

MINUTES

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 7 FEBRUARY 2023 at 10.00 am

Present Councillors Sam Adeniji, Abul Azad, Matthew Beaver, Colin Belsey, Nick Bennett, Bob Bowdler, Charles Clark, Chris Collier, Godfrey Daniel, Johnny Denis, Penny di Cara, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Kathryn Field, Gerard Fox, Roy Galley (Vice Chairman), Nuala Geary, Keith Glazier, Alan Hay, Julia Hilton, Ian Hollidge, Stephen Holt, Johanna Howell, Eleanor Kirby-Green, Carolyn Lambert, Tom Liddiard, Philip Lunn, James MacCleary, Wendy Maples, Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood, Carl Maynard, Matthew Milligan, Steve Murphy, Sarah Osborne, Peter Pragnell (Chairman), Paul Redstone, Christine Robinson, Pat Rodohan, Daniel Shing, Stephen Shing, Alan Shuttleworth, Rupert Simmons, Bob Standley, Colin Swansborough, Barry Taylor, Georgia Taylor, David Tutt, John Ungar and Trevor Webb

43. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2022

43.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the County Council held on 6 December 2022 as correct.

44. Apologies for absence

44.1 An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Phil Scott.

45. Chairman's business

NEW YEAR'S HONOURS

45.1 On behalf of the Council, the Chairman congratulated all those who live or work in East Sussex who were recognised in the New Year's honours.

CHAIRMAN'S ACTIVITIES

45.2 The Chairman reported that he had attended the Mayor of Eastbourne's Charity Christmas Dinner, a citizenship ceremony in Hastings, the Conservators Coffee morning in Forest Row, the opening of the All Saints Suite in Hastings and a number of carol services including those held by Seaford Town Council, West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, a service at St Peter's Church, Ashburnham (Family Support Work) and hosted a Christmas Reception at Blackstock Country Estate. The Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman for his ongoing support.

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PETITIONS

45.3 The following petitions were presented before the meeting by Councillors:

Councillor Ungar	- calling on the County Council to reduce the traffic, car noise, pollution and risk of car accidents with pedestrians or between cars on Ocklynge Road, Eastbourne.
Councillor Murphy	- calling on the County Council to convert Garfield Road, Hailsham to a one way system from Station Road to Bell Banks Road and instate a 20mph speed limit in the road.
Councillor Daniel	- calling on the County Council to instigate a 20mph limit for Lower Park Road between Braybrooke Road/Bethune Way and Dordrecht Way, Hastings.
Councillor Maples	- calling on the County Council to make 20mph the default for residential areas.

PRAYERS

45.4 The Chairman thanked the Reverend Father John Wall for leading prayers before the meeting.

46. Questions from members of the public

46.1 Copies of the questions from members of the public and the answers from Councillor Bennett (Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change), Councillor Claire Dowling (Lead Member for Transport and Environment) and Councillor Fox (Chair of the Pension Committee) are attached to these minutes. A supplementary question was asked and responded to.

47. Declarations of Interest

47.1 There were no declarations of interest.

48. Reports

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

Cabinet report – paragraph 1 (Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources), paragraph 2 (Final draft Corporate Climate Emergency Plan for 2023-25), paragraph 3 (Scrutiny Review of Use of Digital and Technology in Adult Social Care and Health) and paragraph 6 (Annual Report of Looked After Children's Services).

People Scrutiny Committee report – paragraph 1 (Scrutiny review – use of technology in Adult Social Care and Health).

East Sussex Fire Authority report – paragraph 1 (Medium Term Financial Plan Update – draft savings proposals).

NON-RESERVED PARAGRAPHS

48.2 On the motion of the Chairman of the County Council, the Council adopted those paragraphs in report that had not been reserved for discussion as follows:

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Cabinet report – paragraph 4 (Council Monitoring: Quarter 2 2022/23), paragraph 5 (Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2023/24) and paragraph 7 (The Conservators of Ashdown Forest 2022/23 forecast out turn, medium term financial plan and vision and management strategy).

Governance Committee report – paragraph 1 (Adoption Agency Delegation).

49. Report of the Cabinet

Paragraph 1 – Reconciling Policy Performance and Resources

49.1 Under Standing Order 23, the Council agreed that the speeches of the Leaders of the 5 Groups (or the nominees) on paragraph 1 of the Cabinet's report be extended beyond 5 minutes.

49.2 Councillor Bennett moved the adoption of paragraph 1 of the Cabinet's report.

49.3 The following amendment (from the Liberal Democrat, Labour, Green and Independent Democrat Groups) was moved by Councillor Tutt and seconded:

Delete paragraph 1.71 of the Cabinet's report and replace with:-

(1) approve, in principle, the draft Council Plan 2023/24 at Appendix 1 and authorise the Chief Executive to finalise the Plan in consultation with the relevant Lead Members;

(2) approve the net Revenue Budget estimates totalling £501.4m for 2023/24 as set out on Appendix 2 (Medium Term Financial Plan) and Appendix 3 (Budget Summary) and authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, Leader and Deputy the Leader, to make adjustments to the presentation of the Budget Summary to reflect the final settlement and budget decisions with the following one year only amendments:

(i) £615,000 to reduce the cost of transport, to service users, to and from Day Services. Directly provided by ESCC and commissioned from the private sector. This should reduce charges to users of this transport by 100%.

(ii) £628,500 to increase by 5% the provision of Mental Health non-residential services for working age mental health, older people's mental health and section 117 service users.

(iii) £300,000 to provide Carers' support. This sum to be allocated for bids from the Voluntary Sector to provide direct support for carers on a one-off basis that will help improve the quality of life for carers. This sum to be used to provide small sums to a number of Voluntary Organisations to achieve the aforementioned.

(iv) Additional School Streets - £300,000.

(v) Additional Resource for additional pavement repairs, dropped kerbs, rights of way and pothole repairs - £1,000,000.

(vi) Carbon mitigation and adaptation for One Council/One Planet – Recruit a Climate Adaptation and Mitigation officer to work on the systemic adaptation issues across the Council – looking at the big picture. Issues to include including flood management linking with natural environment, road response to extreme weather, extreme heat,

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feeding into retrofit strategies, care homes adaptation etc. There is a commitment to an adaptation plan in the new climate emergency plan but no obvious budget line, targets or timescale. This work is urgent and essential. £125,000 – 2023/24 and £125,000 – 2024/25.

(vii) Supporting Mission 2 and Mission 5 of the Council's Recovery Plan to work with partners to identify skills and support needs in the county to deliver on climate adaption and mitigation and meet the county's business and domestic retrofit needs in order to reduce the climate impact and user costs related to energy use. Also, to have the capacity to respond to government funding opportunities. £125,000 – 2023/24 and £125,000 – 2024/25.

(viii) CAMHS: To provide urgently needed services for young people left on the waiting list for undue periods of time by the NHS - £700,000

(ix) SEND: Further to provide help and assistance to children with special educational needs - £800,000

(x) Reversal of increase to travellers' site service charges and rentals, to be reviewed the year after - £6,500

(xi) Recruit a Food Policy Officer to develop a food strategy for East Sussex and deliver on the key recommendation from the Food Matters "Good Food for East Sussex report commissioned for ESCC to address barriers to sustainable growth within the local food economy as well as public health goals of increasing access to a healthy diet - £80,000

Total of proposed revenue amendments - £4,930,000

To be funded by:

(xii) Use of Revenue Service Grant 2022/23 unallocated of £4,905,000

(xiii) Further Savings/Additional income from use of County Hall - £25,000

Total of proposed revenue funding amendments - £4,930,000

(3) in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to agree that:

- (i) the net budget requirement is £501.4m and the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as its council tax requirement (see Appendix 5) for the year 2022/23 is £348.8m*
- (ii) the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as the basic amount of its council tax (i.e. for a band D property) for the year 2023/24 is £1,693.80 and represents a 4.99% (2% of which relates to the Adult Social Care precept) increase on the previous year;*

(4) advise the District and Borough 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 Appendix 5;

(5) agree the Reserves Policy set out in Appendix 6;

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(6) approve the Capital Strategy and Programme as set out at Appendix 8;

(7) note the progress with the Council Plan and Budget 2022/23 since quarter 2 set out in paragraphs 1.40 to 1.43 of the report;

(8) note the Medium Term Financial Plan forecast for 2023/24 to 2025/26, as set out in Appendix 2 and amended by the proposals in paragraph 1.71 above;

(9) note the comments of the Chief Finance Officer on budget risks and robustness as set out in Appendix 6;

(10) note the comments from the engagement exercises as set out in Appendix 7 and

(11) note the schedule of fees and charges that have increased above 4% at Appendix 9.

49.4 A recorded vote on Opposition Groups amendment proposed by Councillor Tutt was taken. The amendment was LOST, the votes being cast as follows:

FOR THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Collier, Daniel, Denis, Field, Hilton, Holt, Lambert, MacCleary, Maples, Murphy, Osborne, Robinson, Rodohan, Daniel Shing, Stephen Shing, Shuttleworth, Swansborough, Georgia Taylor, Tutt, Ungar and Webb.

AGAINST THE AMENDMENT

Councillors Adeniji, Azad, Beaver, Belsey, Bennett, Bowdler, Clark, di Cara, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Fox, Galley, Geary, Glazier, Hay, Hollidge, Howell, Kirby-Green, Liddiard, Lunn, Marlow-Eastwood, Maynard, Milligan, Pragnell, Redstone, Simmons, Standley and Barry Taylor.

ABSTENTIONS

None

49.5 The following motion was moved by Councillor Bennet to adopt paragraph 1 of the Cabinet report:

(1) approve, in principle, the draft Council Plan 2023/24 at Appendix 1 and authorise the Chief Executive to finalise the Plan in consultation with the relevant Lead Members;

(2) approve the net Revenue Budget estimate of £501.4m for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 2 (Medium Term Financial Plan) and Appendix 3 (Budget Summary) and authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, Leader and Deputy Leader, to make adjustments to the presentation of the Budget Summary to reflect the final settlement and budget decisions;

(3) in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to agree that:

(i) the net budget requirement is £501.4m and the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as its council tax requirement (see Appendix 5) for the year 2023/24 is £348.8m;

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(ii) the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as the basic amount of its council tax (i.e. for a band D property) for the year 2023/24 is £1,693.80 and represents a 4.99% (2% of which relates to the Adult Social Care precept) increase on the previous year;

(4) advise the District and Borough 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 Appendix 5;

(5) agree the Reserves Policy set out in Appendix 6;

(6) approve the Capital Strategy and Programme at Appendix 8;

(7) note progress with the Council Plan and Budget 2022/23 since quarter 2 set out in paragraphs 1.40 to 1.43 of the report;

(8) note the Medium Term Financial Plan forecast for 2023/24 to 2025/26, set out in Appendix 2;

(9) note the comments of the Chief Finance Officer on budget risks and robustness, as set out in Appendix 6:

(10) note the comments from engagement exercises set out in Appendix 7; and

(11) note the schedule of fees and charges that have increased above 4% at Appendix 9.

49.6 A recorded vote was taken on the motion moved by Councillor Bennett. The motion was CARRIED with the votes being cast as follows: as follows:

FOR THE MOTION

Councillors Adeniji, Azad, Beaver, Belsey, Bennett, Bowdler, Clark, Collier, Daniel, Denis, di Cara, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Field, Fox, Galley, Geary, Glazier, Hay, Hilton, Hollidge, Holt, Howell, Kirby-Green, Lambert, Liddiard, Lunn, MacCleary, Marlow-Eastwood, Maynard, Milligan, Murphy, Osborne, Pragnell, Redstone, Robinson, Rodohan, Daniel Shing, Shuttleworth, Simmons, Standley, Swansborough, Barry Taylor, Georgia Taylor, Tutt, Ungar and Webb.

AGAINST THE MOTION

None

ABSTENTIONS

Councillors Maples and Stephen Shing.

Paragraphs 2 (Final draft Corporate Climate Emergency Plan for 2023-25) and Paragraph 6 (Annual Report of Looked After Children's Services).

49.7 Councillor Glazier moved the reserved paragraphs in the Cabinet's report.

49.8 The motions were CARRIED after debate.

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49.9 The Chairman reminded the Council that he was taking paragraph 3 of the Cabinet report with the report of the People Scrutiny Committee.

50. Report of the People Scrutiny Committee

Paragraph 1 – Scrutiny Review – Use of Technology In Adult Social Care And Health

50.1 The Chairman reminded the Council that he was taking paragraph 1 of this report with paragraph 3 of the Cabinet's report.

50.2 Councillor Howell moved the adoption of paragraph 1 of the Scrutiny Committee report.

50.3 Councillor Glazier moved the adoption of paragraph 3 of the Cabinet's report. The motion, including the recommendations, was CARRIED after debate.

50.4 The motion to adopt paragraph 1 of the Scrutiny Committee's report, including the recommendations, was CARRIED after debate on the basis that implementation would be in accordance with the recommendations of the Cabinet.

51. Questions from County Councillors

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

Questioner	Respondent	Subject
Councillor Swansborough	Councillor Claire Dowling	The work of the Pesticide Action Network
Councillor Lambert	Councillor Claire Dowling	The end of a mentoring scheme aiming to improve adult literacy
Councillor Ungar	Councillor Maynard	Effects of NHS industrial action
Councillor Daniel	Councillor Claire Dowling	Flooding in the centre of Hastings
Councillor Daniel	Councillor Glazier	Industrial action by teachers in East Sussex
Councillor Daniel Shing	Councillor Claire Dowling	Impact of the coronation of King Charles III on highways in East Sussex
Councillor Stephen Shing	Councillor Glazier	Increases to Council Tax

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Councillor Stephen Shing Councillor Claire Dowling Road surface standards

Councillor Maples Councillor Claire Dowling Environmental considerations for
bus service contracts

51.2 Two written questions were received from Councillors Lambert and Hilton for the Lead Member for Transport and Environment. The questions and answers are attached to these minutes. The Lead Member responded to supplementary questions.

52. Report of the East Sussex Fire Authority

52.1 Members commented on paragraph 1 of the East Sussex Fire Authority's report.

THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 12.45 pm

The reports referred to are included in the minute book

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Question from Gregory-George Collins, Heathfield, East Sussex

Background

With effect from 17 October 2022 the former Leisure Centre at Heathfield Community College passed back to the school for curriculum use only following the end of the WDS/ESCC agreement. With effect from Monday 17 October the Leisure Centre became part of the Heathfield Community College campus. The college governors had no objection in principle to facilities at the Leisure Centre being rented out to local sports/leisure clubs in the same way that other facilities at the College are made available. However, the wording of the decision of ESCC stated SPECIFICALLY that the centre was to be closed for all non-College use.

It is understood that the Governors at HCC have challenged this decision, and that, furthermore, they had expressed a hope, before Christmas, that HCC might be able to reach a position to bring facilities at the old Leisure Centre site into line with the arrangements for the rest of the campus, and make these facilities available for community groups and sport teams to hire.

Question

Why, on what basis, was the decision made to specifically close the former Leisure Centre facilities at Heathfield Community College to all non-College use even though other facilities on the campus are available to hire?

Response by the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change

Thank you very much for your enquiry regarding Heathfield Leisure Centre.

The County Council had a lease agreement with Wealden District Council for the community operation of the Leisure Centre which expired in October 2022. In summer 2022, there was therefore a full public consultation survey to inform options for the leisure centre site following Wealden's decision not to renew the lease.

An analysis of the public consultation was provided to the Lead Member meeting on 20 September 2022. In that meeting a decision was made to cease offering a full range of community use at the Leisure Centre and the Leisure Centre site was therefore handed back to the college as forming part of their college curriculum facilities.

It is worth noting that Heathfield Leisure Centre is located on a separate site adjacent to the main Heathfield College campus. At the main Heathfield College campus there is currently ad hoc hiring of internal/external sports spaces outside of college hours to community groups. The college continues to use the Leisure Centre site for its curriculum use. The college, like most schools, operates an extended school curriculum across the whole school campus outside college hours. At a future date, the College

may approach the Council if it wished to consider dedicated community use within the Leisure Centre. The Council would take into account all the necessary considerations.

2. Question from Emily O'Brien, Lewes, East Sussex

Background

After my son was run over in 2018, crossing at the bus stop, I presented this council with a petition on the A259 speed limits between Seaford and Newhaven. As well as the multiple accidents and around Bishopstone junction and its endlessly delayed 'improvements', the petition pointed out the high and escalating level of accidents on the 'bends' and the fact that a 60mph speed limit is inappropriate for a road which has bus stops on either side, footpaths crossing over, and multiple bends, and in fact clearly against national guidance on speed limits.

East Sussex chose to ignore the petition. Then last year, as the level of accidents continued to escalate, chose to take the opposite approach – i.e. to introduce reflective bollards on the A259 bends, which have, as would be expected, increased the speed on this road.

Since then there has been a notable increase in serious accidents on the bends, which have included a fatality and which have also caused traffic chaos for miles around, as the road is regularly closed for lengthy stretches.

Question

My question to the lead member is firstly how much money was spent on the bollards, secondly by what amount has the rate of serious road accidents increased since their introduction, and thirdly whether you think their introduction was good value for money?

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

I refer to your written question of 30th January 2023, in which I understand that you would like to know the cost of the reflective verge marker posts that were installed on the A259 between Seaford and Newhaven, by how much the Personal Injury Crash (PIC) rate has increased since their introduction and whether their introduction represented good value for money.

The bend in the road by Foxhole Farm was identified as a priority for a Local Safety Scheme (LSS) in 2020. The cost of the scheme was £9,205 and it was completed in December 2021.

A detailed analysis of the PIC's on this part of the A259 indicated that there had been 11 PIC's during the three-year review period (01/01/2017 and 31/12/2019) on the bends between Stud Farm and Denton roundabout. A full review of the crashes and their causation factors indicated that it would be appropriate to introduce reflective verge marker posts on the bends in the road to help highlight the alignment of the road to drivers.

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Since the scheme was completed the crash data, provided to us by the Police, indicates that there has been one fatal crash on the treated part of the A259 between 01/01/2022 and 30/09/2022. Early indications are that the new measures are effective in addressing the identified crashes. Until we have three years of after data, it is too soon to make a comparable assessment of the resulting difference in crash rates, but we will continue to monitor the site on an annual basis.

3. Question from Charlotte Keenan, Newick, East Sussex

Background

On the A272, between North Chailey, Newick and Piltdown, there are signs to motorists that the speed limit is 30, 50 or the national speed limit, there are warning signs that there are junctions, or traffic lights, and 'horses crossing' signs. But there are no signs indicating that motorists should slow down for people who might be crossing the road and no safety islands for pedestrians.

In fact, there is only one crossing for pedestrians (at Newick) in the middle of the whole four-mile stretch, despite there being residences, businesses and bus stops on both sides of what is a busy road, with almost non-stop traffic during the rush hours.

In this area it is mostly children and older people who use busses and who by necessity cross the road, whether the speed limit is 30 or 50. Those who are considered to be the most vulnerable and most at risk from incautious drivers.

I'm Newick resident, and I was disappointed to read that a petition brought by our neighbouring village along the A272, Piltdown, to reduce the speed limit through the village to 30, supported by the local Cllr Roy Galley, was rejected on the grounds that reducing the speed would make it more likely motorists would overtake, thereby making accidents more likely.

This is very fuzzy logic.

Where there is a rule, there is generally a convention. Where there is a convention, there is generally compliance.

Question

Please could I ask the Lead Member for Transport and Environment to reconsider her decision for Piltdown, and take into account that not everyone drives; that we need roads, and road signs that encourage motorists to respect not just horses, but also pedestrians, and that where we have likely vulnerable members of our rural communities crossing the road – to get to bus stops, businesses or their homes -- we have as an agreed rule and sensible convention, regular safety islands and lower speed limits.

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

I refer to your written question of 30/01/2023. I understand that you would like me to reconsider my decision for the Piltdown report that was considered at my meeting on 16 January 2023 and introduce lower speed limits and traffic islands on this part of the A272.

The predominant factors that are considered when determining an appropriate speed limit for a road are the level of frontage development that is visible to drivers, and the average speed of traffic. Reducing the speed limit with traffic signs and road markings alone only reduces the average speed by about 1 or 2mph and only when it is obvious to a driver why the speed limit has been imposed. It is important that drivers are provided with a consistent message, so they understand what is expected of them as they enter different road environments.

The speed limits on this part of the A272 are the most appropriate for the road environments. Drivers may not automatically comply with a speed limit if they cannot see any obvious reason for it. If we were to introduce lower speed limits on the more rural parts of the road, it can lead to a wide discrepancy (or spread) of speeds, as some drivers will try to drive at the posted speed limit and others, not seeing the need for the speed limit, will continue to drive at higher speeds, resulting in inappropriate overtaking and a greater potential for collisions.

In respect to your request for traffic islands to be installed on this part of the A272, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has a limited amount of funding to develop local transport improvements and we need to ensure that resources are targeted to those schemes of greatest benefit to local communities. To help us prioritise requests, ESCC has developed a process to determine which schemes should be funded through the Integrated Transport Programme. The request for new walk and cycle ways and safe crossing solutions on this part of the A272 was assessed but it did not meet the benchmark score required to enable them to be considered as part of the Capital Programme.

Although new walk and cycle ways with safer crossing solutions are not an identified priority for the County Council, I understand that Fletching Parish Council are going to commission East Sussex Highways to carry out a Feasibility Study to assess potential measures that could be introduced prior to a possible Community Match application.

The use of road signs is controlled by the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD). The guidance limits the types of traffic signs that can be placed on the public highway. It also states that warning signs should only be used to alert drivers to a potential danger that is not readily apparent. To be effective, warning signs should be used sparingly, as if we introduce too many, the effectiveness of the message provided by the signs becomes diluted.

The personal injury crash record on this part of the A272 will continue to be monitored to determine whether it is a priority for a future road safety intervention.

Note: Questions 4 and 5 relate to a similar issue. The answers to these questions are set out after questions 5 below.

4. The same or similar questions were asked by:

Nick Tigg, Lewes, East Sussex

Ralph Hobbs, Hastings, East Sussex

Charlie Whale, Brighton

Nicola Gover, Hastings, East Sussex

Jason Evans, Brighton

Nicola Harries, Brighton

Charmian Kenner, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex

Adrienne Hunter, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex

Nicky Blackwell, Lewes, East Sussex

Chris Saunders, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex

Clare Shaw, Lewes, East Sussex

Mike Morrison, Brighton

John Hopkinson, Eastbourne, East Sussex

Carolyn Beckingham, Lewes, East Sussex

Kate Christie, Forest Row, East Sussex

Michael Coyne, Crowborough, East Sussex

Adam Rose, Eastbourne, East Sussex

Penny Steel, Brighton

Sue Fasquelle, Lewes, East Sussex

Susan Murray, Lewes, East Sussex

Jan Woodling, Newhaven, East Sussex

Christopher Garland, Lewes, East Sussex

Jan Tramunto, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex

Richard Boyle, Eastbourne, East Sussex

Malcolm Telfer, Brighton

Jane Wilde, Brighton

Sonya Baksi, Lewes, East Sussex

Amanda McIntyre, Robertsbridge, East Sussex

Andy Ward, Brighton

Sarah Hazlehurst, Brighton

Annette Unsworth, Brighton

Les Gunbie, Brighton

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Ron Kemeny, Forest Row, East Sussex
Carla Gerlack, Eastbourne, East Sussex
Iain Sheard, Battle, East Sussex
Hugh Dunkerley, Brighton
Paula Williams, Etchingham, East Sussex
Brian Parkinson, Hove
Claire Duc, Lewes, East Sussex
Sylvia Matthews, Brighton
Ayesha Mayhew, Brighton
Claire Bessel, Brighton
Daisy MacDonald, Hastings, East Sussex
Lyle B. Zimmerman, Hastings, East Sussex
Caroline Gorton, Brighton
Dave Allen, Brighton
Gary French, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex
Mike Cope, Bexhill, East Sussex
Jane Plunkett, Eastbourne, East Sussex
Jane Clare, Crowborough, East Sussex
Max Hewitt, St Leonards-On-Sea, Sussex
Saskia Müller, Eastbourne, East Sussex
Danny McEvoy, Newhaven, East Sussex
Brigitta Zuglói, Eastbourne, East Sussex
Ian O'Halloran, Hailsham, East Sussex
Sallie Sullivan, Lewes, East Sussex
Jane Carpenter, Lewes, East Sussex
Lesley Healey, Lewes, East Sussex
Anne Fletcher, Seaford, East Sussex
Deidre Shalloe, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex
Ann Kramer, Hastings, East Sussex
Paul Bazely, Brighton
Fiona MacGregor, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex
Joanne Rigby, Seaford, East Sussex
Alison Cooper, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex
Sarah Kirk-Browne, Brighton
Csaba Jordan, Eastbourne, East Sussex

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Lorraine Langham, Bexhill, East Sussex
Yasmin Hassan, Brighton
Jessica Loudon, Hove
Sarah Hutchings, Lewes, East Sussex
Clare Halstead, Brighton
Anne Massey, Hove
Anthony Bradnum, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex
Eveline Tijds, Hastings, East Sussex
Guy Edwards, Hove
Viv Mudie, Brighton
Dolmen Domikles, Lewes, East Sussex
Erica Smith, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex
Amanda Jobson, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex
Alison R Noyes, Hastings, East Sussex
Parascevou Sier, Eastbourne, East Sussex
Duncan Armstrong, Lewes, East Sussex
Carol Turner, Eastbourne, East Sussex
Emily Price, Hastings, East Sussex
Grace Lally, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex
John Enefer, Hastings, East Sussex
Jennifer Howells, Wealden, East Sussex
Gabriel Carlyle, St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex
Hilary Turner, Hastings, East Sussex
Leon Panitzke, Cooden, East Sussex

Background

In 2021 the International Energy Agency clearly stated that if the world is going to limit global warming to 1.5°C 'there can be no new investments in oil, gas and coal, from now – from this year' ('No new oil, gas or coal development if world is to reach net zero by 2050, says world energy body', Guardian, 18 May 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/nonewoilcoalgas>).

Yet, in 2023 oil and gas companies are on a massive expansion course. Indeed, a recent analysis of the 685 upstream companies on the GOGEL (a database of 901 oil and gas companies, collectively responsible for 95% of global oil and gas production) found that 96% have expansion plans ('NGOs Release the 2022 Global Oil & Gas Exit List: An Industry Willing to Sacrifice a Livable Planet', Urgewald, 10 November 2022, <https://tinyurl.com/gogel2022>).

Moreover, European and North American companies like Shell and Exxon are leading the way eg. Shell spent almost \$7bn during 2020 – 22 exploring for new oil and gas.

Question

Given these stark realities, does the East Sussex Pension Committee accept that asset owners seeking 1.5°C-aligned portfolios cannot credibly own financial interests in companies that continue to invest in new oil and gas projects?

Response to Question 4 and Question 5 is detailed below.

5. Question from Brian Parkinson, Hove

I have divested from oil and gas companies. The family foundation has also managed to do this as well. I do understand that this is problematic and presents challenges but I believe that East Sussex can also manage to do this, not only that but it is essential that it does so.

Really we all know that such investment has to stop, so drop the excuse, when will you get on with it and what is the time scale, (one year should be long enough)?

Response by the Chair of the Pension Committee

The East Sussex Pension Fund (the Fund) is administering a statutory defined benefit pension scheme where the pension an individual receives is defined in statute and not linked to investment performance. The Scheme's obligations and investment requirements are more complex and differ markedly from an endowment fund. To pay statutory defined pensions as they fall due, and which are affordable to contributors, the Fund has to invest in a diversified investment portfolio which will act in different ways in different economic environments thereby mitigating the risk of failing to have sufficient income to pay the pension of beneficiaries. This means the Fund has investments in equities, bonds, property, infrastructure (such as ports, communication networks, renewable energy), private equity, other forms of debt, commodities and other suitable assets. Some of these asset types require investment for many years (in some cases more than 15 years) and cannot be exited before they reach maturity, or only at significant cost.

Investment decisions must be directed towards achieving a wide variety of suitable investments that are best for the financial position of the Fund. The Fund has a duty to consider a wide range of factors that are financially material to the performance of the investments, including social, environmental and corporate governance factors. As such, the Fund's Investment Strategy Statement explains that the Fund believes climate change poses material risks; and its position on climate change and the energy transition is set out in its Statement of Responsible Investment Principles. The Fund recognises that a prolonged energy transition is under way and acknowledges that a

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number of energy incumbents through their size, capacity to mobilise capital and engineering expertise offer the potential to play a substantial role in that transition. The Fund also recognises that there are a range of possible transition scenarios, evolving physical climate-related risks, potential opportunities and a requirement for a just transition.

The Fund does not hold any investments in fossil fuel companies through its index or active equity manager allocations, reflecting a number of decisions by the Committee through its Responsible Investment strategy. In addition, the Fund has made significant reductions in the carbon emissions of the companies held in the investment portfolio, with a 55% reduction in scope 1 and 2 emissions from 2020 to 2022. The Fund has also focused on investing in climate solutions and green investments and as such has 10% of investments whose core products and services address some of the world's major social and environmental challenges, 20% in investments aiming for Paris alignment, investment in infrastructure which includes renewable energy projects and clean technology private equity investments. Following this drive for positive holdings from climate opportunities, the value of green investments in liquid holdings of the Fund have doubled in the past 2 years.

The Pension Committee, at the Committee Chair's initiative, has commissioned a project to assess the fiduciary and legal consequences of fossil fuel divestment for the Fund; examine how such a move aligns with relevant guidance and advice; Explore how practical an act it would be within the context of the ACCESS* Pool, where government is directing LGPS investment to be made through the LGPS Pools; and review evidence on the efficacy of such an approach in promoting the energy transition. The outcomes of this project and research will help the Committee assess its approach to climate change and its investment decision making.

** ACCESS (A Collaboration of Central, Eastern and Southern Shires) is made up of 11 LGPS Administering Authorities, set up following statutory guidance published in 2016. The ACCESS members are committed to working together to optimise benefits and efficiencies on behalf of their individual and collective stakeholders, operating with a clear set of objectives and principles that drives the decision-making process to enable LGPS funds to execute their locally decided investment strategies.*

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

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

The situation with the A259 is now critical. Seaford, in particular is suffering. In recent weeks, the A259 through Peacehaven, Newhaven and Seaford has been regularly gridlocked and there has been a further serious accident at Denton.

There are only three entrances and exits to Seaford and two of these are the A259. Recent floods also made the road into and out of Seaford through Alfriston impassable, cutting off the town completely.

Despite repeated promises of action, there are no dates for workshops to feed back on the study the County Council is carrying out. The Lead Member has refused a request to carry out a safety audit of all the entrances onto the A259 throughout Seaford and there is not even a temporary plan to help residents in Bishopstone to safely use the A259.

Will the Lead Member now expedite both the study and any proposals to improve the A259 from Peacehaven through to Exceat?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

As per the previous updates provided to all key stakeholders involved in the A259 MRN South Coast Corridor Study, (the last being in November 2022) the delivery programme for the study has had to be adjusted as a result of the announcement of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding award in 2022 - which has a number of schemes on the A259 in the study area. Firstly, any BSIP proposals had to be decoupled from the A259 scheme list to ensure no duplication of funding takes place; and secondly, the BSIP proposed capital schemes had to be incorporated into the transport modelling for the study to ensure any schemes taken forward under the MRN are compatible with the BSIP schemes. This requirement has resulted in lengthening of the time between the second stakeholder workshops – where a long list of scheme options was reviewed and fed back on; and the third stakeholder workshops – where stakeholders will be presented with a package of schemes and be able to provide feedback once it has been able to be tested, modelled and appraised sufficiently.

Since the last update in November 2022, the team have been progressing the study including conducting further scheme appraisal, modelling development, testing and engagement with the Department for Transport on the project. In Q4 2022/23 further testing in the transport model, economic appraisal and business case development will take place. The third stakeholder workshop is anticipated in June 2023 to allow enough time for the scheme short list to be fully tested in the transport model ahead of presenting back to stakeholders.

Following this, the package will be put forward for Major Road Network funding to Government through the Strategic Outline Business Case; with the aim of providing funding for further detailed design and business case development for the improvements to the study area of the A259. As I have outlined above you can certainly see that ESCC is committed to this work and as you say we are expediting both the study and proposals to improve the A259 and we must work within the requirements set out by Government to provide robust business cases that seek to secure major external funds for this county.

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Finally, all stakeholders will be receiving an update this week on the study and we will be in touch in due course to invite key stakeholders to the third key stakeholder workshops and will provide any necessary information prior to the workshops for reference.

2. Question from Councillor Hilton to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

With the increasing number of road works across Hastings in the last few months, I am getting emails from residents distressed by the fumes from idling cars waiting at traffic controls. Given that rule 123 of the Highway Code states that it is illegal to leave a vehicle engine running unnecessarily when stationary for more than a couple of minutes, will you consider asking the new Highways contractors Balfour Beattie and all utilities working on the highways to support an anti – idling campaign by committing to adding ‘Turn your engines off’ signs at their traffic controls? This would be an inexpensive way to reduce pollution from vehicle exhausts. It also reduces carbon emissions.

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

We recognise the problem described by Councillor Hilton. Where temporary traffic lights are utilised for more than three days duration we will explore the use of such signage where it is appropriate to do so. We will also encourage utility companies to similarly support this approach. It is important to note any signage asking drivers to turn off their engines is only advisory and cannot be enforced.