Council develops and implements numerous local road safety and transport schemes funded through its capital programme of local transport improvements. In 2025/26 total funding of £7,941m was allocated (a combination of funding from the County Council, Local Growth Fund secured via the South East Enterprise Partnership and development contributions) to develop and deliver 34 schemes and studies across the county which included a number of road safety and active travel improvements.

All requested road safety and local transport improvements, including requests for traffic calming, are assessed against the established Local Transport Plan (LTP). The content of the capital programme is considered by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment on an annual basis.

The County Council has a limited amount of funding available, and therefore, we need to prioritise requests for local transport schemes which will be of greatest benefit to our local communities.

The East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) was adopted in October 2024. This sets out the transport strategy for the county and focuses on enabling and encouraging people to walk, wheel, cycle and use public transport. This is alongside developing measures to promote vehicles which use cleaner fuels; working towards achieving net-zero targets. All requests for other local transport schemes, such as traffic calming measures, are assessed against these LTP4 priorities.

Whether or not a request for a traffic calming scheme can be implemented will depend upon the extent to which the proposed scheme supports the objectives and outcomes of LTP4.

As a Highway Authority, the Council has a statutory duty under Section 39 of the Road traffic Act 1988 to carry out studies into crashes occurring on our roads and take appropriate measures to prevent such crashes. To fulfil these duties, the Council implements a number of road safety Initiatives, including the delivery of an annual casualty reduction programme. This is an annual review of all crashes occurring on our roads to identify sites and routes with the highest crash rates. A full analysis of the crashes is undertaken for each high priority site/route to identify appropriate interventions. Through this, the Road Safety Team will identify and complete 24 road safety schemes, designed to reduce the number of crashes occurring on our road network each year.

This approach ensures the best use of limited resources. Analysis of road safety interventions implemented in the last 3 years show that they have achieved a 50% reduction in the average number of people being killed or seriously injured from collisions at these locations each year.

In addition, since 2022 the Council has developed and implemented 23 community focused road safety interventions, which have included a number of minor traffic calming schemes such as flashing vehicle activated signs, high friction red surfacing and gateway signage. Selected schemes address identified road safety concerns and are prioritised by considering a range of issues and specific site characteristics.

Q2) Bernard Brown – Battle, East Sussex.

The Queensway Gateway Road Project has been controversial since the original planning stage. The project was originally scheduled for completion by November 2016.

The project was promoted by Sea Change Sussex. On being granted funding through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), it was to be undertaken by Sea Change Sussex under a Service Level Agreement signed with East Sussex County Council. This was claimed to be a back to back /mirror image of a Service Level Agreement signed by East Sussex County Council with Essex County Council as the Accountable Body for SELEP. Beyond the cost of managing the Service Level Agreement there was no cost to East Sussex County Council Taxpayers. The original project budget was for £15m. It was subsequently reported that, following substantive operational and design changes, a downward revision of the budget to £8m had been agreed by Sea Change Sussex, East Sussex County Council and the Accountability Board of SELEP before work had progressed beyond the initial stages. Work progressed on the project but Sea Change Sussex subsequently requested further funding to complete the project. It was reported that an additional £2m was granted by the SELEP Accountability Board with Sea Change Sussex providing any additional funding to complete the project from its own resources. These reports are recorded fully in the minutes of the Accountability Board of SELEP. An executive from the Communities, Economy and Transport Department was responsible for managing the Service Level Agreement and reporting progress on the project. When an East Sussex County Council Director denied this responsibility, East Sussex County Council was publicly admonished by the Chair of the SELEP Accountability Board.

In 2024 it was clear Sea Change Sussex were neither willing nor able to complete the connection of the new road to the A21 under the Service Level Agreement.

Under the Service Level agreement between ESCC and Essex CC for SELEP failure to complete the project opened ESCC open to having to refund the £10m issued to ESCC by SELEP.

A decision was made by East Sussex County Council to complete the connection themselves through a contract with Balfour Beatty. This connection was not completed either within the revised time plan nor the estimated costs. Essentially claims have been made that East Sussex County Council did not know where key infrastructure services were located at the junction site but have offered no explanation for this failure of knowledge. According to limited published data the project is overspent by some £5m.

The Queensway Gateway Project connection was more than nine years late in opening. The contractor for the project was Sea Change Sussex. The last published agreed cost budget was £10m and was the subject of a Service Level Agreement between Sea Change Sussex and East Sussex County Council. The latest published forecast project cost is reported to be £15m with the overspend funded by the Council Taxpayer.

What steps will be taken to hold those responsible to account should it be shown that there was mismanagement of this project?

Response by the Leader - Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development.

Thank you for your question.

The QGR project and current position:

The earlier phases of the Queensway Gateway Road were undertaken by Sea Change Sussex as the original scheme promoter using Local Growth Fund monies from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership. However, by 2023, the allocated funding had been spent, and the road remained incomplete.

The County Council took the decision to step in and complete the project to ensure the road could open to benefit all users, using our highways contractor.

When the County Council took control of the works, a number of issues were identified that needed rectifying, additional design requirements from statutory providers, and unforeseen utilities and ground conditions. These factors extended the programme and increased costs beyond the original completion estimate.

Previous published budget cost:

I must clarify your statement about the last published agreed cost budget of £10m. The budget allocated at that time included a capital grant of £10m from the Local Growth Fund programme administered by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, alongside a proposed contingency contribution of £2m by the promotor. As a result, the initial budget was considered to be £12m.

Latest published budget/cost:

With regards to the latest published forecast project cost to clarify the statement you have made, this has not been reported as £15m.

Once the financial accounts have been finalised, we will report the total project cost to the County Council.

Management of the project:

Turning to the point you have made about holding those responsible for the management of the project. I can confirm that a detailed post-project report is being prepared, which will set out the full timeline of the scheme, the expenditure incurred and the lessons learned which will be taken into future infrastructure projects.

On the further point you have raised about recovering the overspend the County Council will be considering all options available.