



PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, 12 JULY 2024

10.30 am COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, LEWES

MEMBERSHIP - Councillor Matthew Beaver (Chair)
Councillors Chris Collier, Julia Hilton (Vice Chair), Ian Hollidge, Eleanor Kirby-Green, Philip Lunn, Steve Murphy, Paul Redstone, Stephen Shing, David Tutt and Brett Wright

A G E N D A

1. Minutes of the previous meeting (*Pages 3 - 16*)
2. Apologies for absence
3. Disclosures of interests
Disclosures by all members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
4. Urgent items
Notification of items which the Chair considers to be urgent and proposes to take at the appropriate part of the agenda. Any members who wish to raise urgent items are asked, wherever possible, to notify the Chair before the start of the meeting. In so doing, they must state the special circumstances which they consider justify the matter being considered urgent.
5. Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) 2025/26 (*Pages 17 - 254*)
Report by the Chief Executive.
6. East Sussex Highways Year 1 Performance Report and Pothole Review Update
(*Pages 255 - 268*)
Report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport.
7. Work programme (*Pages 269 - 288*)
Report by the Deputy Chief Executive.
8. Any other items previously notified under agenda item 4

PHILIP BAKER
Deputy Chief Executive
County Hall, St Anne's Crescent
LEWES BN7 1UE

4 July 2024

Contact Martin Jenks, Senior Scrutiny Adviser,
01273 481327
Email: martin.jenks@eastsussex.gov.uk

NOTE: As part of the County Council's drive to increase accessibility to its public meetings, this meeting will be broadcast live on its website and the record archived. The live broadcast is accessible at: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/webcasts/default

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 12 March 2024.

PRESENT Councillors Matthew Beaver (Chair) Councillors Chris Collier, Penny di Cara (substituting for Eleanor Kirby-Green), Julia Hilton (Vice Chair), Ian Hollidge, Philip Lunn, Steve Murphy, Paul Redstone, Stephen Shing and Brett Wright

LEAD MEMBERS Councillors Nick Bennett and Claire Dowling

ALSO PRESENT Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
Ros Parker, Chief Operating Officer
Ian Gutsell, Chief Finance Officer
Karl Taylor, Assistant Director Operations
Nigel Brown, Assistant Director Property
Anne Epsom, Head of Policy & Improvement, Orbis Procurement
Justin Foster, Waste Team Manager
Dale Poore, Contracts Manager Highway Infrastructure Services
Martin Jenks, Senior Scrutiny Adviser

25. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

25.1 The Committee RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 as a correct record.

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

26.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Eleanor Kirby-Green (Councillor Penny di Cara substituting).

27. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

27.1 Councillor Matthew Beaver declared a personal non-prejudicial interest under agenda item 7, Update on the SPACES Programme, as he is Vice Chair of the Hasting Borough Council Planning Committee. Councillor Philip Lunn declared a personal non-prejudicial interest under agenda item 7, Update on the SPACES Programme, as he was the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Projects at Wealden District Council before May 2023.

28. URGENT ITEMS

28.1 Councillor Murphy raised the issue of road flooding in Hailsham due to problems with drainage on Southern Water owned land. The Chair agreed to consider this under item 12 on the agenda.

29. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

29.1 The Chair thanked Dale Poore, Highways Contract Manager, on behalf of the Committee for all the work he has done with the Scrutiny Committee as this was Dale's last meeting before retiring after 37 years service with the Council.

30. RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR) 2024/2025

30.1 The Senior Scrutiny Adviser introduced the report which summarised the Committee's involvement in the RPPR process for 2024/25. The purpose of the report was to provide an opportunity for the Committee to review its input into the process, suggest any improvements and consider if there were any RPPR related items that should be included in the Committee's future work programme.

30.2 The Committee discussed the report and a summary of the comments made and questions raised by the Committee is given below.

30.3 The Committee suggested that it could look at fees and charges as part of the future work on RPPR. This could include examining whether fees and charges cover costs and if they could be used to support service activity. The Chief Finance Officer commented that the level of fees and charges is reviewed as part of the budget setting process and a report with some financial information about fees and charges could be brought to the Committee.

30.4 The Committee commented that at the March scrutiny meeting in the RPPR cycle it would be helpful to do some longer term horizon scanning over the next five years or so, to consider policies that may be changing. This would enable the Committee to take a longer term view of its work. The Committee also noted the comments submitted to Cabinet on keeping a watching briefing on the development of devolution deals.

30.5 The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) responded that the State of the County report does horizon scan for policy changes to some degree, but something longer term could be done. However, the policy environment is likely to change as a result of the forthcoming general election. In terms of devolution deals, it was announced in the Spring Budget Statement that Surrey County Council had been offered a level 2 devolution deal. There are no other deals that are that far progressed in the South East and this will be an opportunity to understand what is involved. The Committee asked if there is any scope for a council to influence what is devolved. The Director of CET outlined that it was his understanding that what is devolved can be negotiated with the Government.

30.6 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the report;
- 2) Request that a report on fees and charges is provided as part of the Committee's RPPR work for 2025/26; and
- 3) Request that consideration is given to including some longer-term horizon scanning for policy changes to the March meeting stage of scrutiny's work on the RPPR cycle.

31. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PROCUREMENT: SOCIAL VALUE AND BUYING LOCAL - UPDATE REPORT

31.1 The Chief Operating Officer introduced the report followed by further comments from the Head of Policy & Improvement, Orbis Procurement. The report provides a progress update on the implementation of the recommendations from the scrutiny review as detailed in appendix 1 of the report. Good progress has been made against the recommendations although there has been some capacity and resource constraints in implementing the recommendations. The Head of Policy & Improvement commented that the Social Value trial was going really well and is pleased with the way in which the trial of the new model using a more qualitative approach to Social Value is progressing.

31.2 The Chief Operating Officer also outlined that there are some upcoming changes as the Procurement Act has received Royal Assent, although some of the provisions have not come into force yet, which may provide more flexibility in regard to Social Value. There is a change in the procurement process from looking at the 'most economically advantageous' tender to the 'most advantageous' tender which provides more flexibility in evaluating tenders and putting more emphasis on Social Value.

31.3 The Committee discussed the update report and the comments and questions raised by the Committee are summarised below.

31.4 The Chair of the Review Board commented that it was a very positive to see how the Team is moving forward in implementing the recommendations, and it will be interesting to see how the Council moves from the trial of a new approach to Social Value, through to broadening it out into other areas across the Council.

Recording of Social Value commitments

31.5 The Committee asked about the figure for recording Social Value commitments under recommendation 2 as 8.3% of projects in scope appeared to be quite low. It was clarified that this is a very new system (PM3) which only went live in October 2022 which explains the low starting point as it is only recording Social Value commitments at the point of new contract awards. The Head of Policy & Improvement added that the capacity constraints mean that it will be necessary to see what can be achieved with the existing system (PM3) before looking at what can be done through the Contract Management Advisory Service (CMAS) in East Sussex County Council (ESCC). The PM3 system can be used now for reporting a number of outputs from procurement and it will be possible to see how CMAS can report on contract delivery.

31.6 The Committee asked if it would be possible to provide an update on how the Council is doing in securing Social Value and receiving Social Value commitments. The Chief Operating Officer responded that it will be possible to ensure the delivery on commitments is reported back to the Committee.

Carbon emissions reporting

31.7 The Committee noted that under recommendation 8c, there is a trial of a reporting platform for carbon emissions from contracts (scope 3). The Committee asked if it would be possible to have a demonstration of the system. The Head of Policy & Improvement confirmed that it would be possible to arrange a demonstration either on the test system or on the live system once some data had been loaded onto it.

Buying Local policy

31.8 The Committee asked if the Buying Local policy is working and whether the Council has information to demonstrate contractors are buying locally. The Chief Operating Officer outlined that the policy is working, and information is regularly reported on the amount of goods and services procured locally, which is currently around 66%. It was clarified that activity under this policy does not stop when the corporate plan target of 60% is reached.

Supply chain reviews and development

31.9 The Committee asked if there is an active supply chain review process in place to ensure the Council is getting value for money. The Chief Operating Officer responded that there has been two recent Internal Audits looking at supply chain risk. Supplier and contract management is decentralised to departments in the Council and a range of work is done to ensure value for money and the Council uses its buying power from contracts.

31.10 The Committee asked if horizon scanning is undertaken to ensure the Council knows when new suppliers enter the market and what the markets for various goods and services are doing. The Chief Operating Officer outlined that when tendering for contracts the Council ensures that requests to bid are advertised as widely as possible. There is also proactive market engagement to make sure the market can meet the Council's needs. The Head of Policy & Improvement added that the Council has to publish procurement notices and departmental teams carry out an assessment of the market and suppliers before going to market on large contracts that will capture any new market entrants.

31.11 The Committee RESOLVED to note the updates to the recommendations and action plan set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

32. UPDATE ON THE SPACES PROGRAMME

32.1 The Assistant Director Property introduced the report which sets out the activities of the Strategic Property Asset Collaboration in East Sussex (SPACES) programme since it was established in 2011. The Programme's remit has been extended since it was established to become the One Public Estate (OPE) Partnership for East Sussex, with a broader focus on regeneration, housing and sustainability priorities, based around continuing collaboration and utilisation of public sector assets. The original SPACES Programme was about getting collaboration between all the partners around operational space needs. There is proactive involvement of voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations around asset needs and links with other organisations. A list of current partners is given in appendix 1 of the report, and information about projects is contained in appendix 2.

32.2 The Committee thanked officers for the report and made a number of comments and asked questions about the content of the report. A summary of the Committee's discussion is given below.

Capacity for delivery of projects

32.3 The Committee asked officers about the potential capacity to deliver capital receipts and greater asset rationalisation across the partners. The Assistant Director Property outlined that the number of assets across all organisations with scope for capital receipts and increased co-location had reduced but there were still wider areas of partnership working in other fields. There are opportunities for joint working and collaboration on net zero (decarbonisation) work to reduce CO₂ emissions through bids to SALIX and other funding opportunities such as the Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF). Consequently, the focus of future work is not only around disposals, but about sharing resources and accessing central Government funding. BLRF funding received to date totals £1,761,000 (slide 3, Appendix 2). For the most recent BLRF funding round 2.3, SPACES has submitted bids with the potential value of £2,830,000. Confirmation of the round 2.3 awards are still pending until the Summer of 2024 (slide 4 Appendix 2).

32.4 The Committee asked if there are further opportunities for BLRF projects. The Assistant Director Property responded that access to the central Government BLRF fund will determine the opportunities for further projects on brownfield land. There are stringent conditions and tight deadlines attached to this funding which requires working with developers and planning authorities. This can make the delivery of projects quite complex and challenging. *(Post meeting note: Currently Brownfield Land Release Funding is only available for remediation works on Local Authority owned land to unlock and deliver housing, therefore other public sector organisations are unable to apply for BLRF).*

Information about projects

32.5 The Committee noted the number of past projects that the SPACES Programme had delivered and asked if more detailed information could be provided about the future projects and

the stakeholders involved with them. The Assistant Director Property outlined that it would be possible to provide information about future ESCC projects to relevant ESCC Local Members, including emerging applications for OPE/BLRF or other funding streams. It was noted that this will need to be aligned to partners/ project communications and engagement strategies and take into account where there are potential conflicts of interest or commercially confidential information. It was clarified that the numbers in the circles in the Live Projects Heatmap in appendix 2 relates to the number of separate projects in the same location, and that the Phase 10 OPE recent award of £150,000 (referenced on slide 3 and 9, appendix 2) is for supporting the 'Mayfield GP Surgery and Community Hall' project (led by Wealden District Council).

Asset transfer and working with developers

32.6 The Committee asked if there is a formal policy process for asset transfers to VCSE organisations in the SPACES Programme and if there is scope to involve developers. The Assistant Director Property explained that within the Programme there is a list of partner space needs and availability (including community groups' needs where provided), and this informs a matching process where needs are aligned with potential property assets. However, there is no formal asset transfer policy for the Programme as each partner may have their own policy depending on the organisations' key priorities. The SPACES Programme does engage with developers via the East Sussex Developers Group and other relevant partnerships or bodies through various forums as appropriate.

Measuring economic regeneration

32.7 The Committee noted that objective 5 of the SPACES Programme is to enable development opportunities to drive economic regeneration. It asked how the local economic regeneration benefits are measured. The Assistant Director Property outlined that the One Public Estate programme measures jobs and ongoing jobs metrics, which can be recorded and collated for projects. Information on the delivered, in progress and potential project benefits are included on slide 2, appendix 2.

Hailsham Aspires

32.8 Councillor Murphy commented that there had been a reduction in the scale of the projects covered by the Hailsham Aspires scheme, and it is possible that the new medical centre will not now be delivered. Consequently, the SPACES Programme will need to be clear about which projects relate to Hailsham Aspires. Councillor Murphy also asked about the provision of a new medical centre for Hailsham and how this issue might be referred to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) for its consideration.

32.9 The Assistant Director Property responded that the Hailsham Aspires scheme is still in the document as his understanding is that Wealden District Council is still looking at the provision of a medical centre and potentially leisure facilities, but this will be updated in the light of any upcoming decisions about changes to the scheme. Councillor Lunn commented that his understanding of the situation was that planning for a new medical centre is well advanced and a conversation with Wealden District Council may be needed to clarify the situation. The Senior Scrutiny Adviser commented that if the Committee agreed, it could resolve to refer the matter of the provision of sufficient healthcare facilities in Hailsham to HOSC. *(Post meeting note: At a meeting held on 13 March 2024, the Cabinet of Wealden District Council agreed to proceed with the provision of a new medical centre in Hailsham which was part of the Hailsham Aspires scheme. Consequently, a referral to HOSC is not necessary at this point in time).*

Funding of the SPACES Programme

32.10 The Committee asked about the funding of the SPACES Programme in terms of where the contributions come from at present and any future challenges regarding funding. The Assistant Director Property outlined that the SPACES Programme is funded by a combination of annual contributions from the majority of the partner organisations (e.g. District and Borough councils, NHS partners, Ambulance, Fire and Police services and the East Sussex College Group) and external grant funding. A number of partners are experiencing financial pressures, consequently, it will be necessary to review the future funding/resourcing of the Programme Team and service model in advance for the following financial years.

(Post meeting note: Clarification that whilst the SPACES programme does not receive ongoing revenue funding from One Public Estate (OPE), the current model is that the aforementioned partner organisation contributions are 'topped up' using external grant awarded from either historic funding or specific OPE one-off revenue funding. This grant funding is anticipated to run out in April 2025).

32.11 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the update report on the work of the SPACES programme, including its successes and future focus; and
- 2) Request that officers investigate a mechanism to notify ESCC Local Members of SPACES projects that are taking place in their Division or pending OPE/BLRF or external funding applications involving ESCC assets.

33. COMMUNITY ASSETS UPDATE

33.1 The Assistant Director Property introduced the report which provides an update on how the Council's assets have been used for community asset transfer by community and voluntary groups. The report also contained suggestions for revising the guidance on the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy for consideration by the Committee.

33.2 The Committee considered the report and made a number of comments and suggestions. A summary of the discussion and the points raised is given below.

Information on running costs

33.3 The Committee thanked officers for a good report which outlined how council owned properties and assets can be transferred to or leased by community groups. The Committee asked how community groups could find out about the running costs of a property that they may be interested in. The Assistant Director Property outlined that under the proposal in paragraph 2.18 d) of the report there will be a checklist provided to community groups listing the things that they may consider, including considerations like running costs. If at that stage the community group would like more information on things like utility costs, rent, insurance etc. this can be provided to them. Also, under the proposal in paragraph 2.18 h) there would be a named contact in the Property Services Team who they could contact for information or to answer questions they may have about a particular property, including whether it is surplus or in

operational use. It was clarified that responses to requests would be given within a reasonable timescale.

Local Government Act requirements and evaluation

33.4 The Committee observed that the Local Government Act General Disposal Consent Order 2003 requirements as set out in paragraph 2.9 of the report are an important principle and that this should be given prominence in the web site information. These requirements should also be included in the website information proposed in paragraph 2.18 a) and need to be made clear in the asset disposal process. It would also be really helpful for community organisations to understand the evaluation process the Lead Member has to go through when considering these requirements for asset disposals and longer leases.

33.5 The Assistant Director Property responded that this was a helpful point on the Local Government Act requirements and acknowledged that it would be useful for information on the requirements to be provided to community organisations. Lead Member reports for asset disposals and leases over seven years in length, do set out this information and will provide information on commercial offers and the other wider economic, social and well-being benefits for the Lead Member to consider. In terms of the evaluation process, recent Lead Member reports have included a matrix of evaluation criteria.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy

33.6 The Committee asked how the existing CAT policy would be streamlined and combined with the proposals for improvements. Committee members noted that they would not want to see the existing policy document reduced too far. The Assistant Director Property outlined that the idea was to revise the CAT policy by including a process map and information on the next steps in the process.

33.7 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the update report;
- 2) Agree the suggestions outlined in paragraph 2.18 of the report to provide greater awareness of community asset opportunities; and
- 3) Suggest that a decision making matrix is included in the information for community organisations on the Local Government Act considerations for disposals.

34. FOOD WASTE & ENVIRONMENT ACT 2021 REQUIREMENTS UPDATE REPORT

34.1 The Waste Team Manager introduced the report and outlined that the Government has provided additional information to councils to clarify the requirements for recycling services as part of the Environment Act. The Act requires all Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs - which are the District and Borough councils in East Sussex) to provide weekly food waste collections separate from other waste by March 2026.

34.2 The report provides further information on communal waste collection facilities and on funding arrangements. A total of £4.3 million in funding has been allocated to the WCAs in East Sussex (excluding Lewes District Council (LDC) who already have a food waste collection service) for capital expenditure on collection vehicles and food waste bins. There may also be some ongoing revenue support for collection authorities. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) as the Waste Disposal Authority will not receive any additional funding from the Government.

34.3 The impact on ESCC of having to dispose of more food waste as a result of the introduction of mandatory food waste collections will mean that some work will need to be carried out on the existing in vessel composting (IVC) facilities at the Woodlands facility in Whitesmith. There will also need to be some modifications to waste transfer stations and vehicles used to transport the waste. The Waste Team is working with Veolia on the likely costs to ESCC from the introduction of food waste collections.

34.4 The Team estimates that ESCC will receive around 16,000 tonnes of food waste a year for disposal, but will not know for sure until collections start. A waste composition analysis is being commissioned to provide an up to date estimate of the amount of food waste in black bag/bin, residual waste. Information from Brighton and Hove City Council in 2022 indicated that around 40% of black bag waste was food waste. In Surrey, where all councils currently operate a food waste collection service, around 25% of black bag waste was food waste.

34.5 The Woodlands IVC facility currently composts green waste and food waste from Lewes District Council (LDC). The composting process takes six weeks which sterilises the waste and produces a high quality compost which is used by local farmers and sold at the Household Waste Recycling Sites.

34.6 The Committee discussed the report and a summary of the questions and comments raised is given below.

Communications and quantity of food waste

34.7 The Committee commented that it would be good to have a communications campaign on food waste reduction and what residents can recycle. The Committee also asked about the amount of food waste that is likely to be collected and factors that may affect it. The Waste Team Manager outlined that there is usually an increase in the amount of food waste collected when collections are introduced and then volumes tend to go down. This could be due to residents being more aware of food waste which leads to a reduction or residents not participating in collections. The volumes of food waste collected by LDC have gone up and down, but the tonnage collected has been fairly low. This may be due to LDC having weekly residual waste collections rather than fortnightly ones which provide more of an incentive to put out food waste for collection. It was clarified that food waste percentages are measured by volume.

Can residents opt out of food waste collections

34.8 The Committee asked whether residents could opt out of food waste collections. The Waste Team Manager responded that residents could choose not to present food waste for collection, but councils have to provide a collection service.

Composting capacity and green waste

34.9 The Committee asked if the Woodlands facility had enough capacity to compost all the food waste and if there was enough green waste to mix with the food waste for the composting process to work properly. The Waste Team Manager confirmed that there was enough green waste to mix with the food waste for the composting process. He also outlined that the Woodlands facility has the capacity to process 43,000 tonnes of waste per year and should have sufficient capacity to deal with all the food waste. The Waste Team Manager added that a site visit to the Woodlands facility could be arranged for Committee members to see the composting process and what is involved.

Costs and cost effectiveness of the service

34.10 The Committee asked about the level of additional costs associated with disposing of food waste and whether it was cost effective given that ESCC has an incinerator and there may still be 20% food waste in the residual black bag waste after collections are introduced. The Waste Team Manager responded that the Team were still working with Veolia on the costs for the food waste disposal and there is a risk of additional costs to ESCC. This is subject to negotiation with Veolia as it will be a variation to the waste contract and is likely to include costs for sealed containers for the food waste, vehicles and the modification of waste transfer stations. The main driver for introducing food waste collections is to reduce carbon emissions from waste and it moves food waste up the waste and recycling hierarchy. However, the economics of introducing food waste collections are not entirely clear.

34.11 The Committee asked if Surrey County Council had carried out an analysis of why there was still around 25% food waste in black bag waste when there was a food waste collection service. The Waste Team Manager agreed to approach Surrey CC to find out if they had done any work on this.

Food waste contamination and biodegradable bags

34.12 The Committee asked whether the composting system could handle contamination of the food waste and how it would deal with biodegradable bags. The Waste Team Manager responded that the current garden waste has been incredibly clean, and the level of potential contamination is unknown. Screens and shredders are used in the process to filter out contaminants and Veolia is reasonably confident that the process can handle contaminants, but it is a concern. The standards for compost are very high and Veolia will reject waste if there is a high level of contamination. The process can handle compostable bags if they comply to the national standard. Some authorities have provided compostable bags to encourage food waste recycling, but this can lead to a reduction in food waste collected if they are withdrawn. It was clarified that food waste is usually collected in a separate vehicle.

34.13 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

35. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ROAD MARKINGS - UPDATE REPORT

35.1 The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services introduced the report which is a final update report on the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Road markings report. The Department's updated response to the recommendations is contained in appendix 1 of the report.

35.2 The Committee considered the report and a summary of the discussion of the report is given below.

Frequency of line marking

35.3 The Committee asked whether the Council was now able to renew road markings more quickly than before. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services outlined that the highway maintenance base budget for road markings has been increased as part of the new highways maintenance contract and there is a one road marking team working all year round. Part of the capital budget is also spent on road markings which is used for the machine laid programme of renewing road markings. The Highways Team is also spending an additional £500,000 on road markings that was allocated by Cabinet after the scrutiny review. At present there are two teams working on renewing road markings around the county.

35.4 The Committee asked if ESCC has a duty to maintain road markings under the Highways Act. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services explained that local policy sets out how often line markings are renewed. Consequently, the frequency of maintenance is based on local, not national, policy.

35.5 The Committee enquired about the priority of maintenance for road crossings and other road safety markings. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services set out that all road markings are there to create a safe environment for road users and the maintenance frequency priorities are set by local policy. If road markings important for road safety are worn (e.g. for crossings), they will be refreshed. The Council uses a risk based approach and Highway Stewards can request road markings to be refreshed as part of their routine inspections.

Renewing road markings where road surfaces are deteriorating

35.6 The Committee commented that in some situations the poor condition of road surfacing may prevent road markings being renewed and asked what happens in these situations. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services responded that road markings are replaced when carrying out road repairs and the teams will look to renew road markings as part of capital road maintenance schemes. In general, road markings will not be renewed on road surfaces that are damaged and will be replaced after repairs have been carried out.

Autonomous Vehicles

35.7 The Committee commented that road markings are becoming important for the use of Autonomous Vehicles which need to calculate their position on the road. This may become an issue in future if Autonomous Vehicles come into widespread use and start using roads across the road network.

Road markings for parking enforcement

35.8 The Committee commented that a lot of the road markings in built up areas were associated with parking bays or parking restrictions and asked whether there was a case for using the parking enforcement budget further to keep road markings refreshed. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services commented that the highways team do respond to requests from the Parking Team to renew road markings for parking enforcement. However, the requests do not constitute a significant amount of work or cost.

Impact of the recommendations on road safety and traffic management

35.9 The Committee asked whether the scrutiny review report had made a difference to road safety outcomes and traffic management. The Contracts Manager, Highway Infrastructure Services responded that ESCC is responsible for providing a safe road network and the service does not have a high level of safety issues related to the way the network is managed. It is difficult to provide direct evidence of the impact of the report, but it has helped maintain the status quo of a safe environment for road users.

35.10 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) note the updates to the recommendations and action plan set out in Appendix 1; and
- 2) sign off the review as complete, with all recommendations now being embedded as business as usual.

36. WORK PROGRAMME

36.1 The Chair and Senior Scrutiny Adviser introduced the report on the Committee's work future work programme.

Scrutiny reviews

36.2 The Committee discussed and agreed the priorities for the scrutiny review topics as set out in the report, starting with scoping of a scrutiny review of Speed Limit Policy to be followed by Footway Maintenance and then Highway Drainage. The Committee asked what capacity there was to undertake the scrutiny reviews and whether it would be possible to undertake all four topics before March 2024. The Senior Scrutiny Adviser outlined that it would be possible to undertake the Speed Limit Policy review in the next six months and one other review, but this would be dependent on the agreed scope of reviews. The Chair suggested that the Committee start work on the first two reviews and then leave the others on the work programme to follow if time and resources permit. The Committee were in agreement with this approach.

36.3 The Committee agreed to establish a scoping board for a potential scrutiny review of Speed Limit Policy. Members of the Committee were invited to indicate if they wished to take part in this review work. Councillors Beaver, Hilton, Murphy, Redstone and Wright indicated that they would like to take part as well as Councillors Hollidge and Kirby-Green who had previously indicated that they wished to take part. The Committee agreed the above councillors would form the membership of the scoping board.

36.4 The Chair asked Committee members to let him, or the Senior Scrutiny Adviser, know after the meeting if they wished to take part in the scrutiny review work on the topics of Footway Maintenance or Highways Drainage.

Additional work programme items

36.5 The Committee discussed the suggestions for additions to the work programme as outlined in paragraph 2.5 of the report. Councillor Murphy commented that he had used the services at The Keep and would recommend a visit to understand the work that is undertaken at The Keep. Councillor Hilton suggested that the parking policy item where it relates to Electric Vehicles (EVs) is included in an update report on the provision of EV charge points as a way of combining items on the work programme. Councillor Hollidge outlined that he considered that the parking policy should be urgently reviewed on the grounds of fairness as there is a disparity in charging between the different areas within the county (e.g. people pay more for residents parking permits in Hastings than in Bexhill) and other issues that determine the use of road space. Councillor Brett commented that there may be linkages between the Active Travel ratings and the Speed Limit Policy review and that might be a way of including this item.

36.6 The Chair suggested that the Committee could agree to include these additional items in the work programme and the Committee could undertake work on them if there is sufficient time. The Senior Scrutiny Adviser commented that the best way to include the item on The Keep may be to undertake the suggested work as part of a site visit and outlined that the Committee had carried out a previous review of services at The Keep which had included details of the income generation activity that was undertaken by the service to offset costs. In regard to the Active Travel ratings the Committee could see if this fitted within the scope of the Speed Limit Policy review and if not treat it as a separate report item on the work programme. The Senior Scrutiny Adviser suggested that the four additional items could be included in the work programme if the committee was in agreement with the suggested approaches. The Committee members confirmed they were happy with this approach.

Forward Plan and Training activities

36.7 The Chair asked the Committee to let him know if there were any items on the Forward Plan that they wished to include in the work programme and advise him or the Senior Scrutiny Adviser if there were any training topics they would like to cover.

Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) Working Group

36.8 The Committee agreed to re-establish the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) Working Group with the existing membership and Chair, together with any other Committee members who wished to take part in this work.

Reports for information/briefings

36.9 The Committee asked for timings for the two reports/briefings listed under this section of the work programme on the Future use of County Hall, and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) software technology within the Council. The Chief Operating Officer outlined that work was being undertaken on both of these topics over the next two months and reports or briefings for the Committee would follow on after that work.

36.10 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) agree the agenda items for the future Committee meetings, including items listed in the updated work programme in appendix 1;
- 2) agree the topics and priorities for Scrutiny Reviews to be included in the Committee's future work programme as set out in the report;
- 3) note the upcoming items on East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) Forward Plan in appendix 2;
- 4) notify the Chair and Senior Scrutiny Adviser of any requests for training and development activities including the topics for 'bitesize' training sessions; and
- 5) agree to re-establish the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) Working Group to provide scrutiny input into an update of the corporate climate emergency action plan on behalf of the Committee as set out in section 5.4 of the report

37. ANY OTHER ITEMS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 4

37.1 Councillor Murphy raised the issue of highway drainage on Old Swan Lane in Hailsham (linked to minute 2.18 of the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023). The road is regularly covered in water to a depth of six to eight inches (15 – 20cm) at times of heavy rainfall, and the land either side of the road onto which the highway should drain is owned by Southern Water. The highway drains on the seaward side are not working and Councillor Murphy asked if the Committee could write to Southern Water to take action on this issue.

37.2 The Committee RESOLVED that the Chair should write to Southern Water on behalf of the Committee to request that they take action on this issue.

The meeting ended at 12.44 pm.

Councillor Matthew Beaver (Chair)

Report to: Place Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 12 July 2024

By: Chief Executive

Title: Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)

Purpose: To begin the committee's input to the Council's business and financial planning process (Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources) for 2025/26.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The scrutiny committee is recommended to:

- (1) Consider information within the 2023/24 end of year Council monitoring report and State of the County 2024 report and the implications for services within the remit of the committee;**
 - (2) Agree key areas for scrutiny focus as part of RPPR planning, including any further information required for consideration by the committee at its September awayday; and**
 - (3) Establish a RPPR scrutiny board to consider the developing Portfolio Plans and financial plans and to submit scrutiny's final comments on them to Cabinet in January 2025.**
-

1. Background

1.1 On 25 June 2024 Cabinet considered two reports which form important annual milestones in the ongoing Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) cycle – the Council's integrated business and financial planning process.

1.2 The end of year performance monitoring report for 2023/24 set out the Council's position and year-end projections for the Council Plan targets, revenue budget and capital programme, together with strategic risks at the end of March 2024. The State of the County 2024 report set out the current operating context for the Council in preparation for more detailed planning for the 2025/26 financial year and beyond. The report provided an up to date understanding of how the Council will need to continue to respond to the wide range of policy, demographic and financial drivers which influence the outlook for the authority.

1.3 The State of the County report highlighted the significant financial and operational challenges facing the Council. The post general election period holds the potential for significant policy change which would impact on the county's residents, businesses and communities, and the Council and partner services which provide them with vital support. Most significantly, we begin our planning for 2025/26 and beyond from an unprecedented financial position with the current year's planned balanced budget being reliant on the use of reserves, which by definition can only be used once, creating a pressing need for further action to address the underlying budget deficit. The possibility of a further one year financial settlement due to the election, followed by a spending review, makes the medium to longer term financial outlook for the Council, and local government more broadly, highly uncertain, although it is clear that public finances will remain very constrained with many competing demands.

1.4 Alongside the high level of both policy and financial uncertainty, we continue to see locally the ongoing legacy of the Covid pandemic and increased cost of living manifest in growing need. Our biggest statutory services – social care for children and adults, support for special educational needs and disability (SEND), transport and highways maintenance – continue to face escalating costs and demand arising from factors largely outside our control. This, along with ongoing

workforce challenges and new duties arising from national reforms, is placing unsustainable pressures on services across the Council.

1.5 Taken together, these national and local factors make future service and financial planning very challenging. When the 2024/25 balanced budget was approved by Full Council on 6 February 2024, the deficit on the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2026/27 was £61.825m. The updated MTFP position at State of the County is an increased deficit by 2027/28 of £83.601m. Existing financial pressures that have already impacted in 2023/24, whilst recognised within the additional investment when the budget was set, are expected to continue into 2024/25, particularly in Children's Services, where Looked After Children and Home to School Transport service demands are significant, and Adult Social Care, due to the impact of the national living wage increase and rising levels of debt from client contributions. In addition, emergent pressures are likely in SEND and Adult Social Care independent sector placements. The level of uncertainty means it was not possible to present a detailed MTFP as part of State of the County and further work is required to produce a full update for the autumn.

1.6 The State of the County report sets out work already underway in response to the financial position and proposed next steps, including exploring areas of search for further savings.

2. Place scrutiny committee engagement in RPPR

2.1 This committee's contribution to the RPPR process is vitally important and is threaded through all scrutiny work. The insight and evidence gathered through previous and ongoing scrutiny work is drawn together and enhanced in specific RPPR sessions which will, ultimately, enable the committee to provide commentary and recommendations to be taken into account by Cabinet and Council before a final decision is taken on the updated Council Plan, budget and MTFP early in 2025. The diagram attached at **appendix 1** summarises scrutiny involvement throughout the annual RPPR cycle.

2.2 The **July scrutiny committee** meeting focuses on reviewing current service and financial performance information contained in the end of year monitoring report, and giving consideration to the new developments which will impact on services as set out in the forward-looking demographic, policy and financial analysis in the State of the County report. This is to ensure the committee has a full understanding of the current context and future pressures for the service areas within its remit.

2.3 The following attachments are provided to support the committee in these tasks:

- **Appendix 2** comprises extracts from the 2023/24 **end of year monitoring report** considered by Cabinet in June and County Council on 9 July – departmental appendices not relevant to this committee's remit have been removed. The Strategic Risk Register (appendix 8 of the end of year monitoring report) is included for information, however the Audit Committee has a lead role in relation to oversight of risk management and the Strategic Risk Register.
- **Appendix 3** contains the full **State of the County report** as considered by Cabinet in June and County Council on 9 July. The committee is invited to focus on the elements relevant to services within its remit, particularly in appendix 2 to the report – the national and local policy outlook.

2.4 Based on the information in the attached reports, and Members' wider accumulated knowledge and evidence, the committee is invited to identify any key areas of focus for scrutiny which it wishes to pursue through forthcoming RPPR discussions and/or its wider work programme. This includes any additional information required for the September meeting or awayday to inform the committee's input to the RPPR process.

2.5 Areas of interest to be prioritised for scrutiny may arise from, for example, areas experiencing performance challenges or demand pressures, significant policy changes or new service developments. Careful selection of topics to focus on will enable the committee to be well positioned to comment on the impact of service changes, future service delivery and budget proposals as part of the ongoing RPPR process.

Future Timetable

2.6 The **September 2024 and November 2024 scrutiny committee meetings** will consider any additional information which has been requested and any updated information reported to Cabinet during the autumn. Further refinements to the committees' ongoing work programmes can also be considered at each meeting. In addition, the committee's **awayday on 9 September** provides an opportunity to receive more detailed information on any specific areas of interest identified by Members, and to review the overall work programme to ensure it is aligned to strategic priorities for the Council and scrutiny.

2.7 The committee is also asked to agree the membership of its **RPPR board**, which will meet on **9 December 2024** to agree detailed comments and any recommendations on the emerging Portfolio Plans and financial plans to be put to Cabinet on behalf of the scrutiny committee.

2.8 The **March 2025 scrutiny committee meeting is an opportunity to** review the process and scrutiny input into the RPPR process and receive feedback on this input has been reflected in final plans. Any issues arising can be reflected in the future work programme.

2.9 Running alongside the scrutiny process, whole Council Member forums will ensure that Members can keep an overview of the emerging picture across all service areas including the impacts of national announcements on our plans. Chief Officers will also provide any briefings required by group spokespersons to assist them in contributing to the RPPR process.

BECKY SHAW **Chief Executive**

Contact Officer: Martin Jenks, Senior Scrutiny Adviser
Tel No. 01273 481327
Email: martin.jenks@eastsussex.gov.uk

Local Members:

All

Background Documents:

None

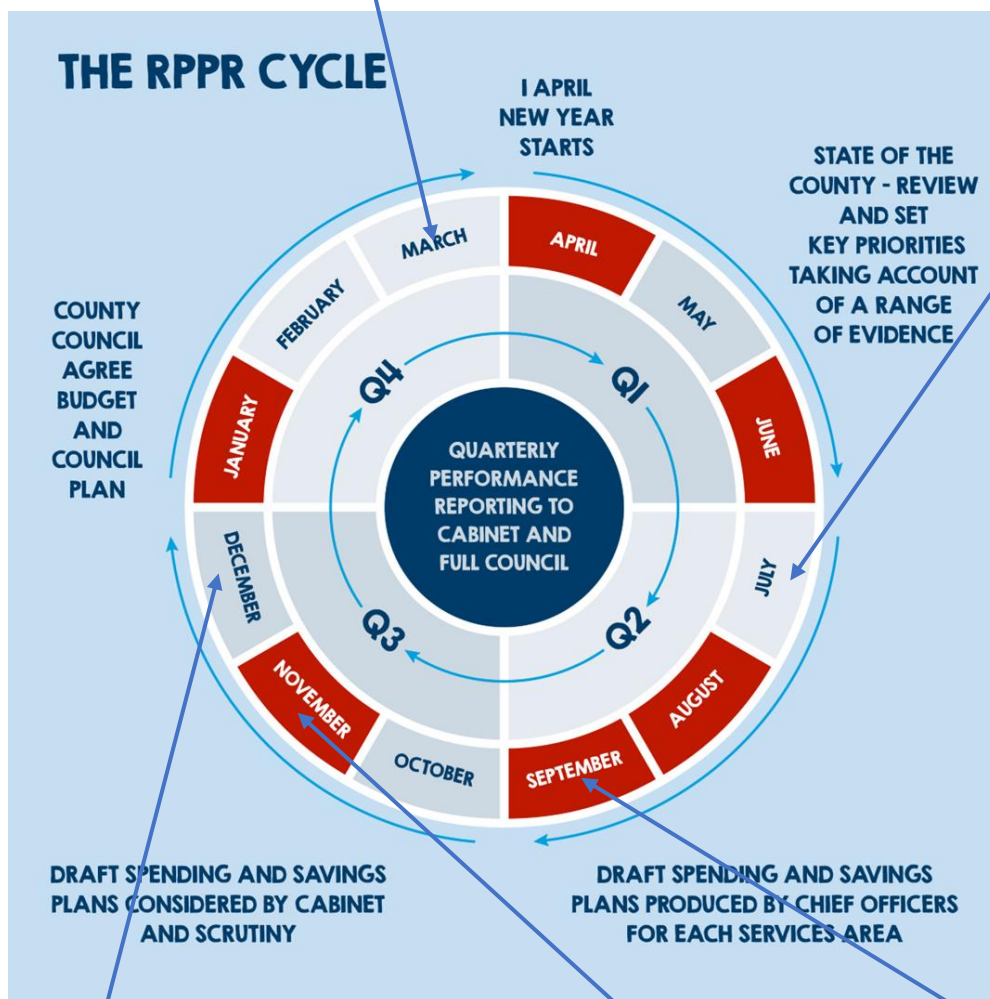
This page is intentionally left blank

5. March scrutiny committee meetings

Scrutiny committees review their input into the budget setting and business planning process, receive feedback on any specific recommendations and consider any potential improvement to the way they are involved in the process for the coming year, including the information they receive and the way they scrutinise the planning process.

1. July scrutiny committee meetings

Scrutiny committees review the Q4 Council Monitoring report (backward look) and the State of the County report (forward look) with a focus on services within their remit. The Q4 report enables committees to scrutinise performance in relation to the Council's targets, financial performance and risk issues over the previous year. The State of the County report enables scrutiny to consider the key issues in the policy, financial and operating environment for the relevant service areas in the coming planning period. The committees identify any aspects of performance, policy, budget or service issues that they would like to explore in more detail through their autumn business planning (RPPR) agenda items or via their broader work programme.



Scrutiny input is embedded throughout the annual budget setting and business planning (RPPR) cycle

4. December RPPR Boards

The committees' RPPR Boards scrutinise the latest information on the overall financial position, including the provisional settlement if available, relevant draft updated Portfolio Plans and savings plans. Scrutiny comments and recommendations on financial and service plans for the coming year are agreed and submitted for consideration by Cabinet in January.

3. November scrutiny meetings

The committees continue to consider the latest available information on the policy and financial context, review any additional information requested in September and agree any further information required for committees' RPPR Boards.

2. September scrutiny meetings

The committees consider the latest available information on the policy and financial context for the coming year and review any additional budget or service information requested in July. Further information or scrutiny work is agreed as required.

This page is intentionally left blank

Title: Council Monitoring Report – end of year 2023/24
Report to: Cabinet
Date: 25 June 2024
Report by: Chief Executive
Purpose: To report Council monitoring for the full year 2023/24

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

1) note the latest monitoring position for the Council.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the Council's position and year-end projections for the Council Plan targets, Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, and Savings Plan, together with Risks at the end of March 2024.

1.2 Broad progress against the Council's four strategic priority outcomes is summarised in paragraph 4 and an overview of finance and performance data is provided in the Corporate Summary at Appendix 1. Strategic risks are reported at Appendix 8.

2. Overview of Council Plan 2023/24 outturns and strategic risks

2.1 We set challenging targets each year that reflect our aim to deliver the best services we can for our local residents and businesses with the limited resources we have available. While there have been a number of successes for our services over the past year, there are also areas that have experienced challenges. The Departmental Appendices (3-7) provide details of both our achievements and how we are working to improve where targets have not been met.

2.2 Overall 37 (64%) of the 58 Council Plan targets were achieved and 14 (24%) were not achieved. 7 (12%) do not have results available yet and are carried over for reporting in quarter 1 2024/25. The carry overs are measures where action has been completed, but the year-end outturn data is not yet available to report against the target.

2.3 Of the 58 targets, the outturns for 14 (24%) are not comparable with the outturns from 2022/23. Of the remaining 44 measures which can be compared, 23 (40%) improved or were at the maximum (i.e., the most that can be achieved); 14 (24%) had a lower outturn; and 7 (12%) do not have results available yet and are carried over for reporting in quarter 1 2024/25. Although 14 measures are showing a lower outturn compared with 2022/23, 10 of these met their target for 2023/24.

2.4 The Strategic Risk Register, Appendix 8, was reviewed and updated to reflect the Council's risk profile. Risk 12 (Cyber Attack) has updated risk definition and risk control. Risk 1 (Roads), Risk 4 (Health), Risk 6 (Local Economic Growth), Risk 9 (Workforce) and Risk 15 (Climate) have updated risk controls.

3 Budget Outturn

3.1 The details of revenue over and underspends in each department are set out in the relevant appendices, and show a total overspend of £30.1m. This is an increase of £1.0m from quarter 3. The main headlines are:

- Children's Services (CSD) is overspent by £30.4m (£28.5m at quarter 3).

The main area of overspend is in Early Help and Social Care (EH&SC) of £29.8m, an increase from quarter 3 of £1.9m. The main pressures are within Looked After Children, with lost income due to delays in Lansdowne opening and cost pressures for Agency Residential placements, continuing the trend demonstrated this year of a small number of children placing high pressure on the budget. The service has worked with IMPOWER to support longer term

placement sufficiency and identify opportunities for delivering improved care placement options for children and young people through the 'Valuing Care' approach. The aim of this work is also to identify cost reductions and efficiencies within the service.

There is also an increased overspend of £1.2m within the Home to Schools Transport service. There has been an increase in pupil numbers qualifying for transport and contract costs have also increased for the new academic year cohort, where they couldn't be added to existing routes. The CSD Team will be working closely with the Communities, Economy and Transport transport service to explore all possible mitigations to reduce costs.

The CSD overspend will be funded Corporately for 2023/24 as follows:

Mitigation of CSD Overspend	£m
Forecast overspend	(30.1)
Mitigated by:	
Treasury Management underspend	8.2
Underspend on Capital Programme	1.8
Part of underspend on Pensions	0.3
General Contingency	4.9
Use of provision for budgetary risks	3.5
Business Rates Levy surplus	0.9
Agreed use of COMF	1.3
Covid-19 General Funding (balance held Corporately)	5.7
Council Tax Collection Fund Surplus	2.0
Use of Financial Management Reserve	1.5
Subtotal Mitigation	30.1

- The outturn for Adult Social Care is an overspend of £2.0m (decrease of £0.001m since quarter 3). It comprises an overspend of £2.9m in the Independent Sector due to a number of factors including increasing complexity of need, plus pressures arising from demand and demographic growth returning to pre-pandemic levels of modelling. This is offset by an underspend of £0.9m in Directly Provided Services, mainly being due to staffing vacancies which reflects difficulties in recruitment.
- Communities, Economy and Transport has underspent by £1.7m (£1.3m at quarter 3). The largest underspend is £2.0m in Transport and Operations where current market prices mean that electricity and recycling income is exceeding expectations in the Waste Service. The underspend of £0.4m in Communities is mostly due to staff vacancies in Trading Standards and Road Safety with additional income from Emergency Planning training. Customer and Libraries have underspent by £0.3m due to staff costs and additional income in libraries, and slippage in maintenance at the Keep.

These are netted against an overspend of £0.6m in Highways due to the estimated increased cost of electricity for streetlighting; an overspend of £0.3m in Transport Development Control within Planning and Environment due to an increase in speculative planning applications for residential developments, which often have challenging transport issues that need addressing; and a £0.1m overspend in Economy which is mostly due the cost of consultants engaged to help transition SELEP funded projects back into Council control.

- Business Services has an underspend of £0.4m (£0.07m at quarter 2), mainly due to: higher staff recharges to Orbis, higher than expected Ukraine funding plus lower consultancy and Audit fees within Finance & Business Administration: higher recharges for project managers and higher than anticipated licence recharges within IT & Digital.
- Governance Services has a final underspend of £0.163m (£0.05m overspend at quarter 3). The forecast overspend on Coroners (due to costs of mortuary provision, court hire, body removal, toxicology and staffing, as well as accumulative demands on the service) decreased

due to a reduction on demand compared to that anticipated. The overspend in Corporate Support is due to the cost of covering maternity leave in Legal Services, partially offset with staff vacancies elsewhere.

3.2 Within Treasury Management (TM), Centrally Held Budgets (CHB) and corporate funding there is an underspend of £18.6m including the general contingency (£18.5m at quarter 3):

- In CHB there is an underspend of £0.6m for Pensions because of the actuarial revaluation. This is offset by an accounting adjustment of £0.6m to reflect the potential risk that increasing outstanding debt levels will not be settled. The General Contingency of £4.9m will be required in full to offset service overspend.
- There is an £8.2m underspend on TM, based on a continued improvement in the current forecasts for our market investment returns and increased cash balances. The anticipated average investment return for the year has increased to 5.39% from the 4.45% assumed when the budget was set, based on the latest forecasts from our external treasury management advisors. In addition, slippage on the Capital Programme and an increase in our cash balances has reduced the need to borrow externally in 2023/24.
- The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy published the revised Treasury and Prudential codes in 2021. These require quarterly reporting of performance against forward looking prudential indicators. The performance of the Council's treasury management activity against benchmarks and the key indicators in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, as approved by Full Council on 7 February 2023, are provided at Appendix 2.
- The aforementioned slippage on the Capital Programme has resulted in an underspend of £1.8m, where two transfers for Capital Expenditure from Revenue Account have not been utilised this financial year.
- There is a planned £3.5m use of the in-year provision made for budgetary risks to cover part of the remaining overspend on service budgets.
- The £0.9m underspend on Business Rates is mainly due to the Levy Surplus Distribution for 2023/24, announced alongside the Local Government Finance Settlement on 5 February 2024, plus movements in pool monitoring.

3.3 The Council is still experiencing residual COVID-19 related costs and income losses which are being mitigated from general and specific COVID-19 grant funding. The balance of COVID-19 General Funding will be used to meet CSD cost pressures. The following table shows the use of this funding in 2023/24:

COVID-19 Grants 2023/24 (£m)	Carried forward	Estimated use in-year (including payback*)	Balance to offset CSD overspend	Specific set-aside for LAC in future years	Estimated balance remaining
COVID-19 General Funding	9.1	(1.6)	(5.7)	(1.8)	-
COVID-19 Specific Funding	4.3	(3.9)	-	-	0.4
Total funding	13.4	(5.5)	(5.7)	(1.8)	0.4

*To date the Council has repaid £2.1m of unused grant.

3.4 Capital Programme expenditure for the year is £77.5m against a budget of £85.9m, a net variation of £8.4m. The main headlines are:

- Total slippage of £9.6m across a number of projects as the programme continues to experience extended lead-in times, and where inflation and material cost increases have resulted in the pause and reassessment of a number of projects to ensure delivery within budgets, as well as other project specific factors. The largest areas of slippage include the Highways Structural Maintenance programme (£2.0m), Integrated Transport Schemes (£1.1m), Youth Investment Fund project (£0.9m), Bridge Assessment and Strengthening (£0.7m), Exceat Bridge

Replacement (£0.6m), IT& Digital Programme (£0.6m) and the Visibly Better Roads programme (£0.5m).

- A net overspend of £0.2m, mainly relating to the Bexhill and Hastings Link Road (£0.6m) where project costs remain for post excavation archaeology, landscaping, and compensation, which is offset to a large extent by various smaller underspends
- A number of minor spends in advance totalling £1.1m across a number of projects.

4 Progress against Council Priorities

Driving sustainable economic growth

4.1 The Council has spent £311m with 847 local suppliers over the past 12 months. This is 64% of our total spend exceeding our target of 60%. We have continued, throughout 2023/24, to work with suppliers to maximise the social value delivered by our contracts, with benefits that were equal to 31% of the contract values being achieved, against a target of 10% (Appendix 4).

4.2 Work on our highways has taken place in 2023/24, using the additional funding approved by the Council in recognition of the deterioration of the network following the last prolonged, wet and cold winter. 564 patches across 337 sites were completed. 102 road signs have been replaced, with a further 427 signs scheduled to be replaced in 2024/25. Around 180 drainage schemes have been delivered, including replacing gully covers and clearing significant blockages. 117 road improvement schemes were completed in 2023/24 and 29,357 potholes were repaired (Appendix 6).

4.3 A number of projects have been implemented in 2023/24 using the £41.4m of funding assigned to the Council as part of the Government's Bus Service Improvement Plan. £13m of bus service improvements have begun, including the Flexibus service which covers over 90% of East Sussex. £5m is allocated for reduced fares which are scheduled to run until April 2025. Improvements to bus stop infrastructure have been made, including the installation of 2,560 QR code plates, new hard standing areas and the installation of Real Time Information signs at a number of stops (Appendix 6).

4.4 Several programmes have helped people into work or improved their skills in 2023/24. These projects included the Multiply programme, which supported 950 people to improve their numeracy skills; the Moving on Up and Support into Work schemes which helped 265 homeless and refugee residents into work; and 65 young people starting work experience placements in libraries (Appendix 6).

4.5 The average Attainment 8 score for state funded schools in East Sussex in academic year 2022/23 was 43.6. This is below our target of 46.5 and below the national average of 46.4. The average Attainment 8 score for disadvantaged pupils in East Sussex was 30.3. This is below our target of 33.3 and below the national average of 35.1. The average Attainment 8 score for Looked After Children was 18.9. This is just below our target of 19 and the national average of 19.4 (Appendix 5).

4.6 The percentage of young people who are in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at academic age 16 (year 12) is 4.4% against a target of below 4%. For academic age 17 (year 13), 6% of young people are NEET against a target of below 6%. We have been successful in a bid for Education and Skills Funding Agency funding to increase the vocational offer for young people in 2024/25 (Appendix 5).

4.7 The development of the Sussex Story has been delayed due to performance management issues needing to be addressed on the overall contract awarded to the consultants. As a result, the Council, as the lead contractor on behalf of partners, severed the contract and withheld 25% of the contract fee. A new supplier will be identified to complete the work in 2024/25, with the cost for the outstanding work to be met by the remaining 25% budget (Appendix 6).

Keeping vulnerable people safe

4.8 The inspection of the Council Local Authority Children's Services by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) Inspections took place from 11 – 15 December 2023. This was a short inspection. The inspection report was published 6 February 2024, and we were awarded an overall effectiveness grading of Good with the experiences and progress of children in care graded as Outstanding (Appendix 5).

4.9 The rate of Looked After Children has decreased from a rate of 63 (671 children) at quarter 3, to 61.5 (655 children) at the end of 2023/24, against a target of 63.4 (676 children). The decrease has resulted from a focus on reunification work with children and their birth families, and discharges from care into Special Guardianship, Adoption and Child Arrangement Orders. The rate of children with a Child Protection plan has decreased from a rate of 70.6 (753 children) at quarter 3 to 64.6 (688 children) at the end of 2023/24, however, this is above the target of 62 (661 children) (Appendix 5).

4.10 Children's Services formally launched Connected Families Intervention Practitioners in January 2024. The team are adult facing specialist practitioners, delivering support and interventions with parents/carers of children on Children in Need or Child Protection plans, who are experiencing domestic abuse, problematic mental health and/or problematic drug and alcohol use. Since their launch the practitioners have supported 177 parents and there has been a reduction in the number of Child Protection plans (Appendix 5).

4.11 The latest figures (from 2022) for deaths from drug or alcohol misuse show 77 people died in the county. Within that total there was a significant decrease in the number of people who died as a result of drug misuse compared to previous years. Every death is a tragedy, and we continue to work hard to reduce the number of deaths every year, including by working with partners to ensure people receive support as early as possible (Appendix 3).

4.12 The Government's Sustainable Warmth Scheme, which was delivered through the Council's Warm Home Check Service came to an end in October 2023. Between 2022/23 and 2023/24 over £2m of major home energy efficiency improvements were installed for fuel poor households. Over 600 warm home checks were completed during 2023/24 and the 'keep warm and well' helpline provided brief advice to over 8,000 residents (Appendix 3).

4.13 The White Ribbon charity aims to prevent violence against women and girls by addressing its root causes. The Council was reaccredited as a White Ribbon organisation in quarter 4. The Safer Communities team are scheduled to submit a three-year action plan to White Ribbon UK in quarter 2 2024/25. During quarter 4, the Safer Communities Team supported Clarion to open four self-contained units at Phoenix House for people fleeing domestic violence in East Sussex. These units have expanded the options for safe accommodation in East Sussex, especially for those where communal refuges may not be always appropriate (Appendix 3).

Helping people help themselves

4.14 The Tribe project, an app and website that makes it easier to volunteer across the county, was launched in quarter 2. By quarter 4 there were 434 listings on the platform from 141 organisations. 323 of these listings were volunteering opportunities and 111 activities for people to take part in. In February 2024, the Council and Tribe created a promotional campaign that reached over 50,000 residents, encouraging volunteering across East Sussex (Appendix 3).

4.15 The number of people receiving Direct Payments fell from 1,520 at the end of 2022/23 to 1,457 at the end of 2023/24. The number has also decreased as a proportion of all clients, due to an increase in the number of people receiving community based long term support meaning this remains below target. Despite this, the Council's performance is still good compared to national benchmarks. Based on current national data, performance would fall within the upper-middle quartile (Appendix 3).

4.16 333 carers were supported through short-term crisis intervention in 2023/24, against a target of 390. The service relies on receiving referrals direct from carers or via other organisations. There

is evidence that carers do not identify themselves as having a caring role, and being in need of support. Adult Social Care will look in more detail at reasons for the drop in referrals and explore solutions with the provider to increase referrals to the service (Appendix 3).

4.17 11 family hubs were opened across the county in 2023/24. Family hubs provide support and advice from midwives, health visitors, early communications support workers, early years practitioners and more. Activity sessions give children, parents and carers the chance to socialise and support their children's needs and development (Appendix 5).

Making best use of resources now and for the future

4.18 Throughout 2023/24 our corporate lobbying work has focussed on using our partnerships and networks at the local, regional, and national level to influence policy development in a range of areas, including investment in highways and children's services, as well as local authority funding more generally. During quarter 4, the Council outlined to East Sussex MPs the severe financial pressures facing the authority and asked for support in lobbying ministers to increase the funding in the Final Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) 2024/25. This successfully resulted in a number of local MPs signing a letter organised by the County Councils' Network that called for more funding in the LGFS and an additional £600m of national funding for social care subsequently being made available in that settlement. Also, during quarter 4, ahead of a debate in the House of Commons, the Director of Children's Services provided a written briefing to MPs on pressures in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities system, which included proposed solutions to address these pressures. This briefing was mentioned during the debate and a copy provided to the Minister for consideration (Appendix 7).

4.19 25 energy efficiency projects have been completed in 2023/24 meeting the target for the year, including 5 LED lighting projects and 10 solar PV energy generation schemes. Triple glazing and loft, door and wall insulation has been installed at 5 schools in the county. 3 heat decarbonisation projects have been completed to transition from oil boilers to air source heat pumps at schools. 2 asset rationalisation projects have also been completed, ensuring more modern facilities with reduced carbon emissions. Projected energy consumption at the end of quarter 3 (reported a quarter in arrears) was down 33% on the 2019/20 baseline, against a cumulative target of 43% for the year. If energy use in quarter 4 was the same as quarter 4 2022/23, our Scope 1 & 2 carbon emissions would reduce by 2% in 2023/24 compared with 2022/23 (Appendix 4).

4.20 The Council has continued to work with a range of partners to develop and deliver carbon reduction and climate change adaptation work in 2023/24. This included securing funding for a feasibility study for a potential solar farm on a former landfill site. Funding was secured to develop a plan to provide people with the skills to retrofit domestic properties and reduce their carbon emissions. Small and Medium Enterprises were assisted to measure their carbon footprint and awarding grants to businesses to improve their energy efficiency and install renewable energy systems (Appendix 6).

4.21 The Council has received 90% of the £4.4m allocated to East Sussex from the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund. The remaining 10% will be paid once the final contract has been approved. The funding will support the delivery of on street electric vehicle chargepoints in the county. It is expected that procurement of the contract will begin in quarter 2 2024/25, and that Initial work to deliver chargepoints will follow in quarter 4 2024/25 (Appendix 6).

4.22 The 2023/24 sickness absence figure (excluding schools) is 9.13 days per Full Time Equivalent role (FTE). Although this is a decrease of 9.3% since 2022/23, the 2023/24 target of 9.10 days per FTE has not been met. Mental health absences have increased by 772 days compared to 2022/23, and extra support is being offered to staff to help deal with this issue (Appendix 4).

Becky Shaw, Chief Executive

How to read this report

This report integrates monitoring for finance, performance and risk. Contents are as follows:

- Cover report (includes how to read this report)
- Appendix 1 Corporate Summary
- Appendix 2 Treasury Management Prudential Indicators
- Appendix 3 Adult Social Care and Health – (ASCH)
- Appendix 4 Business Services (Department) – (BSD)
- Appendix 5 Children’s Services (Department) – (CSD)
- Appendix 6 Communities, Economy and Transport – (CET)
- Appendix 7 Governance Services – (GS)
- Appendix 8 Strategic Risk Register

Cover report, Appendix 1 and Appendix 2

The cover report, Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 provide a concise corporate summary of progress against all our Council Plan Targets (full year outturns at quarter 4), Revenue Budget, Savings Targets, Capital Programme and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators.

The cover report highlights a selection of key topics from the departmental appendices, for the four Council priorities:

- driving sustainable economic growth;
- keeping vulnerable people safe;
- helping people help themselves; and
- making best use of resources now and for the future.

More information on each of these topics is provided in the relevant departmental appendix referenced in brackets, e.g. (Appendix 3). More detailed performance and finance data is also available in the departmental appendices.

Departmental Appendices 3-7

The departmental appendices provide a single commentary covering issues and progress against key topics for the department (including all those mentioned in the cover report). This is followed by data tables showing progress against Council Plan Targets, Savings Targets, Revenue Budget, and Capital Programme for the department.

For each topic, the commentary references supporting data in the tables at the end of the appendix, e.g. **(ref i)**. The tables include this reference in the ‘note ref’ column on the right hand side. Where the commentary refers to the Revenue Budget or Capital Programme, it may refer to all or part of the amount that is referenced in the table, or it may refer to several amounts added together. Performance exceptions follow these rules:

Quarter 1	All targets not expected to be achieved at year end i.e. not RAG rated Green, and any proposed amendments or deletions. Changes to targets early in Q1 should be made under delegated authority for the Council Plan refresh in June.
Quarter 2	Targets that have changed RAG rating since Q1 including changes to Green (except where target was amended at Q1), plus proposed amendments or deletions.
Quarter 3	Targets that have changed RAG rating since Q2 including changes to Green (except where target was amended at Q2), plus proposed amendments or deletions.
Quarter 4	Targets that have changed RAG rating since Q3 to Red or Green (except where target was amended at Q3). Outturns that are not available are reported as Carry Overs. All target outturns for the full year are reported in the year end summary at Appendix 1.

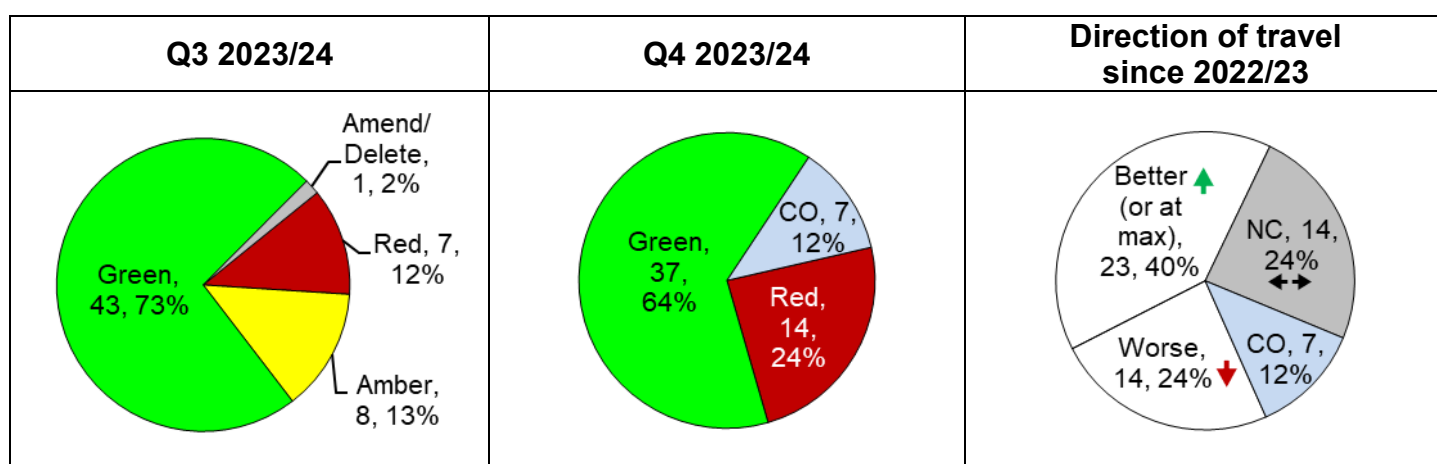
Strategic Risk Register Appendix 8

Appendix 8 contains commentary explaining mitigating actions for all Strategic Risks.

Council Monitoring Corporate Summary – end of year 2023/24

Council Plan performance targets

Priority	Total	Red	Green	Carry Over
Driving sustainable economic growth	25	9	16	0
Keeping vulnerable people safe	12	2	6	4
Helping people help themselves	14	2	10	2
Making best use of resources now and for the future	7	1	5	1
Total	58	14	37	7



Direction of Travel key:

No Change: ↔, Not Comparable: NC, Carry Over: CO, Worse: ↓, Improved (or at maximum): ↑

Council Plan year end 2023/24 outturn summary all measures

58 Council Plan target outturns for the full year are reported below. Targets achieved are highlighted in green; targets not achieved are highlighted in red; and carry overs (CO) for reporting at Q1 2024/25 are highlighted in blue.

Detailed information for new exceptions at Q4 is contained in the departmental appendices and these exceptions are highlighted **in bold in the table below**. Details of previous exceptions can be found in the referenced appendices for Q1-Q3 monitoring.

Where available, performance improvement relative to 2022/23 is given under Direction of Travel. Measures marked NC (not comparable) do not have 2023/24 outturns, which are comparable with 2022/23 outturns.

Driving sustainable economic growth – outturn summary

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Outturn 2023/24	Direction of Travel
BS	The percentage of Council procurement spend with local suppliers	66%	60%	64%	↓
BS	Economic, social, and environmental value committed through contracts, as a percentage of our spend with suppliers	57%	≥10.0%	31%	↓
BS	The Council's Apprenticeship Levy strategy supports the Council's workforce development and training plans	270 staff within the Council and schools currently undertaking an apprenticeship 115 staff enrolled on a new apprenticeship in 2022/23 Apprenticeships range from entry level to master's degree across 47 different types of apprenticeship. Apprenticeships continue to address skills shortages and offer existing staff a variety of progression routes	Where appropriate Standards exist, to ensure apprenticeship training is available and taken up (subject to the needs of the business), which addresses skills shortages in the Council	252 staff within the Council and schools currently undertaking an apprenticeship 117 staff enrolled on a new apprenticeship in 2023/24 Apprenticeships range from entry level to master's degree Over £275,000 annual levy spend passed onto small and medium employers throughout the county in 2023/24	↑
CET	Percentage of Principal roads requiring maintenance	5%	4%	4%	↑
CET	Percentage of Non-Principal roads requiring maintenance	6%	4%	5%	↑
CET	Percentage of Unclassified roads requiring maintenance	13%	14%	17%	↓
CET	The number of businesses and professionals receiving advice and support through training and bespoke advice provided by Trading Standards	379 (107 individual delegates trained; 272 businesses received bespoke advice)	350	653 (324 individual delegates trained; 329 businesses received bespoke advice)	↑

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Outturn 2023/24	Direction of Travel
CET	Deliver a range of Family Learning programmes across East Sussex to provide high quality learning opportunities for parents/carers and their children to develop English, maths and language skills and to support a culture of learning in the family (subject to external funding)	1,166 enrolments	500 enrolments across Family English, maths, and Language (FEML) and Wider Family Learning (WFL) programmes	2,051 enrolments	↑
CET	In partnership with funding organisations provide online learning (including skills for life and ICT courses) in libraries (subject to contract)	83 achievements	70 achievements	88 achievements	↑
CET	East Sussex Careers Hub	Schools supported to achieve an average of 5.36 national benchmarks; 46 Industry Champions recruited to support schools and colleges	East Sussex Careers Hub to support schools to achieve an average of 5 national benchmarks. 210 Industry Champions support schools and colleges in the county	Schools supported to achieve an average of 5.7 benchmarks; 234 Industry Champions in place	↑
CET	Deliver East Sussex Skills priorities for 2021-2026	6 action plans developed to address the 6 Skills East Sussex priorities	a) Adult Learning Network established b) Deliver six interventions that meet the Skills East Sussex priorities c) Deliver six embedded numeracy interventions	a) Adult Learning Network established b) 6 interventions delivered that meet the Skills East Sussex priorities c) 17 embedded numeracy interventions delivered	NC
CET	Deliver new economic strategy	N/A	Draft economic strategy developed	Draft economic strategy developed	NC
CET	Job creation from East Sussex Invest	N/A	27 jobs created	No jobs created from East Sussex Invest; Fund remains closed to new applications	NC

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Outturn 2023/24	Direction of Travel
CET	Create a pan-Sussex visitor economy group to re-start the leisure, hospitality, culture, retail, and tourism economy and enhance existing marketing vehicles	Sussex Tourism Leadership Group established	Develop a shared Sussex Story and assets to promote the region Develop a shared Sussex Meetings, Inceptive, Conferences and Events (MICE) initiative	Completion of shared Sussex Story and assets delayed until 2024/25; Shared Sussex Meetings, Inceptive, Conferences and Events (MICE) initiatives developed	NC
CET	Create a prioritised list of cultural projects ready for and seeking funding over the value of £100k	List of cultural projects, ready for and seeking funding over the value of £100k, launched	Maintain a list of cultural projects ready for and seeking funding over the value of £100k	Pipeline list published and maintained on ESCC website of cultural projects ready for and seeking funding over the value of £100k	↑
CS	The percentage of eligible 2 year olds who take up a place with an eligible early years provider	ESCC: 82% National Average: 72% (March 23)	Equal to or above the national average	ESCC: 84% (1,045 / 1,241) National Average: 73.9%	↑
CS	The percentage of pupils achieving a "good level of development" at the Early Years Foundation Stage	Ac Year 21/22: ESCC: 69.0% National Average: 65.2%	Ac Year 22/23: Equal to or above the national average	ESCC: 69.9% National Average: 67.2%	↑
CS	Average Attainment 8 score for state funded schools	N/A	Ac Year 22/23: 46.5	Ac Year 22/23 ESCC: 43.6	NC
CS	The percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving at least the expected standard in each of reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2	Ac Year 21/22: ESCC: 37.6% National Average: 42.7%	Ac Year 22/23: 37.7	Ac Year 22/23 ESCC: 39.2%	↑
CS	The average Attainment 8 score for disadvantaged pupils	Ac Year 21/22: ESCC: 33.3 National Average: 37.7	Ac Year 22/23: 33.3	Ac Year 22/23 ESCC: 30.3	↓
CS	The percentage of young people who are in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at academic age 16	N/A	Below 4%	4.4%	NC
CS	The percentage of young people who are in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) at academic age 17	N/A	Below 6%	6%	NC

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Outturn 2023/24	Direction of Travel
CS	Average Attainment 8 score for Looked After Children (LAC)	N/A	Ac Year 22/23: 19	Ac Year 22/23 ESCC: 18.9	NC
CS	The percentage of LAC participating in education, training, or employment at academic age 16 (Year 12)	81% RPA (86% EET)	80%	EET: 84% (75 / 89)	↓
CS	The percentage of LAC participating in education, training, or employment at academic age 17 (Year 13)	67% RPA (80% EET)	70%	EET: 73% (77 / 105)	↓

Keeping vulnerable people safe – outturn summary

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Outturn 2023/24	Direction of Travel
ASC	Percentage of Health and Social Care Connect referrals triaged and progressed to required services within 24 hours	87.34% (67,404/77,177)	95%	95.69% (74,375 / 77,724)	↑
ASC	Health and Social Care Connect – % of contacts that are appropriate and effective (i.e., lead to the provision of necessary additional services)	99.27% (78,641/79,219)	95%	99.17% (81,237 / 81,916)	↓
ASC	The % of people affected by domestic violence and abuse who have improved safety/support measures in place upon leaving the service	91.4% (360/394)	90%	CO	CO
ASC	When they leave the service the % of those affected by rape, sexual violence and abuse who have improved coping strategies	92.7% (544/ 587)	88%	CO	CO
ASC	The percentage of people who access additional support from our specialist commissioned domestic abuse service who are older	N/A	3%	CO	CO
ASC	Number of drug and alcohol related deaths in the county	N/A	74	Calendar year 2022: 77	NC
ASC	The number of people accessing treatment for opiate misuse	N/A	1,247	CO	CO
CET	The number of positive interventions for vulnerable people who have been or may be the target of rogue trading or financial abuse	530 positive interventions	200	2,669 positive interventions	↑
CS	Rate of children with a Child Protection Plan (per 10,000 children)	64.8 (691 children)	62 (661 children)	64.6 (688 children)	↑
CS	Rate (of 0-17 population) of referrals to children's social care services (per 10,000 children)	Rate: 377 (4,018)	≤ 556	Rate: 413 (4,400)	↓
CS	Rate (of 0-17 population) of assessments started by children's social care services (per 10,000 children)	Rate: 353 (3,764) assessments initiated	≤ 558	Rate: 399 (4,249)	↓

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Outturn 2023/24	Direction of Travel
CS	Rate of Looked After Children (per 10,000 children) <i>*Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children</i>	62.3 per 10,000 children (664 children) 55.5 (591 children excl. UASC*)	63.4 (676 children)	61.5 per 10,000 children (655 children) 54.6 (582 children excl. UASC*)	↑

Helping people help themselves – outturn summary

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Outturn 2023/24	Direction of Travel
ASC	National outcome measure: Proportion of working age adults and older people receiving self-directed support	100% (4,792 clients)	100%	100% (5,181 clients)	↑
ASC	National outcome measure: Proportion of working age adults and older people receiving direct payments	31.9% (1,520 people)	>31.5%	28.1% (1,457 people)	↓
ASC	Number of carers supported through short-term crisis intervention	494	390	333	↓
ASC	Number of people receiving support through housing related floating support	7,946	7,000	8,178	↑
ASC	Percentage of respondents who strongly agree or agree that the professionals who are involved in organising and providing their care communicate well with each other and share information to make sure their support is the best it can be (Listening To You)	58.5% Clients: 64% (60/94) Carers: 53% (47/89)	>56%	61.6% Clients: 61.9% (130 / 210) Carers: 60.9% (67 / 110)	↑
ASC	The proportion of people who received short-term services during the year, where no further request was made for ongoing support	94.7% (1,292/1,364)	>90.5%	95.9% (1,678 / 1,749)	↔
ASC	National outcome measure: Achieve independence for older people through rehabilitation / intermediate care	90.5% (801/885)	>90%	CO	CO
ASC	Through the Drug and Alcohol Funding streams, commission services that sustain the development of the recovery community in East Sussex	12 services commissioned	Commission services	7 services commissioned	↓
ASC	Recommission the Integrated Health and Wellbeing Service (IHWS)	N/A	Recommission Integrated Health and Wellbeing Service	Integrated Health and Wellbeing Service recommissioned	NC
ASC	Improved targeting of NHS Health Checks	Cumulative uptake: 29.5% (5 year period 2018/19 – 2022/23 Q4)	10% of the eligible population in the 20% most deprived areas (IMD1) have received a health check	CO	CO

APPENDIX 1

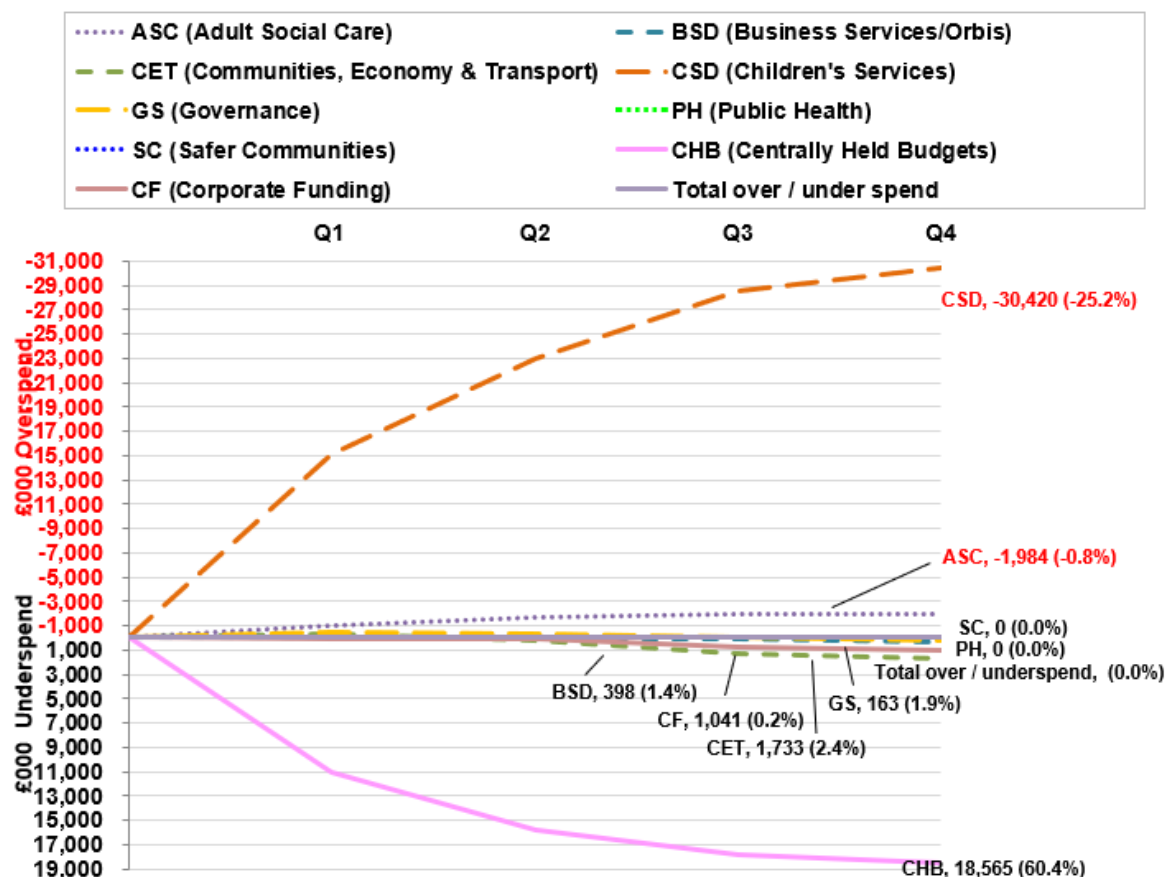
Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Outturn 2023/24	Direction of Travel
CET	Road Safety: Deliver targeted cycle training activities to vulnerable road users	555 Bikeability Courses delivered to 4,354 individuals; 252 Wheels for All Courses delivered to 3,649 individuals	Deliver Bikeability Training to 4,000 individuals and 100 Wheels for All sessions	551 Bikeability Courses delivered to 4,428 individuals; 343 Wheels for All sessions delivered to 3,862 individuals	↑
CET	Road Safety: Implement infrastructure schemes on identified high risk sites/routes to improve road safety	17 Safety Schemes implemented	Implement 24 safety schemes	24 Safety Schemes implemented	↑
CS	Proportion of all new EHC Plans issued within 20 weeks (a) Including Exception Cases (b) Excluding Exception Cases	N/A	(a) 65% (b) 70%	(a) 76.3% (521 / 683) (b) 76.5% (521 / 681)	NC
CS	The proportion of respondents to the feedback surveys who agree that things have changed for the better as a result of getting targeted support from the 0 – 19 Early Help Service	Adult: 91% Young Person: 100% Average: 95.5%	80%	Adult: 86% (82 / 95) Young Person: 91% (29 / 32) Average: 87%	↓

Making best use of resources now and for the future

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Outturn 2023/24	Direction of Travel
BSD	Reduce the amount of CO2 arising from County Council operations	32% reduction on baseline year (2019/20) emissions	43% reduction on baseline year (2019/20) emissions (emissions not to exceed 7,139 tonnes CO2e)	CO	CO
BSD	Progress on implementation of Carbon reduction schemes	11 low energy lighting schemes completed; 8 solar PV schemes completed; 2 decarbonisation of heat schemes implemented	23 energy saving schemes implemented	25 energy saving schemes implemented	↑
BSD	Number of working days lost per FTE (Full Time Equivalent) employee due to sickness absence in non-school services	10.07	9.10	9.13	↑

Dept	Performance Measure	Outturn 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Outturn 2023/24	Direction of Travel
BSD	Review use of corporate buildings	Workstyles adaptations completed in 3 office hubs. Impact reviewed	Develop revised office strategy based on 2022/23 review	Office strategy revised and footprint reduced in Eastbourne and Hastings. Paper on options for County Hall produced. Plans for 2024/25 developed, including consideration of options for County Hall, finalisation of Eastbourne office moves, and further work to reduce the Hastings office footprint	NC
BSD	Deliver the Property Asset Investment Strategy	6 business cases completed	Outline Business cases brought forward against at least 2 priority projects	4 Outline Business cases brought forward against priority projects	↓
GS	Delivery of Corporate Equality Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan actions planned for the year	N/A	Deliver the key actions within the action plan	Key actions delivered from action plan	NC
GS	Achievement of key milestones for the Workplace Adjustments Review	N/A	Completion of appropriate milestones that support the objectives of the Workplace Adjustments Review	Key milestones from the Workplace Adjustments Review achieved	NC

Revenue budget outturn (net £000)



Revenue budget summary (£000) 2023/24

Services:

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2023/24 Gross	2023/24 Income	2023/24 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net
Adult Social Care	379,603	(143,290)	236,313	423,204	(184,907)	238,297	(43,601)	41,617	(1,984)
Safer Communities	2,076	(909)	1,167	2,792	(1,625)	1,167	(716)	716	-
Public Health	36,778	(36,778)	-	35,672	(35,672)	-	1,106	(1,106)	-
Business Services / Orbis	56,038	(26,728)	29,310	67,250	(38,338)	28,912	(11,212)	11,610	398
Children's Services	402,521	(282,003)	120,518	441,651	(290,713)	150,938	(39,130)	8,710	(30,420)
Communities, Economy & Transport	159,757	(88,116)	71,641	156,743	(86,835)	69,908	3,014	(1,281)	1,733
Governance Services	9,202	(744)	8,458	9,256	(961)	8,295	(54)	217	163
Total Services	1,045,975	(578,568)	467,407	1,136,568	(639,051)	497,517	(90,593)	60,483	(30,110)

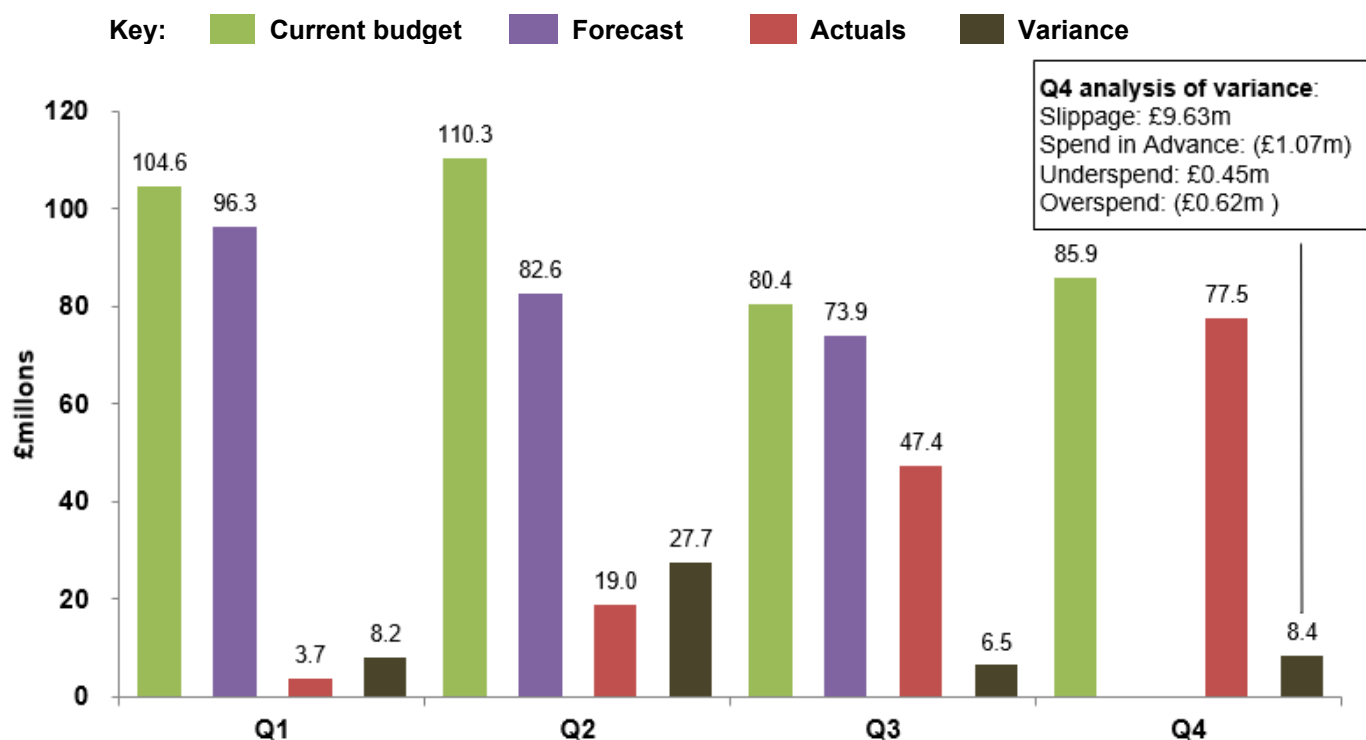
Centrally Held Budgets (CHB):

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2023/24 Gross	2023/24 Income	2023/24 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net
Treasury Management	21,630	(7,700)	13,930	19,770	(14,053)	5,717	1,860	6,353	8,213
Capital Programme	2,314	-	2,314	1,787	(1,300)	487	527	1,300	1,827
Unfunded Pensions	5,202	-	5,202	4,622	-	4,622	580	-	580
General Contingency	4,880	-	4,880	-	-	-	4,880	-	4,880
Provision for Budgetary Risks	4,272	-	4,272	740	-	740	3,532	-	3,532
Apprenticeship Levy	772	-	772	794	-	794	(22)	-	(22)
Levies, Grants & Other	5,121	(5,779)	(658)	5,455	(6,270)	(815)	(334)	491	157
Debt Impairment	-	-	-	602	-	602	(602)	-	(602)
Total Centrally Held Budgets	44,191	(13,479)	30,712	33,770	(21,623)	12,147	10,421	8,144	18,565

Corporate Funding:

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2023/24 Gross	2023/24 Income	2023/24 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net
Business Rates	-	(94,336)	(94,336)	-	(95,256)	(95,256)	-	920	920
Revenue Support Grant	-	(4,076)	(4,076)	-	(4,076)	(4,076)	-	-	-
Service Grant	-	(2,916)	(2,916)	-	(3,036)	(3,036)	-	120	120
Council Tax	-	(351,828)	(351,828)	-	(351,829)	(351,829)	-	1	1
Social Care Grant	-	(44,612)	(44,612)	-	(44,612)	(44,612)	-	-	-
New Homes Bonus	-	(351)	(351)	-	(351)	(351)	-	-	-
Total Corporate Funding	-	(498,119)	(498,119)	-	(499,160)	(499,160)	-	1,041	1,041

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2023/24 Gross	2023/24 Income	2023/24 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net
TOTAL	1,090,166	(1,090,166)	0	1,170,338	(1,159,834)	10,504	(80,172)	69,668	(10,504)
Use of COMF	-	-	-	-	(1,285)	(1,285)	-	1,285	1,285
Use of Covid Funding	-	-	-	-	(5,668)	(5,668)	-	5,668	5,668
Use of CT Surplus	-	-	-	-	(2,031)	(2,031)	-	2,031	2,031
Use of Financial Management Reserve	-	-	-	-	(1,520)	(1,520)	-	1,520	1,520
FINAL TOTAL	1,090,166	(1,090,166)	0	1,170,338	(1,170,338)	0	(80,172)	80,172	0

Capital Programme (gross £ millions) – approved projects**Capital Programme Summary 2023/24 (£'000)**

	Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variation (Over) / under 2023/24 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance
Adult Social Care	1,259	1,025	234	37	197	-
Business Services	25,360	23,402	1,958	367	2,098	(507)
Children's Services	1,868	1,881	(13)	(13)	-	-
Communities, Economy & Transport	57,393	51,184	6,209	(563)	7,336	(564)
Gross Expenditure (Planned Programme)	85,880	77,492	8,388	(172)	9,631	(1,071)
Section 106 and CIL	1,607	592	-	-	-	-
Other Specific Funding	10,710	8,085	-	-	-	-
Capital Receipts	817	817	-	-	-	-
Formula Grants	39,296	38,736	-	-	-	-
Reserves and Revenue Set Aside	22,904	19,831	-	-	-	-
Borrowing	10,546	9,431	-	-	-	-
Total Funding	85,880	77,492	-	-	-	-

Treasury Management

The Treasury Management Strategy (TMS), which provides the framework for managing the Council's cash balances and borrowing requirement, continues to reflect a policy of ensuring minimum risk, whilst aiming to deliver secure realistic investment income on the Council's cash balances.

The average level of Council funds available for investment purposes during Q4 was £223.16m. The total amount received in short term interest for Q4 was £2.999m at an average rate of 5.39%, compared to £3.646m at an average rate of 5.38% for Q3 2023/24. The average investment return for the year was 4.89% from the 4.45% assumed at budget setting and was based on the forecasts from our external treasury management advisors.

The Bank of England Base Rate was maintained in Q4 at 5.25%. The investment return outlook had improved during the latter part of the year however, the potential for increased interest rates into the future has ended, 5.25% is expected to be the peak and the latest forecasts suggest marginal decreases in the bank rate into 2024/25. Where possible a number of fixed term deposits with local authorities were placed for periods up to 1 year in Q4 at improved rates over bank deposits. These investments have been 'laddered' and will mature at different intervals in the next 12 months. This will take advantage of securing investment returns into 2024/25.

In seeking investment opportunities, as defined by the TMS, opportunities have been taken to invest in bank deposits that aligns to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Q4, an average of £12m was in place during the quarter, opportunities to place additional funds will be explored into 2024/25.

No short-term borrowing was required in Q4. The majority of the Council's external debt, totalling £216.6m at Q4, is held as long-term loans. No long-term borrowing was undertaken in Q4, and no further cost-effective opportunities have arisen during Q4 to restructure the existing Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) or wider debt portfolio.

The Treasury Management budget underspent by £8.2m. This is based on the position outlined above with regard to balances held and investment returns and slippage on the capital programme reducing the need to borrow externally in 2023/24.

The performance of the Council's treasury management activity, against benchmarks and the key indicators set in the Treasury Management Strategy, as approved by Full Council on 7 February 2023, are set out at Appendix 2.

Reserves and Balances 2023/24 (£000)

Reserve / Balance	Balance at 1 Apr 2023	Forecast net use at Q3	Outturn net use at Q4	Movt	Balance at 31 Mar 2024
-------------------	-----------------------	------------------------	-----------------------	------	------------------------

Statutorily ringfenced or held on behalf of others:

Balances held by schools	20,082	-	(1,824)	(1,824)	18,258
Public Health	7,812	(1,704)	(1,518)	186	6,294
Other	6,983	(867)	(230)	637	6,753
Subtotal	34,877	(2,571)	(3,572)	(1,001)	31,305

Service Reserves:

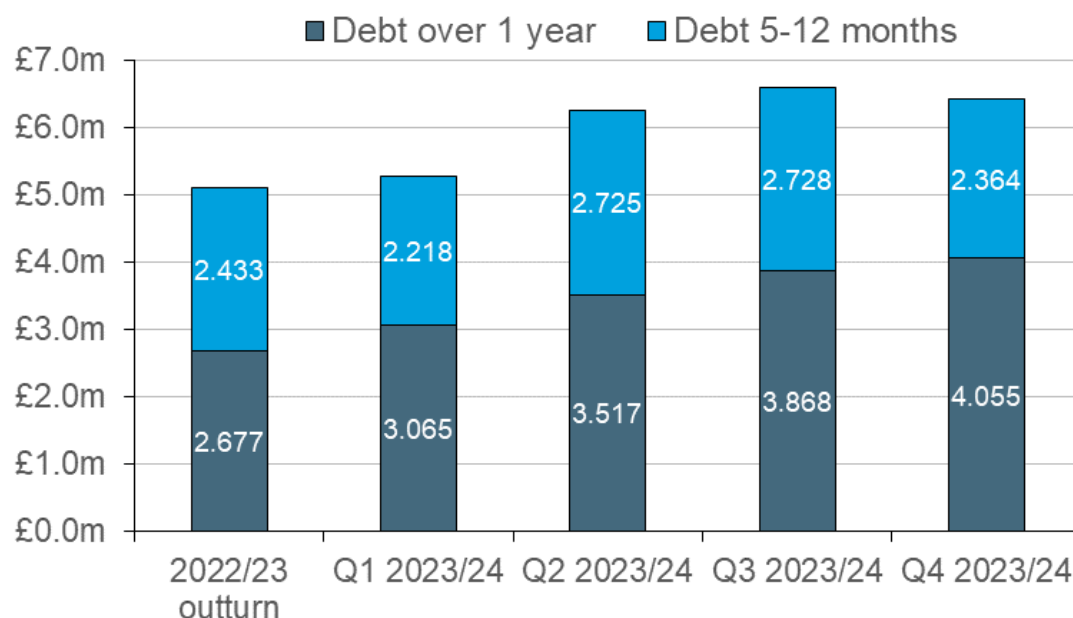
Corporate Waste	19,883	(440)	(397)	43	19,486
Capital Programme	13,425	(4,061)	(3,574)	487	9,851
Insurance	7,363	133	(4)	(137)	7,359
Adult Social Care	3,099	-	(65)	(65)	3,034
Subtotal	43,770	(4,368)	(4,040)	328	39,730

Strategic Reserves:

Priority / Transformation	17,398	(11,474)	(10,084)	1,390	7,314
Financial Management	41,880	(10,115)	(6,075)	4,040	35,805
Subtotal	59,278	(21,589)	(16,159)	5,430	43,119
Total Reserves	137,925	(28,528)	(23,771)	4,757	114,154
General Fund	10,000	-	-	-	10,000
Total Reserves and Balances	147,925	(28,528)	(23,771)	4,757	124,154

Changes to Fees & Charges

There are no changes to Fees and Charges during quarter 4.

Outstanding debt analysis (£ millions)

The value of debt aged over 5 months at Quarter 4 has increased by £1.309m to £6.419m compared to the 2022/23 outturn position of £5.110m.

The value of aged debt over 5 months as a proportion of debt raised has increased from 3.22% in 2022/23 to 3.93% in 2023/24.

The majority £5.984m (93.22%) of all debt over 5 months old relates to Adult Social Care (ASC), which has increased by £1.769m compared with the 2022/23 outturn position of £4.215m.

The debt over 5 months related to income due to other departments has decreased by £0.460m to £0.435m, compared with the 2022/23 outturn position of £0.895m. £0.294m of the £0.435m due to other departments is income due from the NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) and other Local Authorities and ongoing communications take place to facilitate repayment.

Debt recovery related to ASC client contributions can often take a long time due to circumstance of the debtors. For example, an ASC client may lack capacity to make decisions for themselves and an appointee, deputy or power of attorney therefore needs to be established, or the debt forms part of the administration of an estate.

Recovery of debt continues to be a high priority. As part of ongoing improvement work a Debt Recovery Project has been initiated to review and improve the ASC debt recovery model. The ASC Debt case panel continues to meet monthly to review complex and high value debt cases, ensuring the most appropriate next steps are taken to recover debt with sensitivity and consideration of the clients or families concerned and in accordance with the Care Act.

Revenue Savings Summary 2023/24 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target for 2023/24	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved
ASC	-	-	-	-	-
BSD/Orbis	869	869	559	310	-
CS	-	-	-	-	-
CET	105	910	105	745	60
GS	-	-	-	-	-
Total Savings	974	1,779	664	1,055	60
ASC			-	-	-
BSD / Orbis			-	-	-
CS			-	-	-
CET			-	-	-
GS			-	-	-
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0
Total Savings & Permanent Changes	974	1,779	664	1,055	60

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total
ASC	-	-	0
BSD / Orbis	210	100	310
CS	-	-	0
CET	745	60	805
GS	-	-	0
Total	955	160	1,115

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Adult Social Care – Savings exceptions 2023/24 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2023/24	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved
There are no targeted savings in 2023/24	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Total Savings	0	0	0	0	0
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	0	0	0	0	0

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
Total	0	0	0

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Business Services – Savings exceptions 2023/24 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2023/24	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved
IT&D: SEG wide area network operating costs	300	300	300	-	-
Property: Courier cost reduction based on reducing the frequency of pickups	24	24	24	-	-
Procurement: Identified income generation	100	100	0	100	-
Central Management: Resources for support	15	15	15	-	-
IT&D: Reduced printing costs	220	220	220	-	-
Property Assets (Offices): Co-location of St Mary's & St Marks and reduced usage of County Hall	210	210	-	210	-
Total Savings	869	869	559	310	0
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	869	869	559	310	0

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total
Property Assets (Offices)	210	-	210
Procurement	-	100	100
Total	210	100	310

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Children's Services – Savings exceptions 2023/24 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2023/24	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved
There are no targeted savings in 2023/24	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Total Savings	0	0	0	0	0
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	0	0	0	0	0

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
Total	0	0	0

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Communities, Economy & Transport – Savings exceptions 2023/24 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2023/24	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved
Parking: Increase on-street parking charges where possible. Surpluses to be used for transport related funding.	-	745	-	745	-
Libraries: improving the cost efficiency of provision and/or relocating back office functions/libraries. In addition, we'll achieve further efficiencies in ICT through the implementation of a new contract for self-service facilities in libraries.	105	105	105	-	-
Environmental Services: Income generation through traded services.	-	60	-	-	60
Total Savings	105	910	105	745	60
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	105	910	105	745	60

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total
Parking - one-off funding for 2023/24	745	-	745
Environmental Services - part of reported variance	-	60	60
Total	745	60	805

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Governance Services – Savings exceptions 2023/24 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2023/24	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved
There are no targeted savings in 2023/24	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Total Savings	0	0	0	0	0
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	0	0	0	0	0

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
Total	0	0	0

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Treasury Management Prudential Indicators – Q4 2023/24

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy published the revised Treasury and Prudential codes in 2021, which now requires quarterly reporting of performance against forward looking prudential indicators. The performance of the Council's treasury management activity, against benchmarks and the key indicators in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, as approved by Full Council at its meeting of 7 February 2023, are set out below.

Investments

The average investment return over Q4 was 5.39% performing above the benchmark rate by 19 basis points (or 0.19 percentage points). Performance has improved as a result of reinvesting maturing investments in a duration matched to a peak in the forecast Bank of England (BoE) bank interest rate.

Quarter	Average Investment Balance £m	Average Investment return	Average Benchmark Rate*	Difference
Q1	295.687	4.19%	4.34%	(0.15%)
Q2	293.169	4.82%	5.09%	(0.27%)
Q3	269.102	5.38%	5.19%	0.19%
Q4	223.163	5.39%	5.20%	0.19%

**the Benchmark rate used is the Standard Overnight Index Average (SONIA); a rate administered by the Bank of England based on actual transactions of overnight borrowing by financial institutions.*

During Q4 we have monitored the security of the Council's investment, to assess the risk of those investments losing their value. These risks were assessed using the financial standing of the groups invested in, the length of each investment, and the historic default rates. Our investment strategy sets an allowable risk level of 0.050% (i.e. that there is a 99.95% probability that the Council will get its investments back). The actual indicator ranged between 0.005% and 0.007%, reflecting the high proportion of investments held in highly secure and/or very liquid investments.

Investment Risk benchmark	0.050%
Maximum investment risk experienced Q4	0.009%

Borrowing

The table below shows the Council's total external borrowing and average rate as at 31 March 2024:

	Balance as at 31 March 2024 £m	Average Rate
PWLB	210.142	4.53%
Market Loans	6.450	4.25%
Total borrowing	216.592	4.52%

The table below shows the outturn position of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) compared to the forecast position within the 2023/24 strategy approved in February 2023. The closing CFR showed an under-borrowed position of £59.084m, compared to the original estimate of £83.932m under-borrowed. The strategy throughout the year forecast that the level of reserves and balances in the medium term allowed for internal borrowing of up to £50.000m, and therefore it could be expected that external borrowing of £9.084m may have been required during the 2023/24 year to support the capital programme. However, in the current economic environment delaying that external borrowing decision is a prudent Treasury Management action as the cost of borrowing is high and cash balances remain sufficient to delay that external borrowing in the short to medium term.

Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) (Underlying Borrowing Need)	Original Estimate 2023/24 £m	Outturn Position 2023/24 £m
Opening CFR	274.367	271.822
Borrowing Need	34.904	12.100
Minimum Revenue Provision	(7.429)	(8.246)
Closing CFR	301.842	275.676
External Borrowing as at 31 March 2024		216.592
Forecast Under-borrowing (if no action taken)		59.084

The table below shows that the Council is operating within the Operational Boundary and Authorised Borrowing Limits set within the Treasury Management strategy and has sufficient headroom to cover the borrowing need arising from the year's capital programme.

Borrowing Limits	Operational Boundary £m	Authorised Borrowing Limit £m
Limit set for 2023/24	376.000	396.000
Less: PFI & Leases	65.000	65.000
Limit for Underlying Borrowing	311.000	331.000
Actual External Borrowing at 31 December	216.592	216.592
Headroom*	94.408	114.408

**Authorised Borrowing headroom cannot be less than zero*

The maturity profile of the Authority's borrowing is within the limits set within the strategy.

Maturity Structure of borrowing	Lower Limit set	Upper Limit set	Actual as at 31 March 2024
Under 12 Months	0%	25%	2%
12 months to 2 years	0%	40%	2%
2 years to 5 years	0%	60%	7%
5 years to 10 years	0%	70%	20%
Over 10 years	0%	90%	68%

Business Services – end of year 2023/24

Summary of progress on Council Priorities, issues arising, and achievements

Key cross cutting programmes

Carbon

In line with our current Climate Action Plan, further progress was made in Q4 on the delivery of energy efficiency projects. A further 9 projects were completed in Q4 making a total of 25 completed projects in 2023/24, against a target of 23 (**ref ii**).

Schemes completed throughout 2023/24 were:

- 5 LED lighting energy saving projects at Milton Grange Residential Home plus Frant, Hankham, Chiddingly and Catsfield Primary Schools.
- 10 solar PV energy generation projects at The Keep, the Phoenix Centre, St. Nicolas Centre, Hailsham Library, Bexhill Library, Newhaven Library, and Bodiam, Chiddingly, Plumpton, and Rocks Park Primary Schools.
- 5 building insulation projects to cut heat loss: triple glazing at Greenwood and Grovelands Primary Schools and loft, doors and wall insulation at Hellingly, Rocks Park and Rotherfield Primary Schools.
- 3 decarbonisation of heat projects to transition from oil boilers to air source heat pumps at Bodiam, Chiddingly and Plumpton Primary Schools.
- 2 large asset rationalisation projects ensuring more modern facilities with reduced carbon emissions. These are the Ropemaker Park to Alder Close project and the move from Ocean House to Cavendish House, Hastings

The Property team hosted a further energy saving workshop for managers / school caretakers in Q4, with a focus on heat cost savings. The annual target to train 40 site managers has been exceeded, with 95 trained at 5 events.

A pilot scheme for the Site Heating Control Interventions Initiative was successfully completed in Q4, targeting 10 sites with low heating efficiency arising from poor control. A consultant visited sites to review and optimise heating controls and provide training for site managers to support improvements being sustained in the longer term. A summary report on the cost-benefit of the interventions across all 10 sites will be completed in Q1 2024/25 and will be used to determine whether the return on investment is sufficient to consider roll out to further sites later in the year.

Total energy consumption (buildings, streetlighting and servers) in Q3 (reported a quarter in arrears) was down 8% compared with the same period last year and down 25% on the baseline year 2019/20. Building energy use in Q3 was down 8% compared with the same period last year and down 28% on the baseline year 2019/20.

As there is now only one quarter of 2023/24 remaining for the reporting of energy consumption, the forecast outturn does become more reliable. However, the final outturn can still be impacted by the weather, as Q4 has the potential for the largest heating demand of the year. If consumption for Q4 this year is the same as Q4 last year our Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions would reduce by 2% in 2023/24 compared with 2022/23, against the target of 16% required to keep within the 5-year carbon budget. This is an improvement from Q2 where a 0.39% decrease in emissions was forecast and would result in a 33% reduction on the 2019/20 baseline, against a cumulative target of 43% (**ref i**).

Carbon emissions from the Council's electricity consumption increased during 2023/24, despite a fall in the amount of electricity consumed by the Council. This was due to changes in the carbon emission factor, which is the figure used to convert electricity consumption from the national grid into equivalent carbon emissions. Carbon emission factors are produced by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. They are updated every year and applied widely in the UK. The UK

grid carbon emission factor changes from year to year as the fuel mix consumed in UK power stations changes (i.e. between renewables, nuclear, natural gas, oil and coal) and as the proportion of imported electricity also changes. The carbon emission factors used for reporting in 2023/24 are based on the fuel mix used in 2021, due to the time it takes to collate and analyse the data (more information can be found here).

The carbon emission factors for electricity fell by over 24% between 2019/20 and 2022/23 as renewables increasingly replaced coal in the generation mix. However, for 2023/24, this trend reversed and the carbon emissions factor increased. This was due to a post-covid increase in national electricity demand and a relatively poor year for wind generation in 2021 (see above on timing delay). We continue to see the benefit of energy efficiency projects, which have helped reduce our overall energy consumption and utility bills. Without these projects, we would have missed the carbon target by a greater margin.

Modernising Systems

The Modernising Back Office Systems (MBOS) Programme was established to deliver the replacement of the Council's core finance and Human Resources systems, to support further developments to increase agile and digital working. The programme will enable the Council to move off the SAP system, which is due to go out of support in 2027. Following the decision not to go live in 2023, the external programme support was significantly reduced, and an independent review was commissioned to complete an assurance exercise of the system and programme. The first phase of the review gave a number of recommendations and confirmed that Oracle remains a suitable product for the Council.

Human Resources and Organisational Development (HROD)

Successes and achievements during 2023/24 include:

- Successful organisational wide engagement on the refresh of the 2024-2027 People Strategy.
- Delivery of 'single sign-on' for access to the Council's Attendance Management System, GoodShape. GoodShape accounts are now automatically linked with Council network accounts, which improves security and ease of access when using the portal. This is expected to increase Return to Work Interview compliance, as it will reduce the reason 'manager unable to log on to GoodShape' for not completing a Return to Work Interview.
- Delivery of a series of 'masterclasses' for Heads of Service in areas of key strategic importance, with positive feedback received.
- Review and re-design of the process and provision for workplace adjustments, including strengthening support for neurodiversity.

Attendance Management and Wellbeing

The 2023/24 year end sickness absence figure for the whole authority (excluding schools) is 9.13 days lost per Full Time Equivalent role (FTE), a decrease of 9.3% since last year. Despite this, the 2023/24 target of 9.10 days/FTE has narrowly been missed (**ref iii**). The main reason for the decrease in absence rates is a fall in COVID-19 related absences.

We have continued to see a significant decrease in musculoskeletal absence of 1,182 working days compared to 2022/23. This indicates that preventive measures are having a positive impact in reducing sickness absence for this reason. In addition, we are running a dedicated pilot within Adult Social Care and Health with the University of Brighton to explore how our musculoskeletal offer can be further improved to reduce absence and retain staff.

However, mental health absence has increased by 772 days compared to last year. Benchmarking data from GoodShape suggests this is a common theme across local authorities and our absence rates are below the average for other authorities. Set against this background, we are continuing to provide support to staff by:

- The HR Attendance Management Team proactively contact all line managers during the first week an employee reports a stress related absence. This ensures timely and practical guidance on supporting the employee back to work is given. The results over the last 3 months have shown a 34% decrease, equating to a reduction of 9 days per absence.
- Improving the Wellness Plan and Stress Risk Assessment, which were successfully launched during Q3, and are being promoted in line with key awareness days and in team meetings and employee sessions.
- Providing enhanced tools and guidance for workplace adjustments specifically in relation to supporting performance and mental health.
- Offering employees additional support when they report an absence due to Mental Health to GoodShape. The aim is to reduce absence length and the risk of further mental health absence taking place in the future.
- Our growing Mental Health First Aid network continues to pro-actively support staff and promote wellbeing resources within teams.

Procurement

Savings achieved through procurement, contract and supplier management activities

The Council has spent £311m with local suppliers over the past 12 months. This equates to 64% of our total procurement spend, compared to a target of 60%. 847 local suppliers were used. The Procurement team continues to promote our contract opportunities to local suppliers, as well as building local supply chain opportunities into our tenders where possible.

Social Value

Several contracts with significant social value commitment were secured this year, including:

- Soft Facilities Management (FM) Services for the Council's corporate and schools estate. The successful suppliers for the various FM services committed to a Social Value offer of £1.46m (29% of contract spend). Social Value benefits include: apprenticeship opportunities for local people; job opportunities for local people in priority groups; volunteering for the local community; work experience and professional development opportunities offered to local people.
- Solar PV for Schools. The successful supplier has committed to a Social Value offer of £450k (35% of contract spend). Social Value benefits include: apprenticeship and job opportunities for local people; training opportunities to aid green skills growth in the construction sector; school talks to educate pupils on the importance of renewable energy and environmental sustainability; and community volunteering.
- Start' and 'Specialise' Business Support. The 2 successful suppliers committed to a Social Value offer of £255k (57% of contract spend). Social Value benefits include: spend with locally based businesses; training on environmental awareness; job opportunities for local people; and volunteering for local charities.
- Youth Employability Service (YES). The successful supplier has committed to a social value offer of £171k (17% of contract spend). Social Value benefits include: 2 apprenticeships offered to local people; professional development opportunities offered to local people; and a local job opportunity for a priority group.

In Q4, a total of 21 contracts commenced, of which 10 were out of scope of the Social Value Measurement Charter, which quantifies the economic, social, and environmental benefits of the procurement, as they accessed an existing pre-approved list of suppliers (Frameworks) with predefined contractual terms. The in-scope contracts for Q4 had a total contract value of £18.11m and secured £5.79m in Social Value commitment, which equates to an outturn of 32% against a target of 10%. This brings the final outturn figure for 2023/24 to 31%.

The Social Value secured through our Property Frameworks used for the Planned Maintenance Programme in 2023/24 has been reported in Q4. Contracts with a combined value of £11.24m were awarded and secured £3.51m in Social Value, which equates to 31%. The Social Value consists of a number of different measures, including targeted spend with local sub-contracted suppliers and contractors, which is an important contributor to economic growth, and various employment and skills initiatives.

The Place Scrutiny Committee's report of Procurement: Social Value and Buying Local was agreed at full Council in May 2023. The 9 recommendations included a 12-month trial of a new qualitative approach to social value within the Adult Social Care and Health service which is now underway. Place Scrutiny Committee considered an update of the implementation of the recommendations Action Plan in March 2024 and were pleased with the progress that has been made implementing the recommendations from the review, in particular the Social Value trial. The Place Scrutiny Committee will consider a further update report at the Place Scrutiny Committee meeting in September 2024.

Procurement's Policy Team continues to build on the success of achieving publication of the Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy (ESPP) in 2022. Extensive guidance for the Procurement Team on how to utilise the policy has been published on our new Procurement Intranet site. The policy received minor updates in March 2024 to reflect enhanced approaches to biodiversity, waste hierarchy and explicit reference to government policy, namely Carbon Reduction Plans. The Senior Policy Lead for Supply Chain Decarbonisation has developed a broad Carbon Reduction Strategy for the Authority (presented to Climate Emergency Board in September 2023) and is working with Services and Procurement colleagues to develop focused strategies in the 5 prioritised spend areas. The Procurement Policy Team continues to make good progress against the 4 related actions in the Climate Emergency Plan and is steadily increasing the number of suppliers reporting and reducing carbon emissions through procurement and contract management activity.

Internal Audit

Through the delivery of sufficient audit coverage in Q4, the Chief Internal Auditor continues to be able to provide assurance over the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control for the Council.

Internal Audit have continued to focus on delivery of the Annual Internal Audit Plan and were able to complete 91.2% of the plan to draft report stage by the end of Q4, against an annual target of 90%.

All high priority actions agreed with management as part of individual audit reviews are subject to action tracking, whereby we seek written confirmation from services that these have been implemented. 9/9 (100%) of the agreed high-risk actions due to be implemented on a 12-month rolling basis have been actioned.

Property

Work has continued through Q4 on an options paper for the County Hall campus, with additional technical support being provided by external specialists. The paper is expected to be completed in Q1 2024/25.

The delivery plan to consolidate our Eastbourne offices into one main base has begun its implementation phase in Q4 and will continue in Q1 2024/25.

The re-procurement of facilities management services for the corporate and schools estate has completed and mobilisation of the services began in Q4, with full service implementation in Spring 2024.

Working across the workstreams in the Council's Asset Management Plan 2020-2025, progress throughout 2023/24 includes:

- Relocating teams from Ocean House to their new Hastings bases at Cavendish House and Muriel Matters House, with ongoing support for teams as they settle in. The move has reduced the Council's carbon footprint for corporate premises in Hastings by 43% (when compared to Ocean House)
- Completion of the sale of the former Etchingham School Site and 1 Southview Close, Crowborough.
- The sale of Hindslands, Polegate, is progressing through the legal process, with conditional contracts now expected to be signed in Q1 2024/25. The capital receipt is dependent on the purchaser securing planning consent which will need to be approved by Wealden District Council.
- The sale of Hye House Farm, Crowhurst is progressing through the legal process, with 3 purchasers identified for 4 separate transactions. It is anticipated these sales will proceed in Q1 / Q2 2024/25.
- Temporary school buildings were completed on schedule and a nursery extension in Wadhurst was completed.
- Planning permissions for two new youth facilities were secured, at Heathfield and The Joff, Peacehaven, and have begun as projects. Both are funded through the Youth Investment Fund from central Government.

IT & Digital

Interest in artificial intelligence (AI) has increased considerably during Q4 and exploratory work has started to understand the implications of this technology and explore how it could be used safely, responsibly and effectively to enable efficiencies. Work has focused on understanding the types of AI available and the risks and benefits associated with each type which include free to use tools such as ChatGPT, vendor specific licenced tools such as Microsoft Co-pilot and AI capability built into line of business applications. This activity will be overseen by the Corporate Digital Board which will facilitate the sharing of learning across the Council.

The migration of services to the new South East Grid (SEG) network on behalf of the Link Consortium has continued during Q4 and is nearing completion. Hosted by the Council, the network allows the Council and other public sector organisations in the South East to access higher speed digital infrastructure connections and contributes to the provision of ultra-fast data network connectivity throughout East Sussex.

The Wi-Fi service has now been replaced and upgraded to a next new generation Wi-Fi capability across Council sites. The new service provides higher bandwidth and will improve performance and enhance security. It will also be an enabler of newer technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) likely to be used in the future for a range of activities such as energy and intelligent buildings management.

Work to replace the core telephony solution paired with a dedicated contact centre solution has progressed in Q4, with the contract now signed. The change from landline-based telephony builds on existing technology investment and provides a sustainable solution, reducing the carbon footprint (removing handsets and on-premises equipment) and removing building dependency, thereby supporting a reduction in office space.

Following successful procurement activity, a supplier for the Device Refresh Project has been appointed. Periodically refreshing our IT equipment is vital so that it stays up to date and safe to use to best support and enable a digital workforce. The scale at which this is done (across three councils through the Orbis Partnership) has many benefits and in this case, a saving of 18% per device has been achieved through this joint procurement. New devices will be rolled out with a new operating system as Windows 10 reaches the end of its supportable life. Hence, a Windows 11 Readiness Project has been underway in parallel to ensure that all Council business applications continue to work in the updated environment.

In addition to the above, work has continued throughout Q4 to move all Council SharePoint sites into the Microsoft 365 cloud service where there is increased functionality that will help people to collaborate effectively, this project is nearing completion.

External Funding

In Q4, the External Funding team helped 15 organisations bring £501,850 into the county. This included small to medium sized applications from organisations such as Warming Up the Homeless in Bexhill, Northiam Village Hall in Rye, and Holding Space in Eastbourne, to continue offering parent and carer peer support to families whose children are struggling with their mental health.

The team responded to 56 funding enquiries from not-for-profit organisations, primarily for community and health and wellbeing work. During Q4 the service provided one-to-one support to 6 organisations, prioritising and aligning funds to projects and discussing steps to take before applying.

Throughout 2023/24 the team supported 77 Council colleagues and 200 organisations including new and existing groups, charities, and social enterprises across a wide range of causes (many overlapping) – health and wellbeing, community, environment, arts, culture and heritage, economy. Needs included adapting or expanding services in response to the impact of the cost of living to both services and residents, making improvements to community facilities. Funding needs ranged from startup and first year's costs, project costs and notably core running costs and multi-year funding.

The Team provided:

Resources

- Funding News, a monthly electronic publication about forthcoming funding opportunities (11,300 subscribers).
- East Sussex 4 Community, a free to use database of funders.

One to one support

- 283 funding searches tailored to organisations' needs.
- Bid readiness – talking through practicalities and steps to take before applying. The team met with 71 organisations and 24 council colleagues to discuss their specific requirements.
- Reviewing grant applications, vetting proposals for strengths and weaknesses. We carried out 15 quality checks and delivered 10 applying for funding sessions attended by 382 people.

Partnership working

- Participating on wider strategic and cross sector work such as Partnership Plus, and Multi-Agency Financial steering group.
- Participating on the Healthy Activities and Food Fund (HAF) panel.
- Working with key stakeholders, discussing trends and sharing best practice.

By facilitating resources and connections between groups and colleagues, the team helped bring in £891,211 to East Sussex, through 44 grants ranging from £500 to £450,000. These projects mostly covered communities, (29 projects) health and wellbeing (8 projects).

Revenue Budget Summary

The 2023/24 Business Services net revenue budget is £29.310m. There are £0.869m planned savings in BSD this financial year, of which £0.210m (**ref iv**) relating to the consolidation of the Eastbourne hubs will not be achieved but will be offset by underspending elsewhere. These unachieved savings are included within the current outturn forecast, which is a net £0.398m underspend (**ref viii**). The underspend has increased by £0.329m since Q3. Finance and

Business Administration has a net underspend of £0.248m **(ref v)** an increase of £0.186m from Q3 due to higher staff recharges to Orbis, higher than expected Ukraine funding plus lower consultancy and Audit fees. IT & Digital has an underspend of £0.151m **(ref vi)** an increase of £0.262m since Q3 and is due to higher recharges for project managers and higher than anticipated licence recharges. The Procurement income target of £0.100m **(ref vii)** set for East Sussex was not achieved due to certain income streams not materialising. However, the service did exceed its income budget by £0.030m across the Orbis partnership representing a £0.009m contribution for East Sussex.

Capital Programme Summary

The 2023/24 capital budget is £25,360m with a £1.958m net underspend variance at the end of the financial year. The Salix underspend of £0.294m **(ref ix)** will be offset by a reprofile of the total SALIX programme budget. The Youth Investment Fund slippage of £0.889m **(ref x)** relates to delays as the project is value engineered to stay within budget. The spend in advance of £0.238m **(ref xi)** on Corporate Buildings Improvements relates to a number of projects which commenced in 2023/24 that were originally planned to start in 2024/25. This includes the heating project at Greenwood and the building maintenance spend on fabric works (windows external insulation/rendering) and an emergency boiler replacement. The Core Programme – Capital Building Improvements Schools spend in advance of £0.201m **(ref xii)** was as a result of milder, drier weather enabling greater progress to be made on several projects than had been expected. Core Programme – IT & Digital Strategy Implementation variation of £0.683m **(ref xiii)** relates to slippage in Laptop deployment and telephony projects and an underspend on the TechForge implementation. Core Programme – IT & Digital Strategy Implementation MBOS slippage of £0.442m **(ref xiv)** arising from delays in the programme which means that some of the work initially planned for 2023/24 will be carried out in 2024/25.

Performance exceptions (Q4 – See How to read this report for definition)**Priority – Making best use of resources now and for the future**

Performance measure	Outturn 22/23	Target 23/24	RAG Q1 23/24	RAG Q2 23/24	RAG Q3 23/24	RAG Q4 23/24	2023/24 outturn	Note ref
Reduce the amount of CO2 arising from County Council operations	32% reduction on baseline year (2019/20) emissions	43% reduction on baseline year (2019/20) emissions (emissions not to exceed 7,139 tonnes CO2e)	R	R	R	CO	Emissions reported a quarter in arrears Estimate for 2023/24: 33% reduction on baseline year (2019/20) emissions	i
Progress on implementation of Carbon reduction schemes	11 low energy lighting schemes completed; 8 solar PV schemes completed; 2 decarbonisation of heat schemes implemented	23 energy saving schemes implemented	A	A	A	G	25 energy saving schemes implemented	ii
Number of working days lost per FTE (Full Time Equivalent) employee due to sickness absence in non-school services	10.07	9.10	G	G	G	R	9.13	iii

Savings exceptions 2023/24 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2023/24	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved	Note ref
Planned savings - BSD	869	869	559	310	-	
Planned savings - Orbis	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Savings	869	869	559	310	0	
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0	
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	869	869	559	310	0	

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total	Note Ref
Property: consolidation of Eastbourne hubs	210	-	210	
Procurement	-	100	100	vii
	-	-	-	
Total	210	100	310	iv

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Revenue Budget 2023/24 (£'000)

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2023/24 Gross	2023/24 Income	2023/24 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note ref
Finance & Bus Admin	11,660	(5,753)	5,907	13,523	(7,864)	5,659	(1,863)	2,111	248	v
HR & OD	3,353	(1,160)	2,192	3,587	(1,396)	2,191	(234)	235	1	
IT & Digital	12,135	(3,671)	8,464	17,075	(8,762)	8,313	(4,940)	5,091	151	vi
Procurement	-	(100)	(100)	-	-	-	-	(100)	(100)	vii
Property	25,144	(16,044)	9,100	29,319	(20,317)	9,002	(4,175)	4,273	98	
Contribution to Orbis Partnership	3,747	-	3,747	3,747	-	3,747	-	-	-	
Total BSD	56,038	(26,728)	29,310	67,250	(38,338)	28,911	(11,212)	11,610	398	viii

Capital programme 2023/24 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variation (Over) / under 2023/24 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
SALIX Contract	700	700	350	56	294	294	-	-	ix
Lansdowne Unit (CSD)	75	75	65	26	39	-	39	-	
Youth Investment Fund	7,624	7,624	1,510	621	889	-	889	-	x
Special Educational Needs	3,198	3,198	1,114	1,029	85	-	85	-	
Special Educational Needs - Grove Park	19,179	19,179	150	172	(22)	-	-	(22)	
Disabled Children's Homes	786	786	716	743	(27)	(27)	-	-	
14 Westfield Lane	721	721	53	36	17	-	17	-	
Core Programme - Schools Basic Need	98,444	98,444	2,066	2,093	(27)	-	19	(46)	
Core Programme - Capital Building Improvements Corporate	44,749	44,749	3,509	3,747	(238)	-	-	(238)	xi
Core Programme - Capital Building Improvements Schools	42,049	42,049	4,218	4,419	(201)	-	-	(201)	xii
Core Programme - IT & Digital Strategy Implementation	72,956	72,956	4,055	3,372	683	100	583	-	xiii
Core Programme - IT & Digital Strategy Implementation MBOS	13,125	16,514	7,530	7,088	442	-	442	-	xiv
IT & Digital - Utilising Automation	24	24	24	-	24	-	24	-	
Total BSD Gross	303,630	307,019	25,360	23,402	1,958	367	2098	(507)	

Communities, Economy & Transport – end of year 2023/24

Summary of progress on Council Priorities, issues arising, and achievements

Economy and environment

Levelling Up Partnerships

As part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda, the Levelling Up Partnerships programme was announced in March 2023. Hastings and Rother were each allocated £20m capital funding to be spent by March 2025 to deliver a tailored approach to place-based regeneration. Over the last year, the Council has worked with other partners and Government officials in preparing a package of proposals for Ministerial sign-off, which were announced on 25 March 2024. The Council directly secured over £7m of funding for five projects, including: Queensway Gateway Road; Hollington youth facility and family hub; and other family and youth support services, and a combined skills capital pot for both areas.

Long Term Plan for Towns

As part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda, the Long Term Plans for Towns programme was launched in October 2023. Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne have been allocated £20m each under this programme. The grant funding is to be awarded as an endowment fund to be spent over a 10-year period (with 75% capital and 25% revenue). The priority investment themes to support the regeneration of the towns include safety and security (community safety); high streets, heritage and regeneration; and transport and connectivity.

Employability and Skills

Over 950 people have been supported to improve their numeracy skills in 2023/24 as part of the Multiply programme. 17 numeracy interventions were delivered in partnership with local training and community organisations. These programmes have included maths for managing finance, maths in catering, and maths in railway engineering.

The Employment and Skills Team have delivered two programmes in 2023/24, Moving on Up and Support into Work, that have supported over 265 homeless and refugee residents into work. The team also secured £250,000 of Government funding to support people in the construction sector to gain new retrofit skills. This will help boost the local economy, while also reducing carbon emissions in the county. The Careers Hub secured funding in 2023/24 to undertake a Steps to Success pilot programme to try to prevent young people becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), through bespoke work experience and one to one support.

234 Industry Champions were supporting schools and colleges at the end of 2023/24, exceeding the target of 210. 1,113 pupils attended Open Doors visits in Q4 alone, providing young people with experiences of the workplace.

Apprenticeships

117 staff enrolled on a new apprenticeship during 2023/24. A wide range of apprenticeships are offered covering the vast majority of the roles at the Council. We also expect to see an increase in uptake from Schools when the undergraduate Teaching apprenticeship is introduced in 2024/25.

In total, we now have 252 staff undertaking an apprenticeship. These range from entry level through to degree level and the focus of the team this year has been on the growth of corporate apprenticeships. There has been an increased uptake in the various management apprenticeships offered, as these are applicable to all departments. These apprenticeships also feed directly into other management development initiatives such as the Ladder to Leadership programme.

Almost all the 25% annual levy spend that can be passed onto small and medium employers throughout the county has now been allocated. This totals over £275K in 2023/24. The Government has recently announced that with effect from April 2024, the 25% will be increased to 50%. The existing framework of the Transform project means that the Council is in a strong position to benefit from this change and increase our levy spend accordingly.

Cultural investment and recovery

The Sussex Story work has been delayed due to performance management issues needing to be addressed on the overall contract awarded to the consultants (**ref i**). As a result, the Council, as the lead contractor on behalf of partners, severed the contract and withheld 25% of the contract fee. A new supplier will be identified to complete the work in 2024/25, with the cost for the outstanding work to be met by the remaining 25% budget. The subsequent second phase of the work will follow once the first stage of the work is completed satisfactorily.

Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) work has continued in Q4, in partnership with Local Visitor Economy Partnership members and Visit England. A MICE education session for businesses, in partnership with Visit England, is being planned, and the team are also booked to present at two more exhibits in the summer and autumn.

Broadband

The Broadband Project has completed its final build and is moving into formal contract closure. The Broadband Team is continuing to engage with Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) on its centrally run Project Gigabit programme. The contract for East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove has been let by BDUK to CityFibre. We understand that the Gigabit Voucher scheme run by BDUK is currently closed in East Sussex and we have no indication of future plans. The Broadband Team is continuing to push BDUK for details of how they plan to cover the very hardest to reach properties in the county.

Job creation

East Sussex Invest provides loans and grants to local businesses to help create local jobs and support businesses to become environmentally responsible. As part of a wider corporate approach, applications for funding through the scheme were suspended in Q2, while an independent Strategic and Operational Review of the scheme was undertaken. The review was completed in Q4, and options for the future of the fund are now being developed.

Environment and climate change

We have continued to work together with partners to develop and deliver carbon reduction and climate change adaptation work. In 2023/24 this included:

- securing funding from the South East Net Zero Hub for a feasibility study for a potential solar farm on a former landfill site, the study has now begun
- securing £245,000 from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to develop a plan to provide people with the skills to enable the retrofit of domestic properties to reduce their carbon emissions
- assisting 44 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to measure their carbon footprint, and awarding grants to 21 SMEs to improve energy efficiency and install renewable energy systems, which will reduce their energy bills
- identifying Council fleet vehicles potentially suitable for EV transition at the end of their current leasing periods and starting work on cost analysis
- starting a county-wide assessment of climate risks and vulnerabilities to inform our climate adaptation work

Planning

100% of County Matter applications were determined with the statutory determination period in 2023/24, against a target of 70%. 100% of County Council development applications were also determined within 8 weeks or within an agreed extension of time during 2023/24, against a target of 70%.

Highways, transport and waste

Highways improvements and road condition

Work continued in Q4 using the additional funding for highways approved by the Council. 183 patches across 116 sites were completed bringing the total completed in 2023/24 to 564 patches across 337 sites. This has had a significant impact on the condition of the network and has enabled us to carry out works above and beyond our usual programmes. 102 signs have been replaced in 2023/24 with a further 427 signs scheduled to be replaced in 2024/25. This work will focus on the repair and replacement of damaged or missing signs. Further work has begun cleaning signs and clearing vegetation or obstructions around signs where necessary.

The focus for the additional drainage spend has been on delivering schemes that are quick and simple to design and will address the most urgent drainage issues. Around 180 schemes have been delivered in 2023/24, including replacing gully covers and clearing significant blockages. 53 larger schemes have been identified and will be delivered in 2024/25. The remaining budget for the refresh of road markings has now been fully allocated and will include renewing the lining along the A22 Hailsham bypass and around 600 further sites across the county. However, due to high levels of rainfall in the winter, the majority of these works will not be delivered until Q1 2024/25.

9,691 potholes were repaired in Q4, with 8,579 of these being carriageway potholes, the remainder were primarily footway potholes. Amongst the carriageway potholes, 70% of these were completed within the required timescales. 29,357 potholes were repaired in 2023/24, with 24,411 of these being carriageway potholes, the remainder were primarily footway potholes. 117 road improvement schemes were completed in 2023/24 to improve the condition of the roads. 100 larger scale schemes were also delivered across the county, including schemes such as Diplocks Way in Hailsham and Bunny Lane in Frant.

The road condition outturns (where a lower figure indicates better road condition), were published in Q3. These figures are only available at one point each year and are based on specialist laser surveys undertaken in summer 2023. The outturns refer to the percentage of road length across the entire county, and all roads are likely to have a mixture of green, amber and red road condition sections. The surveys measure road condition in 10m sections. The road condition outturns reported here are the percentage of 10m sections that should be considered for maintenance. So, for example, a proportion of 5% indicates that 5% of all 10m sections surveyed of that road type should be considered for maintenance. The percentage of Principal roads requiring maintenance was 4%, against a target of 4%. The percentage of Non-Principal roads requiring maintenance was 5% against a target of 4%. The percentage of Unclassified roads requiring maintenance was 17%, against a target of 14%.

Road safety

24 road safety infrastructure schemes were completed in 2023/24 on identified high risk sites/routes to improve road safety, against a target of 24. During 2023/24, 551 Bikeability courses were delivered to 4,428 individuals. 343 'Wheels for All' sessions were delivered to 3,862 attendees. The targets for the year were to deliver Bikeability training to 4,000 people and to also deliver 100 'Wheels for All' sessions.

Transport and parking

Improvements have been implemented in 2023/24 using the £41.4m of funding assigned to East Sussex as part of the Government's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) including:

- £13m of bus service improvements, including the Flexibus, Digital Demand Responsive Transport service covering over 90% of East Sussex. The service has seen continued passenger growth due to continued marketing and improvements to the service
- £5m for reduced fares in the county which are scheduled to run until April 2025
- improvements have been made to the bus stop Infrastructure, including the installation of 2,560 QR code plates, new hard standing areas and the installation of new Real Time Information signs at a number of stops
- 32 traffic light junctions have been identified for bus priority improvements and these schemes are due to commence in 2024/25

Following the approval of a business plan and draft contract submitted in November 2023, the Council has now received 90% of the £4.441m allocated to East Sussex from the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund. The remaining 10% will be paid once the final contract has been approved. The funding will support the delivery of on street electric vehicle chargepoints in the county. It is expected that procurement of the contract will begin in Q2 2024/25, and that initial work to deliver chargepoints will follow in Q4 2024/25.

A Hastings Parking review made several recommended changes to parking restrictions in the town and the majority of these have now been implemented, with the final changes expected to be in place by May 2024. A review of parking in Rother was considered by the Planning Committee in July 2023, and all the agreed changes have now been implemented.

The Home to School Transport Team successfully arranged transport for over 5,000 children at the start of the new school year in September 2023. The team have also completed several projects to improve the efficiency of the service and help mitigate cost increases. The Team worked with Children's Services to review possible mitigations to pressures in the service. The review identified opportunities to increase efficiency, strengthen the transport market and avoid costs. Improvements have also been made to the service, following the implementation of Pax, the new client and contract database. The integration with QRoutes, a route optimisation tool, has delivered efficiencies in the processing of applications and route allocation.

Waste

Changes were made to the chargeable waste service in January 2024, allowing residents to bring small amounts of DIY waste for free to all of our Household Waste and Recycling Sites (HWRS). Hard plastic recycling was introduced at Seaford and Eastbourne HWRS, meaning half the sites in the county now offer this. The recycling of hard plastics, rather than sending them to the Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility, has reduced our carbon impact by an estimated 125.5 tonnes in 2023/24. Eastbourne HWRS began to open early as part of a trial to help residents recycle more and reduce queues at the site in 2023/24. The trial proved a success and early opening has continued, allowing residents access 30 minutes earlier than previously on Monday to Friday. Recycling containers for vapes were added to all East Sussex HWRS in 2023/24.

The projected 2023/24 outturn for the amount of waste re-used, recycled or composted or used beneficially is 56.0%, based on the outturn at the end of December 2023 (reported in arrears). Residual waste and kerbside recycling rates are slightly lower than forecast. This might be partly due to cost-of-living increases. However, green waste and waste sent for beneficial use are higher than forecast, which has helped to maintain the rate.

Rights of Way (RoW) and Countryside Sites

Due to the very wet winter weather, the Rights of Way Team have managed several significant flooding, landslide and cliff fall events around East Sussex in recent months. These have affected public access and are typically longer-term issues which may require a diversion or closure of the affected path. Funding from High Wealth National Landscape (HWNL) has enabled the team to set up a 'free gates for stiles' scheme. Once complete, this will see 120 stiles replaced with gates in the HWNL area. The funding has also provided several new benches for the Forest Way County Park. The team have also begun to install Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) bridges in appropriate locations on the path network. Glass Reinforced Plastic is stronger and has a longer lifespan than timber, so will improve the longevity of the larger bridges we manage.

We completed 95% of high priority maintenance work on schedule in 2023/24, against a target of 80%. Due to continued wet weather in Q4, rangers undertook both reactive and planned work, particularly at countryside sites, where access was possible.

Communities

Trading Standards

79 businesses and individuals received training and advice from Trading Standards in Q4. During 2023/24 a total of 653 businesses and individuals received training and advice, against a target of 350. Trading Standards made 886 positive interventions to protect vulnerable people in Q4. During 2023/24 Trading Standards made 2,669 positive interventions in total, against a target of 200, which included installing call blockers to protect vulnerable people from scammers.

Libraries

7,198 children took part in the Summer Reading Challenge during summer 2023, against a target of 5,100, the highest total since 2018. The challenge aims to encourage primary school children to read books during the summer holidays. 4,258 participants completed the challenge, a 23% increase compared to 2022.

The Libraries team have worked with colleagues across the Council and schools to reintroduce work experience placements at libraries across the county. 65 young people started placements in libraries during 2023/24.

387 people enrolled on Family Learning Programmes at East Sussex libraries in Q4. 197 of these were in Family Learning, English, Maths and Language programmes. 190 were in Wider Family Learning programmes. Throughout 2023/24, 2,051 people enrolled, against a target of 500, with 1,008 of these in Family Learning, English, Maths and Language programmes and 1,043 in Wider Family Learning programmes.

28 people passed online learning courses, including in IT, English and Maths in our libraries in Q4. In total during 2023/24, 88 people passed courses, against a target of 70.

Revenue Budget Summary

The CET revenue budget is £71.641m and has underspent by £1.733m. The largest underspend is in Transport and Operations where current market prices mean that electricity and recycling income exceeded budget in the Waste Service and the budgeted draw down of £2.335m was not required (**ref vi**). The underspend in Communities is mostly due to staff vacancies in Trading Standards and Road Safety with additional income from Emergency Planning training (**ref v**). Customer and Libraries have underspent due to staff costs and additional income in libraries, and slippage in maintenance at the Keep (**ref iv**). The largest overspend is in Highways and is due to the estimated increased cost of electricity for streetlighting (**ref vii**). The overspend in Planning and Environment is mostly within the Transport Development Control budget and can be attributed to the lack of up-to-date Local Plans in the county, which has led to an increase in speculative planning applications for

residential developments, which often have challenging transport issues that need addressing. Consequentially, we have seen a rise in the number of applications that have required specialist input (e.g. transport modelling) and/or have become subject to planning appeals, which are particularly resource intensive and have often required short-term consultancy support (**ref ix**). The overspend in Economy is mostly due to the cost of consultants engaged to help transition South East Local Enterprise Partnership funded projects back into Council control (**ref viii**). The Parking saving was not achieved this year and is covered by a one-year budget increase (**ref ii**). The Environmental Services saving was not achieved and will be addressed going forward (**ref iii**).

Capital Programme Summary

The CET capital programme has a gross budget of £57.393m and there is slippage of £7.317m, overspend of £566k, and spend in advance of £542k. The slippage is mostly in the Highways Structural Maintenance programme where design work must be completed on larger drainage schemes before construction which will now take place in 2024/25 (**ref xv**). There have been delays in progressing project briefs which has delayed construction on Other Integrated Transport Schemes (**ref xiii**). Slippage in the Bridge Strengthening programme is due to wet weather and delays in securing Environment Agency permits (**ref xvii**). Exceat Bridge has slipped due to outstanding project design, discharging planning conditions and ongoing land acquisitions (**ref xiv**). The prioritisation of gangs onto carriageway patching works along with high levels of rainfall has caused slippage in road signage and marking schemes (**ref xvi**). The phase three Broadband contract has now ended however the accrual for the final settlement was overestimated resulting in a negative spend this year (**ref x**). Slippage in the Bus Service Improvement Plan Bus Priority scheme is due to a public consultation review which may require a rescoping of works in the new year (**ref xii**). The Bexhill to Hastings Link Road overspend is due to the outstanding archaeology, ecology, and Part 1 compensation claims (**ref xi**). There are additional schemes with smaller variations to their budgets.

Performance exceptions (Q4 – See How to read this report for definition)

Priority – Driving sustainable economic growth

Performance measure	Outturn 22/23	Target 23/24	RAG Q1 23/24	RAG Q2 23/24	RAG Q3 23/24	RAG Q4 23/24	2023/24 outturn	Note ref
Create a pan-Sussex visitor economy group to re-start the leisure, hospitality, culture, retail and tourism economy and enhance existing marketing vehicles	Sussex Tourism Leadership Group established	Develop a shared Sussex Story and assets to promote the region. Develop a shared Sussex Meetings, Inceptive, Conferences and Events (MICE) initiative	G	G	G	R	Completion of shared Sussex Story and assets delayed until 2024/25	i

Savings exceptions 2023/24 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2023/24	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved	Note ref
Parking	-	745	-	745	-	ii
Libraries	105	105	105	-	-	
Environmental Services	-	60	-	-	60	iii
	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Savings	105	910	105	745	60	
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0	
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	105	910	105	745	60	

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total	Note Ref
Parking	745	-	745	
Environmental Services	-	60	60	
Total	745	60	805	

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Revenue Budget 2023/24 (£'000)

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2023/24 Gross	2023/24 Income	2023/24 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note ref
Management and Support	6,214	(4,804)	1,410	4,180	(2,768)	1,412	2,034	(2,036)	(2)	
Customer, Library and Registration	9,986	(4,501)	5,485	9,764	(4,573)	5,191	222	72	294	iv
Communities	3,279	(877)	2,402	3,478	(1,473)	2,005	(199)	596	397	v
Transport & Operational Services	111,471	(69,533)	41,938	107,119	(67,226)	39,893	4,352	(2,307)	2,045	vi
Highways	21,127	(3,578)	17,549	23,492	(5,363)	18,129	(2,365)	1,785	(580)	vii
Economy	3,297	(1,581)	1,716	3,404	(1,548)	1,856	(107)	(33)	(140)	viii
Planning and Environment	4,383	(3,242)	1,141	5,306	(3,884)	1,422	(923)	642	(281)	ix
Total CET	159,757	(88,116)	71,641	156,743	(86,835)	69,908	3,014	(1,281)	1,733	

Capital programme 2023/24 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variation (Over) / under 2023/24 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
The Keep	1,096	1,096	228	-	228	-	228	-	
Peacehaven Refurbishment and Conversion	70	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Libraries	5,139	5,139	580	442	138	-	138	-	
Broadband	33,800	33,800	160	(269)	429	-	429	-	x
Bexhill and Hastings Link Road	126,247	128,347	-	566	(566)	(566)	-	-	xi
BHLR Complementary Measures	1,800	1,800	100	48	52	-	52	-	
Economic Intervention Fund	8,884	8,884	75	72	3	-	3	-	
Economic Intervention Fund Loans	3,000	3,000	80	53	27	-	27	-	
Stalled Sites Fund	916	916	13	13	-	-	-	-	
EDS Upgrading Empty Commercial Properties	500	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Community Focused Road Safety Interventions	750	750	206	175	31	-	31	-	
Climate Emergency Works	9,929	9,929	3,005	2,831	174	-	174	-	
Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme	963	963	905	1,135	(230)	-	-	(230)	
Flood Management SuDS	420	420	190	202	(12)	-	-	(12)	
SALIX Decarbonisation - Ninfield School	145	145	-	-	-	-	-	-	
SALIX Decarbonisation	369	369	-	12	(12)	-	-	(12)	
Newhaven Port Access Road	23,271	23,271	28	(36)	64	-	64	-	
Real Time Passenger Information	3,181	3,181	155	132	23	-	23	-	
Bus Service Improvement Plan	18,500	18,500	500	188	312	-	312	-	xii
BSIP Passenger Transport	3,815	3,815	2,045	2,174	(129)	-	-	(129)	
Replacement Lewes Road Bus Station	100	100	4	4	-	-	-	-	
PAX Software System	37	37	26	21	5	-	5	-	
Hastings and Bexhill Movement & Access Package	9,583	9,583	(79)	(125)	46	-	46	-	
Eastbourne/South Wealden Walking & Cycling Package	6,936	6,936	79	89	(10)	-	-	(10)	
Hailsham /Polegate/ Eastbourne Movement & Access Corridor	2,251	2,251	350	260	90	-	90	-	

APPENDIX 6

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variation (Over) / under 2023/24 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package A	6,936	6,936	800	521	279	-	279	-	
Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package B	5,454	5,454	100	78	22	-	22	-	
Other Integrated Transport Schemes	66,753	66,753	2,695	1,639	1,056	-	1,056	-	xiii
A22 Corridor Package	1,143	1,143	207	207	-	-	-	-	
Community Match Fund	780	780	95	29	66	-	66	-	
Area-wide traffic management scheme – Schools Streets	200	200	175	169	6	-	6	-	
Emergency Active Travel Fund Tranche 2	1,456	1,456	-	(3)	3	3	-	-	
ATF Eastbourne Liveable Town Centre	274	274	37	58	(21)	-	-	(21)	
Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections	9,689	9,689	574	359	215	-	215	-	
Exceat Bridge	10,591	10,591	1,259	632	627	-	627	-	xiv
Queensway Depot Development	1,956	1,956	104	(16)	120	-	120	-	
Core Programme - Highways Structural Maintenance	498,675	498,675	35,893	33,877	2,016	-	2,016	-	xv
Visibly Better Roads	5,800	5,800	1,293	789	504	-	504	-	xvi
Core Programme - Bridge Assessment Strengthening	38,785	38,785	2,740	1,955	785	-	785	-	xvii
Core Programme - Street Lighting - Life Expired Equipment	39,561	39,561	2,000	2,150	(150)	-	-	(150)	
Core Programme - Street Lighting - SALIX scheme	2,961	2,961	219	219	-	-	-	-	
Core- Rights of Way Surface Repairs and Bridge Replacement Programme	10,417	10,417	552	534	18	-	18	-	
Total CET Gross (Planned Programme)	963,133	965,233	57,393	51,184	6,209	(563)	7,336	(564)	

Governance Services – end of year 2023/24

Summary of progress on Council Priorities, issues arising, and achievements

Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)

Planning for 2024/25 and beyond, culminated with the agreement of the budget and the Council Plan by County Council in February 2024. The plan and budget were informed by engagement events with strategic partners, young people, business representatives and Trade Unions as well as input from scrutiny committees and a survey of local people. The Council Plan and Portfolio Plans 2024/25, which set out our priority and delivery outcomes for the coming year and our plans for delivering them, have been published online. The plans and budget reflect the increasingly challenging financial position facing the Council. This is due to the growth in need for statutory, demand-led, services for vulnerable children and adults, an escalation of costs, and national support and funding not meeting the new costs facing the authority. For the first time, the 2024/25 budget relies on making a significant withdrawal from our limited reserves to bridge the shortfall in funding. This is not a sustainable position, and the forecast for the forthcoming years shows that our reserves would be exhausted within 2 years if we remain reliant on using these to keep our core services running. We will continue to work with our local, regional and national partners to highlight the specific needs of East Sussex, and to press for fair and sustainable allocation of funding that enables us to continue to meet the needs of our residents. In light of the financial position the Council will also need to instigate work to identify a range of actions that it will need to take to set a balanced budget for 2025/26, without the need to draw on reserves.

Our integrated planning process, RPPR, has allowed us to continue to focus and protect our spending where it will deliver our priority objectives most effectively. Through the process we have ensured that we have the demographic trends and performance information to monitor progress through the year, as well as the evidence we need to support lobbying at a local, regional and national level. We began the planning process for 2025/26 in Q4 in preparation for State of the County and are continuing to review our processes to ensure that we are maximising the value for money that we deliver.

Transport for the South East (TfSE)

Regional Centre of Excellence

TfSE has begun delivery of its Centre of Excellence website. Steering groups have been created to shape and inform its development. Seventy local transport authority officers are already registered and there will be an in-person event to launch the work.

We are engaging with professional institutes, partner organisations, national agencies and constituent authorities to understand what resources, tools, knowledge and expertise are desired and can be hosted on the platform.

We are capturing the priorities of local transport authority officers through our capability and capacity survey, which closed on the 22 April 2024. Then, working with our partners, we will develop a pipeline of content to best meet these needs. This data will also be shared with the Department for Transport to support them in their programme of work to boost capacity and capability nationally.

Active Travel

Work on the TfSE Regional [Active Travel](#) Strategy is progressing with the draft strategy due to be completed in summer 2024. The Regional Active Travel Steering Group has met 5 times since the project commenced and their input has been integral to shaping the development of the strategy.

Stage 3 included developing a methodology to identify a strategic active travel network for the region, taking account of input from the project team and Steering Group. The second Technical Report (Strategic Network Identification) has been produced and reviewed by the Steering Group members, and feedback is now being addressed for the final version. The next steps will be to

finalise the strategic network and apply the prioritisation framework developed with Steering Group members to the network.

Freight Forum

England's Economic Heartland (EEH), Transport East (TE), and Transport for the South East (TfSE) have established a Wider South East Freight Forum, which brings together freight and logistics industry representatives such as Logistics UK, the Road Haulage Association, local authorities, business representatives, and ports and airports.

The Forum met for the first time in December 2023. The second meeting in April 2024 focused on the associated with the provision of additional lorry parking and driver welfare facilities. The third meeting in June 2024 will focus on the decarbonisation of the freight and logistics sector.

Delivering the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP)

Our Strategic Prioritisation Framework and Methodology was approved by the Partnership Board in January 2024. A key role for Sub-National Transport Bodies (STBs) is to provide advice to Government on transport investment priorities in their areas and this tool provides a robust evidence-led process through which we can respond to such requests.

Corporate Lobbying

Throughout 2023/24 corporate lobbying work focussed on using our partnerships and networks at the local, regional, and national level to influence policy development in a range of areas, including investment in highways and children's services, as well as local authority funding more generally. During Q4, we took the opportunity to outline to East Sussex MPs the severe financial pressures the council is under, and to ask for their support in lobbying ministers to increase the funding provided in the Final Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) 2024/25. This successfully resulted in a number of local MPs signing a letter organised by the County Councils' Network that called for more funding in the LGFS and an additional £600m of national funding for social care subsequently being made available in that settlement.

The Leader and Chief Executive have continued to raise issues and priorities for the county with our local MPs, including through specific updates on our Council Plan and the final budget position for 2024/25. In Q4, ahead of a debate in the House of Commons, the Director of Children's Services provided a written briefing to MPs on pressures in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system, which included proposed solutions to address these pressures. This briefing was mentioned during the debate and a copy provided to the Minister for consideration. Chief Officers also continue to influence service specific national policy developments through national professional associations and networks. The Chief Executive has contributed to national policy development throughout 2023/24 as representative for the South East region on a national grouping of local authority Chief Executives. In Q4, this work included discussions on community cohesion, local government performance, productivity and audit and preparations for delivering forthcoming elections.

Supporting democracy

During 2023/24 we supported 159 meetings (40 in Q4) including: 4 County Council meetings (1 in Q4); 8 Cabinet meetings (2 in Q4); 48 Lead Member meetings (11 in Q4); 54 Scrutiny Committees and Review Boards (15 in Q4); and 45 other committees and panels (12 in Q4). We also despatched agendas for a further 24 meetings (7 in Q4). We supported 3 Whole Council Forums (1 in Q4). The webcasts of Council meetings were viewed 7,686 times (2,229 times in Q4). The most viewed meetings were the Planning Committee meeting in July 2023, which was watched 582 times and the Full Council meeting in February 2024, which was watched 573 times, either by live view or as a recording.

The Member Training and Development Programme delivered a wide range of training and briefing sessions to Members throughout 2023/24 (a total of 16 sessions were delivered). Courses included sessions on the role of public health in local government, a climate change update, the

fiduciary duties of the Council, member interests and the code of conduct, race equality in East Sussex and training to support scrutiny committee members in their scrutiny role. To help ensure courses continue to meet the needs of Members, a survey of training needs will be undertaken in Q1. Feedback from the survey will inform the development of a fresh training offer for Members for 2024/25. To help make participation as easy as possible, most training sessions will continue to be delivered remotely with resources, such as slides from training sessions, being saved to the Councillors' area of the intranet for future reference. The Member Reference Group also met on 4 occasions and discussed a range of issues including, for example, a draft social media guidance for councillors.

The Council's scrutiny committees delivered varied work programmes during 2023/24, including a range of scrutiny reviews, reference groups and committee meetings, all of which have provided additional scrutiny and constructive challenge to the work of the Council and partners. In Q4, the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee completed a review of changes to paediatric services at Eastbourne District General Hospital. Two scrutiny reviews were completed during Q4 on School Exclusions, and Pothole Management. Scrutiny comments were reported to Cabinet and Council as part of budget and Council Plan setting for 2024/25, following the Place and People Scrutiny RPPR Boards held in December.

During 2023/24 the Place Scrutiny Committee completed its scrutiny work on a draft corporate carbon offset framework and an updated corporate Environment Policy and provided input on the development of a new Economic Growth Strategy for East Sussex. It also continued with scrutiny work on the Local Transport Plan 4. The People Scrutiny Committee completed a scrutiny review of Equality and Inclusion in Adult Social Care, and continued its scrutiny work on the Health and Social Care Integration Programme and Prevention in Children's Services. The committee also engaged with work on the Adult Social Care Strategy and a Local Government Association peer review of Adult Social Care. In Q4, the People Scrutiny Committee held its annual meeting to review Educational Attainment and Performance.

The Health and Wellbeing Board met on 5 March 2024. The Board considered an update report on the delivery of the East Sussex Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) programme. The Board also received reports on School Attendance as a Public Health Outcome, a focus report on Men's Mental Health projects in East Sussex, and the Rye Listening Tour carried out by Healthwatch East Sussex. During 2023/24, the Board also considered annual reports from the Director of Public Health, Healthwatch, Sussex learning from lives and deaths report, the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board. It also considered reports on Sussex and East Sussex Suicide Prevention Strategies, public health work with planning and creative health, and an update report on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

The East Sussex School Appeal Service received 48 in-year appeals from families during Q4, which resulted in 8 virtual appeal hearing sessions taking place (at each hearing session a number of appeals are usually considered, with parents able to attend in-person if that is their preference). Of the appeals submitted during Q4, 6 were successful, 12 were dismissed by an Independent Appeal Panel, a further 15 were either withdrawn by the families or were not needed because a place became available at their preferred school before the hearing. The remaining 15 appeals are set to be heard in Q1 2024/25. A total of 262 appeals have been received for the September 2024 secondary school intake. These appeals will also be heard in Q1 2024/25.

The service successfully recruited and trained 4 new school appeal clerks. New volunteer Independent Appeal Panel members were also appointed, with training delivered early in Q4.

Also in Q4, an Independent Review Panel (IRP) was convened to review the permanent exclusion of 2 children from a school in East Sussex. The decision of the IRP was to recommend that the Governing Board reconsider the reinstatement of both children to the school.

Across the whole of 2023/24, a total of 615 school admission appeals were received and 52 appeal hearings conducted. A total of 6 school exclusion review requests were also heard by Independent Review Panels.

Legal Services

During Q4, Legal Services assisted Trading Standards to secure a confiscation order of £60,000 following a successful conviction for possession for sale of counterfeit footwear. The money, secured to repay the victims, include £22,500 payable to the Council in respect of the prosecution.

The Service advised in relation to 2 judicial review applications issued against the Council during 2023/24. The first claim was withdrawn following a settlement being agreed. The application for permission to apply, in relations to the second claim, was refused in March 2024; however, the application has been renewed and this is yet to be determined.

During 2023/24 the Service advised in relation to 268 Court of Protection cases and 84 matters involving safeguarding vulnerable adults (compared to 273 and 79 in 2022/23) and in relation to 232 Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards applications in the Court of Protection (up from 191 in 2022/23).

The Service continues to work closely with Children's Services, providing advice and representation, including in pre-proceedings and court applications for care proceedings. Our priority is to keep children within their family when it is safe to do so, and for public law applications to be a necessary and proportionate response to achieve the best outcome for the child. At the end of 2023/24 there were 52 families open in pre-proceedings compared to 48 at the end of 2022/23. In 2023/24 the Service applied for care proceedings in respect of 72 families compared to 71 in 2022/23. At the end of Q4, there were a total of 59 ongoing care proceedings compared to 68 proceedings in Q4 2022/23. In 2023/24 we concluded 81 sets of care proceedings compared to 63 in Q4 2022/23. Of the concluded proceedings 43% were placed in the care of family under special guardianship or child arrangements orders. Concluded proceedings in East Sussex in 2023/24 took on average 47 weeks per child, this is 6 weeks less than in 2022/23. The Service has also continued to provide training and legal advice to Children's Services, including on court work for newly qualified social workers and on policy and operational instructions.

During 2023/24, the Service completed agreements to secure financial contributions to the Council of over £4m, together with the delivery of additions and improvements to the highway network across the county. The Service also advised on 187 new property matters compared to 129 in 2022/23. In addition, the Service advised on 241 new contract and procurement matters compared to 230 in 2022/23.

During Q4, the Service assisted Income Recovery in securing the recovery and repayment of debts totalling £74,671, compared to £39,007 in Q4 2022/23.

Coroner Services

During Q4 2023/24, 585 deaths were reported to the Coroner (compared with 627 in Q4 2022/23), averaging 195 deaths per month. Of those deaths, 46% (269) went on to have a post mortem (compared to 47% in Q4 2022/23). 85 Inquests were opened during Q4, a slight increase on 80 inquests that were opened during Q4 2022/23. 66 Inquests were closed in Q4 2023/24, lower than 125 closed in Q4 2022/23.

In total during 2023/24, 2,211 deaths were reported compared to 2,470 in 2022/23. This averages 184 deaths per month. 46% (1,026) required a post mortem. This is an increase in the percentage for 2022/23 of 42% (1,034), meaning marginally fewer examinations were carried out and averaging 86 postmortems per month. A total of 338 Inquest were opened and 266 Inquests concluded in 2023/24. In 2022/23, 352 inquests were opened and 290 concluded.

7 Inquests were held in 2023/24 with Juries. These are usually held between 1 day and 2 weeks and require additional planning/resources. 112 Inquests were held in writing which do not require court bookings. There are currently 311 open Inquests compared to 242 at the end of 2022/23.

During Q4 the Senior Coroner retired and Fiona King was appointed as Acting Senior Coroner.

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)

During Q3, Trading Standards reported on an existing Directed Surveillance Authority (DSA), which had commenced in November 2023. The DSA was set to run for a maximum of three months until February 2024. The Authority allowed officers to undertake covert observations on number of retail outlets in East Sussex, where illegal tobacco was on sale. For operational reasons, the DSA was reviewed and cancelled on the 18 January 2024, when it was assessed as no longer required.

Local Government Ombudsman complaints

The Ombudsman issued 22 decisions in Q4. 16 cases were closed before a full investigation for a variety of reasons. These reasons included insufficient evidence of fault, complaints being out of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction because the complaint had not been through our internal complaint process, or an appropriate remedy had already been applied, of which 4 were recorded as upheld.

Of the 6 cases that were fully investigated, 3 cases related to Adult Social Care (ASC) and 3 to Children's Services (CS). All 6 were closed with the complaint partly or fully upheld as follows:

ASC – The client complained that the Council charged her for care, which she thought was free and did not agree to pay for. She said the Council did not assess her finances correctly, as it only looked at incomings and not outgoings such as Disability Related Expenses (DRE).

The Ombudsman found the Council was at fault for delays during the assessment process after the client was discharged from hospital, and for failing to share important information about her care charges. The Council has agreed to apologise to the client and to pay her £400 in recognition of the avoidable distress she suffered. The Council has also agreed to issue a credit of £348 to the client's outstanding balance to account for the backdated DRE.

ASC – The client's spouse complained that the Council failed to deal properly with her husband's care or respect her position as his power of attorney for property and affairs and health and welfare, causing her significant expense and distress.

The Ombudsman found the Council at fault for failing to deal properly with the complaint, which caused avoidable distress. The Council has agreed to apologise to the client and make payments for the additional costs she incurred and to reflect the long delay in sending her its summary report on the investigation into her concerns.

ASC – The client complained that the Council billed him for top-up fees, which he had already paid directly to the care provider.

The Ombudsman found the Council at fault for providing duplicate invoices and for not clarifying their process. The Council has agreed to provide the client with a written apology and pay him £200 in recognition of the fault identified.

CS – The client's mother complained that the Council failed to provide suitable education to her son, who has special educational needs.

The Ombudsman found fault with the Council for a delay in considering whether the education it was providing was sufficient, whether its section 19 alternative education duty was triggered and for a delay in issuing the final amended Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan. The Ombudsman also found fault with the Council's communication with the client's mother. The Council has agreed to apologise to the client's mother and pay her £2,900 for the benefit of her son, who missed out on alternative education, and £750 in recognition of the avoidable stress caused by the faults identified.

The Council has also agreed to implement a timescale for decisions about whether its section 19 alternative education duty is triggered to prevent delays and ensure children do not remain out of education for longer than necessary.

CS – The client's mother complained that the Council delayed processing her daughter's annual review and failed to consider her safety and welfare during the request for a change of placement. The client's mother also said that the Council failed to consider all her comments and evidence, when it responded to her complaint.

The Ombudsman found the Council at fault for its delays during the annual review process. Furthermore, it failed to evidence that it had considered all relevant information when deciding on a suitable placement. The Council has agreed to apologise to the client's mother and pay £250 for her frustration and distress and £1,000 for the loss of her daughter's educational provision from June to October 2023.

The Council has also agreed to ensure it has a robust process in place to monitor when the annual review of an EHC Plan is due; and to ensure it has a process in place to keep detailed and contemporaneous records of special educational needs panel meetings.

CS – The client's mother complained that the Council failed to provide alternative education to her son after he was permanently excluded from school. She also complained that the Council delayed finding him another school and refused to issue him with an EHC Plan.

The Ombudsman found the Council at fault for not providing alternative education to the client. The Council has agreed to apologise and to pay the client's mother £500 in recognition of the distress caused and £1,500 for the 11 weeks her son did not receive any provision.

Web activity

There were 1,954,700 unique pageviews of the Council website in Q4 (and more than 7.2 million across the whole of 2023/24). In Q4, the jobs section of the site was viewed more than 600,000 times. Customer satisfaction with the website was 64%.

Media and information work

During 2023/24 the press office handled 470 media enquiries and issued 108 press releases which generated 261 media stories. There were 1,415 stories published in total about the Council during 2023/24.

In Q4, the press office dealt with 157 media enquiries and issued 31 press releases. In March, there were 138 media stories about the Council, 94 of which were positive or neutral.

Effective publicity and campaigns

Examples of successful campaigns include a campaign to recruit more hosts for Ukrainian people settling in East Sussex, 5 new hosts have been attracted so far. The campaign used personal stories from hosts and Ukrainians, who've already thrived under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. We promoted the campaign through a mix of paid-for and organic social media posts with print advertising and editorial, posters at transport sites and digital screens at supermarkets. The recruitment of 5 new hosts equates to a saving of around £27,000 by avoiding the costs of emergency accommodation.

Three pop-up COVID-19 vaccination clinics in East Sussex libraries were publicised through no-cost social media and web posts and with a library poster campaign. 300 at-risk people attended for a vaccination, filling the available capacity.

South East 7 (SE7)

Throughout 2023/24, the SE7 partnership continued to provide a valuable forum for sharing intelligence on the rapidly evolving national policy context and developing joint lobbying messages to position the partnership's interests ahead of an expected general election. The SE7 partnership has also helped provide understanding on how neighbouring councils are responding to shared challenges, which this year has particularly focused on highways maintenance, asylum dispersal and demand and cost pressures in children's services, including special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and Home to School Transport.

SE7 Leaders and Chief Executives met jointly in Q4 to discuss latest issues and priorities for all councils, including issues emerging from budget setting for 2024/25, productivity plans and asylum related issues. At that meeting Leaders also received an update on officer-led work to prepare an SE7 collective lobbying position ahead of a general election and agreed to focus lobbying on the priority areas for reform, including SEND, the asylum system, and utilities company street works. SE7 Leaders also met in March and discussed the latest work being done by Transport for the South East, as well as current issues including the Chancellor's Spring Budget and implications for local authorities. Chief Executives continue to meet regularly to discuss latest policy developments.

Revenue Budget Summary

The Governance Service revenue budget is currently £8.458m and has underspent by £163k. Within the Corporate Governance division there was a large overspend in the Coroner budget. This is largely as a result of cumulative increases in the costs of mortuary provision, court hire, body removal, toxicology and staffing, as well as accumulative demands on the service. During the latter part of 2023/24 there was a change in management of the service and also a reduction on demand compared to that anticipated (**ref i**). Budget earmarked for external legal fees was being used to offset in-house legal provision and along with smaller underspends in other services, has resulted in an unpredicted underspend. The overspend in Corporate Support is due to the cost of covering maternity leave in Legal Services. This overspend is partially offset with staff vacancies elsewhere (**ref ii**).

Performance exceptions (See How to read this report for definition)

Performance measure	Outturn 22/23	Target 23/24	RAG Q1 23/24	RAG Q2 23/24	RAG Q3 23/24	RAG Q4 23/24	2023/24 outturn	Note ref
No Council Plan exceptions								

Savings exceptions 2023/24 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2023/24	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved	Note ref
	-	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-	
Total Savings	0	0	0	0	0	
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0	
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	0	0	0	0	0	

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total	Note Ref
	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	
Total	0	0	0	

¹ Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

² Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

³ The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

Revenue Budget 2023/24 (£'000)

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	2023/24 Gross	2023/24 Income	2023/24 Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note ref
Corporate Governance	5,323	(340)	4,983	5,196	(399)	4,797	127	59	186	i
Corporate Support	3,879	(404)	3,475	4,060	(562)	3,498	(181)	158	(23)	ii
Total Governance	9,202	(744)	8,458	9,256	(961)	8,295	(54)	217	163	

Capital programme 2023/24 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variation (Over) / under 2023/24 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
No current programme for Governance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total GS Gross (Planned Programme)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Strategic Risk Register – Q4 2023/24

Ref	Strategic Risks	Risk Control / Response and Post Mitigation RAG score	RAG
5	<p>RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE & RESOURCE</p> <p>There is ongoing uncertainty in relation to future funding levels, the longer-term local government funding regime, and the impact of national reforms, particularly across Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care. The impact of a period of high inflation/cost of living are leading to higher demand for Council services and have increased the direct cost of providing services. Together these create a risk of insufficient resources being available to sustain service delivery at the agreed Core Offer level to meet the changing needs of the local community.</p> <p>The proposed budget for 2024/25 requires a draw from the Financial Management Reserve to balance the budget.</p>	<p>We employ a robust Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process for business planning, which ensures a strategic corporate response to resource reductions, demographic change, and regional and national economic challenges; and directs resources to priority areas. We take a commissioning approach to evaluating need and we consider all methods of service delivery. We work with partner organisations to deliver services and manage demand, making best use of our collective resources. We take a 'One Council' approach to delivering our priorities and set out our targets and objectives in the Council Plan. We monitor our progress and report it quarterly.</p> <p>Our plans take account of known risks and pressures, including social, economic, policy and demographic changes and financial risks. However, we continue to operate in changing and uncertain contexts. Current and forecast economic conditions continue to shape a very challenging financial outlook both for the Council itself and many of the county's residents and businesses. Alongside this we continue to face ongoing challenges as a result of the persistent legacy of Covid, the increased cost of living and other national and international factors. We will continue to use the latest information available on these challenges to inform our business planning. We will also continually review our performance targets, priorities, service offers and financial plans, and will update these as required. As part of this we will continue to take action wherever we can to mitigate financial and service delivery pressures – making best use of new technology, investing in our workforce, seeking efficiencies, and checking that our services are effective and provide value for money. We will look to develop and implement further measures to address the funding challenges we face.</p> <p>We lobby, individually and in conjunction with our networks and partners, for a sustainable funding regime for local government in general and for children's social care and adult social care specifically, to meet the needs of the residents of East Sussex.</p>	Red

Ref	Strategic Risks	Risk Control / Response and Post Mitigation RAG score	RAG
12	<p>CYBER ATTACK</p> <p>The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has highlighted the substantial risk to British web infrastructure, with elevated levels of Cyber Crime being reported against all areas of government, particularly in light of current international unrest.</p> <p>Cyber-attacks are growing more frequent, sophisticated, and damaging when they succeed. With many additional functions now routinely carried out virtually and remotely, the change in working practice gives rise to more requests to relax security controls, with services more likely to take risks on the technology they procure and how they use it. Controls have been enhanced to manage these requests.</p> <p>The impacts of a cyber-attack are far-reaching, and it is difficult to put a figure on the cost, but authorities that have been subject to major attacks have calculated the disruption to have cost between £10m and £12m.</p>	<p>Most attacks leverage software flaws and gaps in boundary defences. IT&D use modern security tools to assure our security posture: Monitoring network activity and identifying security threats; Keeping software up to date with regular patching regimes; Continually monitoring evolving threats and re-evaluating the ability of our toolset to provide adequate defence against them; Ongoing communication with the Security industry to find the most suitable tools and systems to secure our infrastructure. IT&D continues to invest in new tools, which use pre-emptive technology to identify threats and patterns of abnormal behaviour. The Council achieved Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation during 2022/23. Cyber Essentials Plus is the industry standard for the private and public sectors, underpinning safe sharing with partners and helping ensure sufficient controls are in place to minimise the risk of a cyber incident.</p> <p>Enhancing user awareness: Expanding E-Learning and policy delivery mechanisms to cover Cyber threat; educating staff around the techniques and methods used by active threats; and providing General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) training and workshops to cascade vital skills and increase awareness of responsibilities under GDPR legislation. Business Continuity Scenario testing has been cascaded through Departmental Management Teams.</p> <p>Services hosted in ISO 27001 accredited Orbis Data Centres.</p>	Red
9	<p>WORKFORCE</p> <p>An inability to attract and retain the high calibre staff needed could lead to a reduction in the expertise and capacity required to deliver statutory services to our residents, including to prevent harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults at the required level and standards, impacting on the achievement of the Council's strategic objectives.</p>	<p>Following Cabinet's agreement to additional investment of £270k across 2022/23 and 2023/24, a number of strategies responding to the current significant recruitment and retention challenges have been put in place. Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On-going attendance at events such as careers fairs and shows to maximise our presence with job seekers. - The new Pre-Employment Coordinator postholder has linked in with organisations that support people back into employment to extend our reach into sections of the labour market that are underrepresented or face significant barriers to employment. - Continued use of apprenticeships, traineeships, intern arrangements and more flexible work arrangements etc as a way of bringing in new talent to the Council. - Continued delivery of our two leadership development programmes to support our talent management strategies: the 'Ladder to Leadership' programme and 'Head of Service Masterclasses'. The second cohort of the Ladder to Leadership programme started in September 2023 and are making good progress on the programme. <p>Additional work undertaken in Q4 includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of an exit interview pilot which is running for 3 months in the first instance to enable an assessment of success. 	Red

Ref	Strategic Risks	Risk Control / Response and Post Mitigation RAG score	RAG
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement with all DMTs and other senior management forums to determine the Council's future strategic workforce planning approach - Delivery of a masterclass on the use of AI in the Council led by specialists from Microsoft - Provision of information sessions and training around application and interview techniques for candidates who want to apply for roles at East Sussex County Council (ESCC) - Engagement with employees at ESCC, who are under 25, to get feedback on what attracted them to the Council as an employer; and to begin establishing a forum for young people in the new year to highlight any issues, and to attract candidates from a younger demographic to the Council 	
Page 83 15	<p>CLIMATE</p> <p>Failure to limit global warming to below 1.5°C above pre-industrialisation levels, which requires global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) to be reduced by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching 'net zero' by 2050 at the latest. The predicted impacts of climate change in East Sussex include more frequent and intense flooding, drought, and episodes of extreme heat, as well as impacts from the effects of climate change overseas, such as on food supply. This will lead to an increase in heat-related deaths, particularly amongst the elderly, damage to essential infrastructure, increased cost of food, disruption to supply chains and service provision, and greater coastal erosion.</p>	<p>Climate change mitigation: the science-based target is to reduce scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 50% every 5 years (equating to 13% per year). The focus is on buildings, as they made up 79% of carbon emissions in 2020/21. Internal oversight of progress is by the corporate Climate Emergency Board.</p> <p>Climate change adaptation: we work with partners on some aspects of adaptation, including flood risk management plans and delivering a Heat Alert service during the summer months.</p> <p>In Quarter 4 2023/24:</p> <p>A) Mitigation:</p> <p>1) Carbon Reduction Target: the target for 2023-24 is a 13% carbon reduction compared with 2022-23 and a cumulative reduction of 42% against the baseline year of 2019-20. Energy usage data for Qs 1-3 2023-24 indicates that we achieved about a 9% reduction in energy usage compared with Qs 1-3 in 2022-23. However, the carbon emissions from our energy usage increased because the national electricity grid has become temporarily more carbon intensive in 2023-24 due to an increase in fossil fuels and a reduction in renewables to run the system. This is beyond the control of the County Council. If energy usage in Q4 was similar to 2022-23 then the annual result for 2023-24 will be about a 1% overall decrease in carbon emissions compared with 2022-23. The final outturn will be available in August and will be reported to full Council in October 2024.</p> <p>2) Carbon Reduction Schemes: the target for 2023-24 was for the delivery of a further 23 capital schemes. 25 schemes were completed by the end of Q4.</p> <p>B) Adaptation:</p> <p>1) Adaptation Plan: In August the Climate Emergency Board agreed to the procurement of consultancy support to produce a climate change vulnerability and risk assessment, to help inform the development of a corporate adaptation plan. Arup have been appointed and are due to complete the assessment in May 2024.</p>	Red

Ref	Strategic Risks	Risk Control / Response and Post Mitigation RAG score	RAG
20	<p>PLACEMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR CARE</p> <p>Inability to secure sufficient high quality placements for children in our care, suitable accommodation for care experienced young people and respite provision, leading to significant financial pressure leading to significant financial pressure and poorer outcomes for children/young people.</p>	<p>Effective demand management, robust management of front door.</p> <p>Delivery of early help services, implementation of Family Hub programme throughout 2023-24, and Level 2 Family Keyworkers (Q3).</p> <p>Implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Edge of Care 'Connected Families', Family Safeguarding programmes ('Connected Families in Partnership' launch planned for January 2024), enabling more children to live safely with their families.</p> <p>Further delivery of kinship/Special Guardianship Order placements.</p> <p>Capital bid for Sorrel Drive.</p> <p>Consultancy project-IMPOWER to determine forecast trajectory and development of evidence-based business case to further improve sufficiency of placements.</p> <p>Fostering Recruitment & Retention Strategy completed. East Sussex County Council is part of the South East Sector Led Improvement Programme, Regional Fostering Strategy, and piloting Mockingbird hub.</p> <p>Uplift to fostering allowance (for in house carers, Special Guardianship Orders, Kinship carers) approved by the Chief Management Team to help secure sufficient supply of in house foster carers as an alternative to more expensive care packages.</p> <p>In Q3, the valuing care tools have been embedded into the business as usual with a strong focus on reunification.</p> <p>Fostering allowance uplift has been made part of the recruitment drive. Both elements are attempting to mitigate the increased costs due to the lack of placements for Looked After Children.</p>	Red
19	<p>SCHOOLS AND INCLUSION, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (ISEND)</p> <p>For Children with Special Educational Needs. Inability to secure statutory provision due to lack of availability of specialist placement within the county and increasing demand for placements in this sector. This would put the Council at risk of judicial review and/or negative Local Government Ombudsman judgements for failing to meet our duties within the Children and Families Act 2014, with associated financial penalties and reputational damage.</p>	<p>Effective use of forecasting data to pre-empt issues.</p> <p>Work with statutory partners to develop contingency plans.</p> <p>Work with the market to increase provision where needed.</p> <p>Expanding internal interim offer for children.</p>	Red

Ref	Strategic Risks	Risk Control / Response and Post Mitigation RAG score	RAG
Page 85 18	<p>ROADS</p> <p>Extreme weather events over recent years, including this winter, have caused significant damage to many of the county's roads, adding to the backlog of maintenance in the County Council's Asset Plan: and increasing the risk to the Council's ability to stem the rate of deterioration and maintain road condition.</p> <p>The economic impacts of the pandemic and recent events in Ukraine have had some effects on service delivery during this year, particularly with increased costs and shortages of suitable contractors and materials.</p>	<p>The changing climate is now influencing the rate of road deterioration, with more extreme events such as warmer wetter winters; and drier summers punctuated by unseasonal heavy downpours (drying and shrinking the substructure of roads). Additional funding over the last few years has helped maintain road condition, however, the latest condition and funding modelling showed the potential for deterioration over the next 10 years. Additional carriageway patching, footway, signing, and lining works were carried out with additional budget allocated through the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources process in 2023 and Cabinet approved additional investment of £15.7m in June 2023 for highway maintenance. The improvements are well underway to provide greater network reliance. Deterioration in road surfaces in 2023/24 has continued with a generally cool and wet summer and wet start to winter and spring.</p> <p>Road Condition Indicator (RCI) scores for this year indicate we are on target for principal roads but slightly below target for non-principal and unclassified roads, this is what we expected from the modelling given the current conditions. The evidence shows the current wet weather is taking its toll on the condition of many of the county's roads, with large numbers of potholes forming daily and roads deteriorating. Mitigations include encouraging road users to report potholes so we can intervene as soon as possible in accordance with our policies and lobbying Government for additional investment as, without it, it will be increasingly difficult to manage the risks of further decline.</p>	Red
	<p>DATA BREACH</p> <p>A breach of security/confidentiality leading to destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data. This includes breaches that are the result of both accidental and deliberate causes. A personal data breach is a security incident that has affected the confidentiality, integrity, or availability of personal data regardless of whether information has been accessed, altered, or disclosed via electronic or manual means.</p> <p>Risks to individuals, reputational damage, fines from the Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO), compensation claims.</p>	<p>Policy and guidance procedures in place to support practice.</p> <p>Data Protection Officer (DPO), Caldicott Guardians and Information Governance Officers monitor breach reporting and put in place mechanisms to minimise recurrence.</p> <p>Staff training to develop awareness. E-learning and policy delivery mechanism expanded to enhance skills and increase awareness of responsibilities under General Data Protection Regulation legislation.</p> <p>Technical security measures operated by Information Technology and Digital (IT&D), including access control and segregation of duties.</p>	Amber

Ref	Strategic Risks	Risk Control / Response and Post Mitigation RAG score	RAG
<div>8</div> <div>Page 86</div>	<p>CAPITAL PROGRAMME</p> <p>There are risks and uncertainties regarding the capital programme over the current Medium Term Financial Plan period and beyond, which could impact on the ability to deliver the Council's priorities and set a balanced budget.</p> <p>Factors such as inflation, supply chain issues, unforeseen operational risks, and wider economic and geopolitical factors are likely to impact project deliverability and affordability.</p> <p>Additionally, if capital expenditure isn't profiled accurately, then significant slippage against the budgeted programme can undermine the planning process, particularly in relation to treasury management modelling and the impact of borrowing.</p> <p>Due to the complexity of factors and uncertainties impacting them, the level of government grants and other sources of capital programme funding such as developer contributions and capital receipts could be significantly reduced.</p> <p>A combination of the above risks, alongside a volatile interest rate environment, could significantly increase the cost of borrowing to fund the capital programme, increasing pressures on the Council's revenue budget in an already challenging financial environment.</p>	<p>The Council reviews and updates its 20-year Capital Strategy annually as part of the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process, which sets the framework in which the capital programme is planned and allows the Council to prioritise investment to support its objectives. The development and delivery of the capital programme is overseen by a Capital Strategic Asset Board (CSAB), which is a cross departmental group, who also hear from Departmental Capital Board/Sub Boards who oversee priority areas.</p> <p>The capital programme includes an element of 'normal' level of inflation for ongoing target-based core programmes (as opposed to programmes that have cash limited envelopes). Additionally, a capital risk provision in the form of additional borrowing flexibility is in place to provide the ability to react to emerging risks such as supply chain issues and inflationary pressures. The level of provision is reviewed and approved on an annual basis as part of the RPPR process and is maintained by the CSAB in adherence to financial regulations.</p> <p>As part of the RPPR process, services are asked to provide a profiled programme based on best knowledge, which is reviewed and challenged by CSAB, to ensure the programme is profiled as accurately as possible. A corporate slippage risk factor can be applied to the programme to reflect likely programme spend to provide greater robustness to the planning and monitoring process.</p> <p>The CSAB have oversight of all sources of capital funding, including grants, capital receipts and developer contributions, to ensure that assumptions are prudent and realistic, and funds are used effectively and to minimise the need to borrow. Funding announcements are actively monitored, and funding targets reviewed to minimise the impact on delivery of the capital programme, ensuring that there is sufficient liquidity to meet funding requirements. The cost of borrowing for the capital programme has a direct impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan position, therefore capital investment decisions are considered as part of the RPPR process based on Treasury Management capacity and affordability in the context of the Council's wider financial position. The Council's approved Treasury Management Policy and Strategy has been prepared in the context of the current financial situation and seeks to ensure that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent, and sustainable.</p>	Amber

Ref	Strategic Risks	Risk Control / Response and Post Mitigation RAG score	RAG
9 Page 87	<p>LOCAL ECONOMIC GROWTH</p> <p>The transfer of South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) responsibilities and functions to East Sussex County Council (ESCC) does not successfully integrate the development of economic strategic planning, business support, and management of capital funded programmes, into Council operations as required by Government policy.</p> <p>Possible consequences if the transfer is not managed successfully include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Management, monitoring, and evaluation of the current capital programmes do not meet Government requirements, leading to potential clawback of £m funds; or an inability for ESCC to demonstrate it can manage funds successfully, affecting future allocations of growth funds. •Third parties with existing contracts may raise concerns if new / variation funding agreements are not put in place early from April 2024. •Loss of an effective 'business voice' through the current local economic growth board (Team East Sussex) and its various subgroups. •An inability to produce an agreed local economic strategy, which sets the ambitions, objectives, and key outcomes for East Sussex. 	<p>East Sussex County Council, working with partners, has successfully secured significant amounts of local growth funding totalling £127m since 2012 via the South East and Coast 2 Capital Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), to deliver a wide range of infrastructure projects in East Sussex. In August 2023, Government formally announced that direct funding for LEPs will be removed from April 2024. Upper tier local authorities (UTLA's) will then be required to take on the current non-statutory LEP powers, responsibilities, and functions. These include strategy development, business support and oversight/management of capital programmes. We submitted our proposal to Government in November 2023 to become an UTLA as per the guidance issued. East Sussex is eligible to be determined a 'functional economic area' to take on LEP responsibilities, but we still await a formal decision on this from Government.</p> <p>The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and East Sussex County Council have produced draft integration plans to mitigate the transfer risks on current and future capital programmes; and the financial, legal, and reputational risks. SELEP and our own Corporate Management Team endorsed the draft integration plans in Q3, and the plans have been taken to Lead Member in January 2024 and Cabinet in March 2024 to seek approval. Further Government guidance and an Assurance Framework are due to be released either in March or in new financial year to set out transition arrangements.</p> <p>Looking ahead, the lack of large-scale funding programmes to support economic growth across the county presents a big risk to us. Recent funds have been awarded directly to local Borough and District authorities (e.g., UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up Funds and Long Term Plan for Towns) or funding has come from time-limited specific sources.</p> <p>The County Council and Team East Sussex, the local economic growth board, are jointly committed to producing a longer-term East Sussex Economic Growth Strategy to 2050. The strategy will set out our collective approach to take advantage of future funding sources as they become available. Significant work has been completed with consultants and stakeholder consultations and a draft strategy produced in March 2024. The draft strategy is currently being reviewed by partners and is scheduled for approval in 2024 and will help to mitigate economic strategic planning risks.</p> <p>The County Council is already in a good position to mitigate the risks on business support and ensuring business has a voice. We directly run the Business East Sussex Growth Hub services and Government have committed to fund this in 2024/25 although a contract has yet to be issued and funding not yet confirmed. We will also ensure the business voice continues to be heard through Team East Sussex, our local strategic advisory economic growth board for the county.</p>	Amber

Ref	Strategic Risks	Risk Control / Response and Post Mitigation RAG score	RAG
4	<p>HEALTH</p> <p>Failure to secure maximum value from partnership working with the National Health Service (NHS). If not achieved, there will be impact on social care, public health and health outcomes and increased social care operational and cost pressures. This would add pressures on the Council's budget and/or risks to other Council objectives, as well as shared system objectives in the context of our Integrated Care System across workforce and patients who are medically ready for discharge (MRD) from hospital or community beds.</p>	<p>East Sussex was allocated £5,088m, as part of the national Government Discharge Fund Grant for 2024/25, to support local authorities to build additional adult social care and community-based reablement capacity to reduce hospital discharge delays by delivering sustainable improvements to services for individuals. Plans for 2024/25 take account of the Discharge Frontrunner Economic Modelling and review report focussed on improving discharge to home, alongside increased therapy and assessment provision and associated plans to reduce the use of bedded discharge pathways. Funding has been agreed for Q1 2024/25 and Q2, 3 and 4 will be determined alongside the actions required to achieve the recommendations from the review report. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) has retained the £4m uplift, to be used as transformation monies to cover dual running costs/ pump priming to affect the change and pace needed to avoid delays in hospital settings.</p> <p>In 2023/24 we have agreed our Integrated Community Team (ICT) footprints, which align with borough and district boundaries, and a pan-Sussex core offer for ICTs has been developed, focussed on proactive care for the most complex and vulnerable patients, and population health improvement. Alongside this, ICTs will also address local priorities based on intelligence and insight, and data and insight packs have been produced for each area to help further understand and address local health and care needs and inequalities. Building on our progress with integrated care in East Sussex, Hastings is our 'community frontrunner' area for developing the ICT model. The next phase of development will aim to identify current and relevant tests of change to further integrate service delivery, and action planning to support this.</p>	Amber

Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	25 June 2024
By:	Chief Executive
Title of report:	Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) – State of the County
Purpose of report:	To update Members on the issues which need to be taken into account in the priority and budget setting process for 2025/26 and beyond

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1. note the evidence base on demographics (Appendix 1) and the national and local policy outlook (Appendix 2);**
- 2. review the priority outcomes and delivery outcomes (Appendix 3) and agree these as the basis of the Council’s business and financial planning, subject to the proposed amendments set out in paragraph 4;**
- 3. agree officers update the Medium Term Financial Plan as the basis for financial planning when more information is available, as set out in paragraph 5;**
- 4. agree officers identify areas of search for further savings as set out in paragraph 5;**
- 5. agree to allocate the additional £5.386m for social care received in the final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25 to support the investments in children’s and adult social care within the Council’s agreed 2024/25 revenue budget.**
- 6. agree officers update the Capital Strategy and programme (Appendix 4) as set out in paragraph 7;**
- 7. agree the Productivity Plan at Appendix 5 for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; and**
- 8. receive reports on more detailed plans for 2025/26 and beyond in the autumn when there is more information about future resources.**

1. Background

1.1 The State of the County report is a key annual milestone in the Council’s Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process, our integrated business and financial planning cycle. The report provides an overview of our current operating context to begin the process of more detailed planning for 2025/26 and beyond. In conjunction with the 2023/24 year end monitoring report, it reflects on our achievements over the last year and the challenges we expect in the year ahead arising from both local and national factors. Through this analysis, it starts to refine our plans and to steer our business planning and budget setting processes.

1.2 The County Council continues to make a vital difference every day to health and wellbeing, independence, prosperity, connectivity and community throughout the county. Through our services, employment, purchasing and how we work in partnership with others the Council makes a significant contribution to quality of life for people across East Sussex. The reach of our services is significant. In the past year our Adult Social Care services have supported 27,000 people, our Children's Services have been in contact with over 30,000 families, we maintained over 2,000 miles of road, including repairing over 27,000 potholes, issued over two million items through our libraries and dealt with a quarter of a million tonnes of waste.

1.3 Independent reviews have endorsed the way in which the Council provides its services and has a positive impact on the county. Peer challenges led by the Local Government Association have cast a critical eye over our work and found the organisation to be focused, well managed and effective. Ofsted, following its detailed inspection, has praised the quality of our Children's Services and the outstanding support for looked after children. Our external auditors have endorsed the value for money services provide across the Council. These considered judgements confirm the organisation's many strengths, the commitment of our staff and the immense value of our partnerships. It is clear that East Sussex is a well-run council. But despite doing everything possible to plan and manage well locally, we are not immune to the national pressures weighing heavily on local government.

1.4 The past year has seen growing challenges for the Council, as well as achievements, and we expect these ongoing pressures to have a significant impact on our planning for the future. Many years of prudent management, including making difficult decisions when we had to in order to live within our means, have enabled the Council to provide stability in its service offer in recent years. But the gap between the funding we expect to have and the cost of providing services has now grown unsustainably. We are realistic about the substantial challenges we face, grounded in the evidence of the future needs of the county and the demands this will place on our support. As always, we will be open and honest about the path ahead, including what this may mean for services and the people they support, and we will continue to plan with a clear focus on what the Council wants to achieve for East Sussex with the resources we have.

1.5 This will entail looking again at what we are able to provide in future, and where we may have to step back in order to make ends meet and sustain those services we are required by law to provide. We must also be clear to any new Government that making further reductions in services that help people retain independence, or avoid the need for more intensive statutory support, is not what we would do if we had a choice and will have an impact in the longer term. We know that some of the short term decisions likely to be necessary to balance the books now will only generate more demand for support months or years down the road. Evidence shows that the best investment is in the upstream, preventative services which improve outcomes and ultimately make better use of resources and we will continue to make this case. However, we simply do not have the funding to scale up or even maintain these services to the level we would want, or to invest as we would like in the infrastructure and economy of East Sussex for the future.

1.6 This report contains the normal elements included in the State of the County report: the demographic evidence base; the national and local policy outlook; and updates on the Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme. It provides our latest understanding of how we will need to continue to respond to the wide range of policy, demographic and financial drivers which influence the outlook for the Council in the short and longer term.

1.7 Whilst the elements of this report may be familiar, the outlook it presents differs markedly from that of recent years. Nationally, the imminent general election holds the potential for significant policy change which would impact on the county's residents,

businesses and communities, and the ESCC and partner services which provide them with vital support. Most significantly, we begin our planning for 2025/26 and beyond from an unprecedented financial position with the current year's balanced budget being reliant on the temporary buffer of reserves, creating a pressing need for further action to address the underlying budget gap. The possibility of a further one year financial settlement due to the election, followed by a Spending Review, makes the medium to longer term financial outlook for the Council, and local government more broadly, highly uncertain, although it is clear that any new Government will face very constrained public finances with many competing demands.

1.8 Alongside the high level of both political and financial uncertainty, we continue to see locally the ongoing legacy of the Covid pandemic and increased cost of living manifest in growing need. Our biggest statutory services – social care for children and adults, support for special educational needs and disability (SEND), transport and highways maintenance – continue to face escalating costs and demand arising from factors largely outside our control. This, along with ongoing workforce challenges and new duties arising from national reforms, is placing unsustainable pressures on services across the Council.

1.9 We have honed what we do so that it is lean, focused tightly on where the Council is best placed to act, makes best use of available resources and is underpinned by partnership and One Council principles. But with difficult savings and service changes already delivered, we will not be able to sustain our current service offer in the face of mounting costs and increased demand.

1.10 It remains essential that we focus our resources, in partnership with others, in the most effective way to support our priorities and statutory service provision. The Council spends over £1bn gross each year (in the region of £540m net) on services for the county's residents and businesses. We continue to use our robust RPPR process to ensure our financial and other resources are aligned to delivery of our priority outcomes and that we are informed by a clear understanding of our effectiveness. This report describes the range of action we are already taking and outlines further steps we will need to take to bridge the financial gap if additional national support is not forthcoming.

1.11 We continue to make every effort locally to implement strategies to manage demand and reduce costs. Our productivity plan, requested by Government (of all local authorities) and detailed at paragraph 6 below, summarises the significant work already delivered and next steps, including the national support needed. However, the scope for more efficiency gains is very limited and will go only a small way towards bridging the budget gap. This report sets out the ongoing need for proactive lobbying and communications to help ensure that the next Government is aware of the needs of our county, the urgent requirement for a sustainable funding regime that appropriately reflects local need, and the case for fundamental national reform in key areas to enable more flexible and targeted use of the resources we have.

2. Current Position

2.1 Over the past year the county continued to be impacted by national and international factors leading to a range of pressures on households. The heightened cost of living continued to disproportionately impact on the most vulnerable, the complexity of need amongst vulnerable children and families grew, and we further developed our local response with partners and communities to the multiple aspects of migration. This challenging environment again reinforced the importance of the role the County Council plays for the residents, communities and businesses of East Sussex as we saw increased demand for our services. Our assessments of the ongoing levels of local need arising from recent developments continue to be refined and this modelling of future implications will be built into our planning.

2.2 In developing our medium and longer term plans we will also need to take account of the broader context in which we will be working. There is considerable policy uncertainty as a result of the imminent general election. We are analysing manifesto commitments made by the main political parties nationally and how these would impact on the county, ESCC and our partners. The future of significant reforms to key services brought forward by the current Government which are yet to be fully implemented is unclear, as is the future funding available to support these reforms. Alongside these ongoing medium term service changes, there will be a need for Council departments to respond at pace to any rapid policy shifts post-election. The national and local context includes:

- The developing national economic situation, with inflation falling but impacts from the increased cost of living persisting, and the potential for cuts to interest rates in the coming months. The ongoing pressures on households are likely to continue to influence demand for our services for some time and the costs of providing services will also continue to increase.
- Considerable uncertainty over the future of local government funding. The long planned funding review, covering the formula on which funding allocations to individual local authorities are based, was deferred beyond the general election, and a further one year financial settlement is likely for 2025/26. In addition, major national reforms to Adult Social Care and Children's Services (see below) carry considerable financial risks for local authorities.
- Changes to arrangements for driving economic growth locally as Local Enterprise Partnership functions transition to ESCC and a new East Sussex Economic Prosperity Strategy is finalised. Harnessing the benefits of investment in the county through Levelling Up Partnerships and the Long Term Plan for Towns will also be important.
- Ongoing challenges in the labour market, including the impact of workforce shortages in key sectors on our ability to recruit and retain staff, ongoing pay negotiations and the need for our workforce to adapt to service reforms. Alongside this, the need to take advantage of new opportunities from rapidly developing advances in technology and artificial intelligence which may support capacity and efficiency.
- The future of significant reforms of public services – major reforms to Adult Social Care charging were postponed until 2025 and the way forward will be an early decision for any new Government. National reforms in children's social care and SEND are being progressed following substantial reviews, but are at a relatively early stage and not at the pace needed to address growing demand. We are also continuing to respond to a range of significant national and local developments and pressures in health and social care and taking forward a range of work to manage demand and improve outcomes.
- The growing impact of climate change, adapting to its effects and working towards the national and local commitments to achieve carbon neutrality, including developing the next iteration of the Council's Climate Emergency Plan. Additionally, the introduction of a range of new measures through the Environment Act, including new duties in relation to food waste.
- Significant national policy developments related to planning, infrastructure, and transport and, locally, maximising the value of our new highways contract and additional investment in highways, and taking forward the next stages of our Bus Service Improvement Plan and refresh of our Local Transport Plan.

- The increasing need to respond to a complex picture of migration in light of global conflicts, increased numbers of people seeking asylum, including unaccompanied children, and developments in national policy on immigration.
- Further development of positive work with our public and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) partners on financial inclusion and building community wellbeing and resilience, in response to the increased need in our communities and as part of our ongoing work to help people help themselves.
- The ongoing importance of our partnerships in harnessing the collective resources and assets available within the county for the benefit of our communities.

2.3 The local and national policy outlook at Appendix 2 sets out the latest thinking on these and other current issues, although plans will continue to develop over the summer and autumn as more information emerges, particularly once the outcome of the general election is known. As always, Members will continue to be updated on policy developments throughout the RPPR cycle.

2.4 In response to the unsustainable financial position we have set in train several specific strands of work as part of RPPR planning. Steps have already been taken to minimise day to day expenditure wherever possible, to provide additional oversight of workforce issues and to ensure that recruitment to vacant posts is carefully considered. We are also ensuring that increased income offsets increased costs wherever possible and we have reviewed and reduced our office estate and continue to prioritise the sale of assets where appropriate. We are seeking out further opportunities to benefit from advances in new technology, building on work already undertaken to introduce new digital and artificial intelligence approaches and systems which benefit both service delivery and capacity. For example, our 'digital by default' approach in Adult Social Care and the development of our universal digital offer in Children's Services.

2.5 Where resources allow, we have stepped up our long-standing focus on preventative or upstream approaches which improve outcomes and manage demand, supporting people and communities to be independent wherever possible. This includes the investment in family safeguarding and embedding of the Valuing Care approach in Children's Services, and the further integration of community health and care services and development of health improvement work in Adult Social Care and Health. The delivery of additional patching, drainage and lining works through Cabinet's previous additional investment in highways maintenance has supported increased future resilience of the roads which the local economy and our communities depend on. However, there is a lack of funding for the scale of investment required in preventative work across a range of areas which would reduce the need for more intensive support in the future. As resources for this work have become increasingly constrained over time, services have become necessarily focused on responding to the most critical needs, creating a negative cycle of growing demand and increased costs.

2.6 We have reviewed the value for money our services provide, ensuring they perform well against our nearest comparator authorities and that we adopt good practice elsewhere where we can. As part of our RPPR planning we will systematically consider any further actions which may reduce the need for support in the short term or increase our capacity to respond. As always, our approach will be evidence-based, draw on best practice and use data and benchmarking to identify where we can improve.

2.7 This ongoing discipline and our culture of continuous improvement will help contain costs as far as we can. However, fundamentally there remains a significant gap between the income we currently expect to receive in the coming years and the costs of providing

services, with significant additional risk arising from service reforms. Without further Government support, changes to the statutory requirements local authorities are expected to fulfil or sustainable reform of local government finances we will not have the funding we need for the future. Further detail on the financial outlook and proposed next steps is provided at paragraph 5.

2.8 In all our activities, and in planning for the future, the County Council will continue to work to our guiding principles that:

- We are effective stewards of public money and deliver good value for money through strong integrated business planning;
- Our activities are transparent and we can be held to account;
- We operate as One Council and focus on agreed priority outcomes;
- We prioritise the investment available for front line service delivery and maximise the resources available, including work to secure sustainable national funding and partnerships with other organisations;
- We carry out all we do professionally and competently;
- We remain ambitious and realistic about what can be achieved with the resources available; and
- We strive to be a good employer and partner.

3. Demographic, Economic and Demand Changes

3.1 Appendix 1 sets out the key factors affecting the county in relation to demography, deprivation, health, housing, the environment and economy, and the impact these are having on demand for our services. This contains more detail on the issues outlined in paragraph 2. Appendix 1 highlights some of the longer-term challenges we face related to the nature of our population and our geography alongside emerging issues. It should be noted that while some factors, such as the continuing challenges around cost of living, impact on residents across the county, each local area is different and some areas are impacted more by particular issues. In addition, some of our communities are impacted by multiple systemic issues that require additional support to address, as has been recognised by the awarding of Levelling Up funding to these areas.

3.2 The main factors highlighted by the report are:

- **Older People** – the latest population projections show that the number of over 65s in the county will continue to grow at a much faster rate than our working age population; we are expecting an increase of 9.9% in the 65-84 age group and an increase of 14.2% in the over 85 age group in the next four years. Proportionately we have high numbers of over 65s and over 85s which has an impact on the demand for services and the Council's finances. Rother has the highest percentage of the population aged 65 years and over in the country.
- **Children and Young People** – there are still higher levels of demand for children's social care and more complex cases than seen pre-pandemic which together have resulted in a higher number of child protection cases. The number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continues to increase year on year, which is leading to an increased demand for home to school transport provision.
- **Asylum seekers and refugees** – East Sussex continues to have a higher rate of people receiving asylum support within the county than the national average. Unaccompanied asylum seeking children made up nearly a quarter of those children who began to be looked after last year.

- **Economy** – economic productivity within the county remains lower than the national average. Average wages for those employed within the county also remain lower than the national average. The unemployment rates in Hastings and Eastbourne are higher than the national average.

4. Council Priority Outcomes

4.1 The Council's business and financial planning is underpinned by our four priority outcomes, which provide a clear focus for decisions about spending and savings and direct activity across the Council.

4.2 The current four priority outcomes are:

- Driving sustainable economic growth;
- Keeping vulnerable people safe;
- Helping people help themselves; and
- Making best use of resources now and for the future.

The priority outcome that the Council makes the “best use of resources now and for the future” is a test that is applied to all activities to ensure sustainability of our resources, both in terms of money and environmental assets. It ensures that the future impact of the choices we make about using resources is actively considered across all that we do, as well as the here and now.

4.3 The priority outcomes, and their subsidiary delivery outcomes, are reviewed annually to ensure they continue to reflect the current context, with updates proposed as required. Reflecting our continually evolving operating environment, some specific amendments to delivery outcomes are proposed to ensure the priorities we are working to deliver, and the way we measure the performance of our activities and services, remain appropriate.

4.4 The following changes are proposed to delivery outcomes:

Keeping vulnerable people safe

Two wording amendments are proposed to reflect that the social care sector is moving away from the terminology ‘services’ as it is not inclusive of the wider range of support that is offered to residents (such as other community assets that help to meet people’s needs) and also to reflect the Council’s focus on enabling people to live well, beyond simply providing them with a service:

- All vulnerable people in East Sussex are known to relevant local agencies and ~~services are~~ **support is** delivered together to meet their needs
- People feel safe with ~~services~~ **support provided**

Helping people help themselves

The addition of a new delivery outcome is proposed to better recognise that Adult Social Care and Health, and other Council departments, make a contribution to addressing the social determinants of health, beyond simply working with partners (as described in the current delivery outcomes):

- We work to reduce health inequalities and maximise opportunities for our residents to live healthier lives.

4.5 Cabinet is asked to review the current priority and delivery outcomes and agree them as the basis for future business and financial planning, subject to the amendments outlined in paragraph 4.4 above. The full set of priority and delivery outcomes, showing the proposed amendments, is attached at Appendix 3.

5. Medium Term Financial Plan

5.1 When the 2024/25 balanced budget was approved by Full Council on 6 February 2024, the deficit on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2026/27 was £61.825m. Updating the MTFP for normal factors (such as the latest inflation rates and an additional year), the position is an increased deficit by 2027/28 of £83.601m.

Medium Term Financial Plan	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m
Annual Budget Deficit / (Surplus)	40.976	16.503	11.778
Carry Forward of 2024/25 Deficit	14.344	-	-
Annual Budget Deficit / (Surplus) after Carry Forward	55.320	16.503	11.778
Total Budget Deficit / (Surplus)	55.320	71.823	83.601

5.2 Existing financial pressures that have already impacted in 2023/24, whilst recognised within the additional investment when the budget was set, are expected to continue into 2024/25, particularly in Children's Services (which overspent by £30.42m in 2023/24), where looked after children and home to school transport service demands are significant, and Adult Social Care (which overspend by £1.98m), due to the impact of the national living wage increase and rising levels of debt from client contributions. In addition, emergent pressures are likely in SEND and Adult Social Care independent sector placements.

5.3 At a national level, the Government funding that ESCC will receive between 2025/26 and 2027/28 is yet to be confirmed. The Local Government Financial Settlement was only a one year settlement for 2024/25 and was the last year of the Autumn Statement 2021 Spending Review. There is no indication of the level of funding that will be available from 2025/26 onwards. With all this uncertainty, it is not possible to present a detailed draft MTFP to 2027/28.

5.4 As part of the settlement, the Government announced £500m of additional grant funding to support pressures in social care, of which the Council was allocated £5.386m. The continuation of a range of short-term grants announced in the 2023/24 Settlement was also confirmed. It is proposed to allocate the additional funding for social care to support the investments in children's and adult social care within the Council's agreed 2024/25 revenue budget and reduce the budgeted draw from reserves. However, this funding will not be sufficient to fund the demand and inflationary pressures facing ESCC services in 2024/25 in full and the Council will still require a significant draw on reserves.

5.5 The use of reserves to mitigate budget deficits is not sustainable as they can only be used once. The current level of reserves is set out in the table below. Total strategic reserves are projected to be £16.7m by 2029, which excludes any draws required to set a balanced budget in 2025/26 or beyond. This compares with a cumulative deficit of £83.6m by 2027/28:

Reserve Balances	Full Council February 2024		SoC June 2024	
	(£m)		(£m)	
	01.04.24 Est.	31.03.28 Est.	01.04.24 Est.	31.03.29 Est.
Earmarked Reserves:				
Held on behalf of others or statutorily ringfenced	32.3	32.1	31.3	30.6
Named Service Reserves				
Waste Reserve	19.4	8.9	19.5	11.6
Capital Programme Reserve	9.4	0.5	9.9	0.0
Insurance Reserve	7.5	7.3	7.4	7.2
Adult Social Care Reform Reserve	3.1	0.0	3.0	0.0
Subtotal named service reserves	39.4	16.7	39.8	18.8
Strategic Reserves				
Priority Outcomes and Transformation	5.9	5.6	7.3	1.5
Financial Management	31.8	19.4	35.8	15.2
Subtotal strategic reserves	37.7	25.0	43.1	16.7
Total Earmarked Reserves	109.4	73.8	114.2	66.1
General Fund Balance	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Total Reserves	119.4	83.8	124.2	76.1

5.6 A number of scenarios are currently being considered, which may impact the overall deficit, as set out in the table below.

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Revised deficit	55.320	16.503	11.778	83.601
Scenarios currently being considered				
Continuation of Adult Social Care (ASC) grant funding	(5.386)	0.000	0.000	(5.386)
Proceeds of Business Rates (NNDR) pooling	(2.194)	2.194	0.000	0.000
Council Tax: Premiums on second homes	(3.524)	(0.070)	(0.072)	(3.666)
Reduction in contractual inflation in line with forecasts	(6.481)	0.000	0.000	(6.481)
Council Tax Flexibility: Add a further 3.00% to our current 1.99% assumption to get to 4.99% (2.99% plus 2.00% ASC Precept) in all years	(11.138)	(12.254)	(13.476)	(36.868)
Deficit/(surplus) after scenarios	26.597	6.373	(1.770)	31.200

5.7 As set out above, should all these scenarios materialise there would still remain a deficit of £26.6m in 2025/26. Given the forecast level of strategic reserves is £16.7m by March 2029, which excludes any draws necessary to mitigate future deficits, and that all other avenues have been explored, further steps are required to support the Council in being able to set a balanced budget in the absence of any indications of further national support. It is recommended that officers explore areas of search across all departments to reduce the financial gap, with a focus on:

- Discretionary and non-statutory preventative services
- Directly provided services
- Support services and back office functions
- Income generation

5.8 Making further savings will impact on the Council's ability to maintain its Core Offer - the basic but decent level of services residents should expect. The financial position means that it may no longer be possible to sustain all services at Core Offer levels. Given the need for any savings to take effect as early as possible to impact on the 2025/26 financial position, areas of search will be brought forward for Member consideration at the earliest opportunity.

6. Productivity Plan

6.1 The additional national funding provided for social care in the final Local Government Finance Settlement was accompanied by a new expectation for councils to produce productivity plans as part of Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) efforts to return the sector to sustainability in the future. The plan, although not a requirement of local authorities, summarises how the Council continuously assures itself and others about the appropriate and effective use of public money and the significant steps taken over many years to make best use of available resources. It provides an opportunity to set out to DLUHC the key factors now impacting on sustainability and productivity for ESCC and what we are doing to address these, as well as action we need Government to take. DLUHC is establishing a Long-Term Sustainability Panel, comprising representatives from local government and the technology and transformation sectors, to review common themes and evidence arising from the plans from autumn 2024. The Panel will consider national policy implications, the role of Government in supporting change and the role of the sector itself.

6.2 ESCC's productivity plan is attached at Appendix 5. Although a stand-alone document it signposts, where possible, to the Council's existing and comprehensive business planning and performance framework. It summarises concisely the Council's approach in the areas specified by DLUHC – service development, technology and data and effective use of resources – and responds to its request to set out the barriers that Government can help address. It emphasises the need for investment in preventative approaches as central to a return to sustainability, alongside reform to the statutory requirements placed on local authorities in key areas where current national policy or legislation prevents us from targeting our resources most effectively. Subject to Cabinet agreement, the plan will be submitted to Government and published on the Council's website so that it is easily available to the public.

7. Capital Programme

7.1 The approved programme has now been updated to reflect the 2023/24 outturn and other approved variations, revising the gross programme to £874.5m to 2033/34. The details are set out in Appendix 4, together with the revised programme.

7.2 The 10 year capital programme to 2033/34 and 20 year Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2044/45 will be updated as part of the RPPR process over the autumn to add an additional year and ensure continued links into, and support of, the Council's other strategies. In addition, a review will be conducted of core Council-funded programmes/projects to consider the implications of a reduced programme that reduces pressure on the MTFP position.

8. Lobbying and Communications

8.1 This report sets out the diverse range of issues the Council must address in planning for the future, and the national factors significantly contributing to these. The medium term outlook is highly challenging - we face a significant financial gap which will necessitate

service reductions, uncertainty in relation to national reforms in major service areas and wider national policy direction, and a lack of clarity on long-term funding arrangements. There are significant risks and planning in this context is not easy, but it is clear that, without further Government support, the financial outlook will require difficult decisions and that these will not be the decisions we would choose to make to address growing demands.

8.2 Through our lobbying, we will make clear to the Government the specific needs of East Sussex and call for sustainable funding for local government that is appropriately reflective of local need and that fully reflects the impact of reforms. We will also proactively suggest things that will help without significant cost - calling for reforms and flexibilities which would help us better target and use our resources – helping us help ourselves. Both will be paramount to ensuring we are able to deliver what will be required to support East Sussex residents, communities and businesses with the services they need, including opportunities to continue positive preventative work that could most effectively manage future demand for services.

8.3 We will continue to work with local, regional and national partners to make this case through all available avenues and seek the support of East Sussex MPs in highlighting the needs of our county and the key role the Council has to play in improving the quality of life for people in our county.

9. Next Steps

9.1 Work will continue over the summer to refine our understanding of the medium term impacts on our services of national reforms, the evolving economic and political context, changing demand for services and the financial resources that will be available to us in the coming years. We will also further develop proposals for closing the financial gap, including potential savings.

9.2 We will report back to Members in the autumn with an updated assessment of our service demand, funding expectations and proposed actions to inform more detailed business and budget planning for 2025/26 and beyond. We will use our RPPR process to plan for the future as best we can in the context of a likely one year financial settlement once again.

9.3 Members will continue to be consulted on plans as they are developed through Cabinet, County Council, Scrutiny Committees, Whole Council Forums and specific engagement sessions throughout the 2024/25 Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources process.

BECKY SHAW
Chief Executive



State of the County 2024

Focus on East Sussex

Version number 1

Publication date August 2024

Contents

Summary	3
Population	6
Children and young people	18
Health and wellbeing.....	31
Adults.....	39
Housing.....	51
Deprivation	57
Economy.....	63
Environment	78
Civil Society	92
Community Safety	93
Data.....	99

Summary

Population - around 558,400 people are estimated to live in East Sussex in 2024. By 2028 we expect that to increase to around 580,300 people, an increase of 3.9%, with just over half of our population aged 18-64 (53%), and over a quarter (29%) aged 65 and over. East Sussex has an older age profile than nationally, with a significantly higher proportion of the population aged 65 or more than both England and the South East. Rother has the highest proportion of people over the age of 85 in the country.

Children and young people - the levels of attainment at Key Stage 2 and at Key Stage 4 (Progress 8 and Attainment 8) in East Sussex are lower than the national average. The rate of children in East Sussex that are absent or excluded from school is higher than nationally, particularly from secondary schools. There continues to be higher levels of demand for children's social care which include more complex cases, and this has resulted in a higher number of Child Protection plans. The number of Looked After Children has also increased. Of those who became looked after last year, 23% were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. There continues to be increased demand for support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, including for Home to School Transport.

Health and wellbeing - East Sussex has a consistently higher life expectancy for both men and women than the national average. However, there are challenges to health in the county. Smoking levels are significantly higher in some parts of the county than nationally, and a greater percentage of people have high blood pressure which can lead to serious health conditions. The number of people with multiple long-term conditions in East Sussex is expected to increase over the next ten years which will greatly increase the complexity and costs of providing care services.

Adults - the number of people receiving long term support increased in 2023/24, with the majority aged 65 and over. Projections indicate that the number of people with dementia and other long-term conditions will continue to increase in

the coming years. Fewer people aged 65 and over are admitted to residential care than nationally, and a higher percentage of people are supported to successfully live at home after discharge from hospital than the average in England. A higher percentage of the population were providing unpaid care in 2021 in East Sussex than nationally.

Housing - house prices in East Sussex remain higher than the national average. The ratio of median house prices to median earnings is also higher than the ratio in England, but is the same as the South East ratio. Rented housing makes up a significant proportion of the housing sector in East Sussex, and there were significant rises in the cost of private rented housing between 2019 and 2023.

Deprivation - as a county, East Sussex is ranked 93 out of 151 Upper Tier Local Authorities on the Index of Multiple Deprivation rank. This is a similar level of deprivation as Lincolnshire, Somerset and Kent. However, deprivation varies across the county, with Baird Ward in Hastings in the most deprived 1% of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in the country, while an LSOA in Uckfield is in the least deprived 3%. The Government has identified 4 out of 5 district and borough council areas in East Sussex as having specific locations with priority need for 'levelling up' funding. This funding will be used on projects that address economic recovery and growth, improved transport connectivity, and the need for regeneration.

Economy - employment rates fell in 2023. The challenges that existed pre-pandemic relating to productivity and average wages for those employed within the county remain. Although the unemployment rate in the county is now below the national average, it remains higher than the regional rate. Youth unemployment remains higher than the overall percentage. Qualification levels across the county are broadly in line with the regional and national averages.

Environment - emissions of carbon dioxide have continued to fall in East Sussex over recent years. However, further reductions will be needed to contribute towards keeping the increase in global average temperature below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Civil Society - There are a diverse range of Voluntary, Community and Social

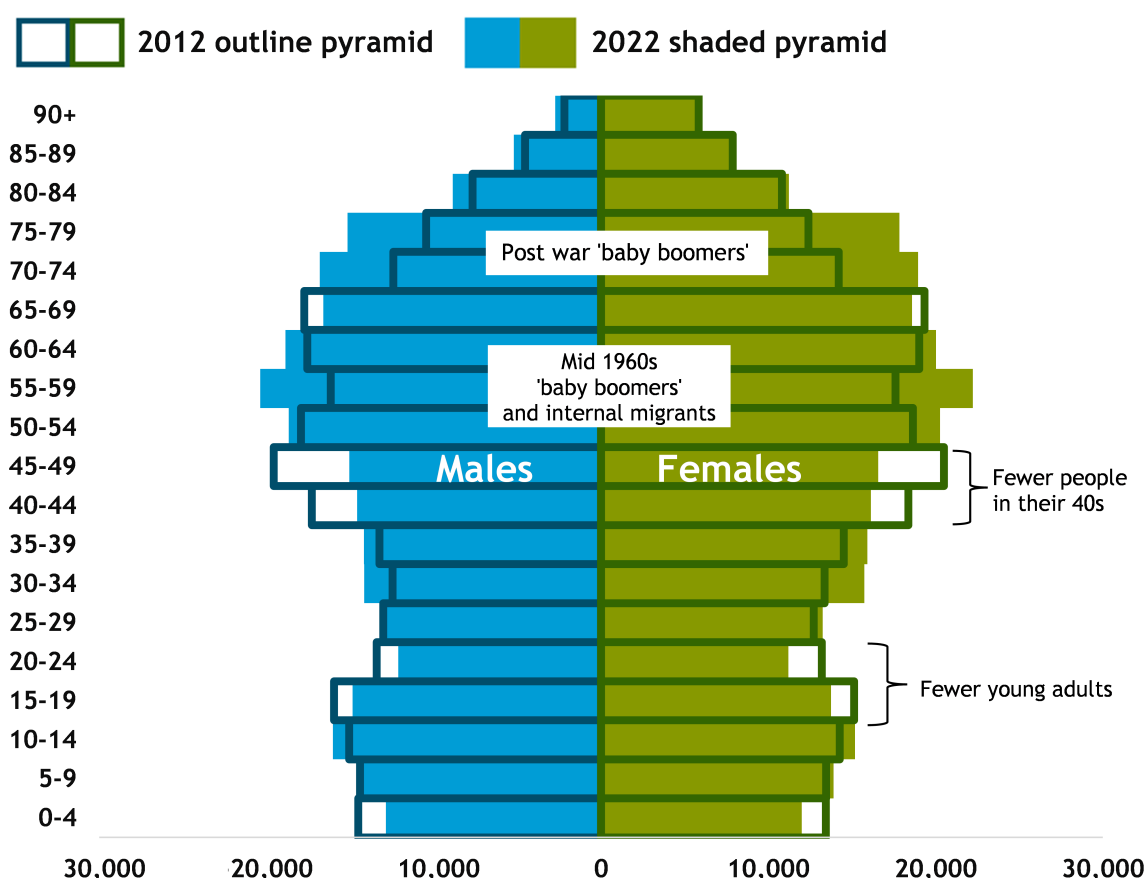
Enterprise organisations working at neighbourhood, town/parish, and district/borough levels in East Sussex. There are over 3,000 not-for-profit groups and organisations providing activities and support to residents and communities.

Community safety - the number of adults in East Sussex in treatment for substance misuse and alcohol use has increased, but at a lower percentage than nationally. In East Sussex in 2023 more potential victims of modern slavery and human trafficking were referred by the local authority and Sussex Police than in the previous year. There was an increase in neighbourhood crime in East Sussex between 2022 to 2023 but the rates are lower than the national average in all categories. There was also an increase in serious violent crime in the county. However, the rate of serious violent crime remains low in East Sussex.

Population

Age and sex

The ONS mid-year estimates 2022 estimated the population of East Sussex to be 550,700. Compared to England and the South East, East Sussex has a much older age profile, with Rother having the highest rate of people over the age of 85 in the country at 4.9%, just ahead of North Norfolk and New Forest, both 4.8%. 26% of the East Sussex population is comprised of people aged 65 or over, compared to 20% for the South East and 19% for England. 3.9% of people in East Sussex were aged 85+ in 2022, higher than nationally, 2.5%, and the South East, 2.8%.



Source: ONS mid-year estimates 2022

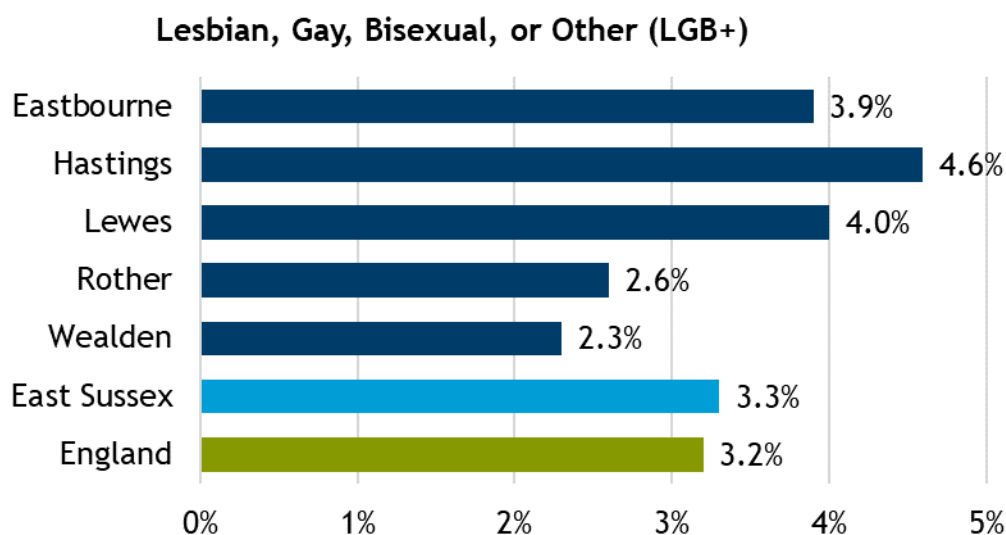
Young people, those aged 0-17, made up 18.7% of the population of East Sussex in 2022. This is lower than in England, 20.8%, and the South East, 20.9%. Working age people, those aged 18-64, made up 54.9% of the population in East Sussex in 2022.

This is lower than England, 59.4%, and the South East, 60.6%.

52% of the county's population was estimated to be female and 48% male, similar to the national split. For those aged 65 and above, it was estimated that 55% of the population was female and 45% male.

Sexual Orientation

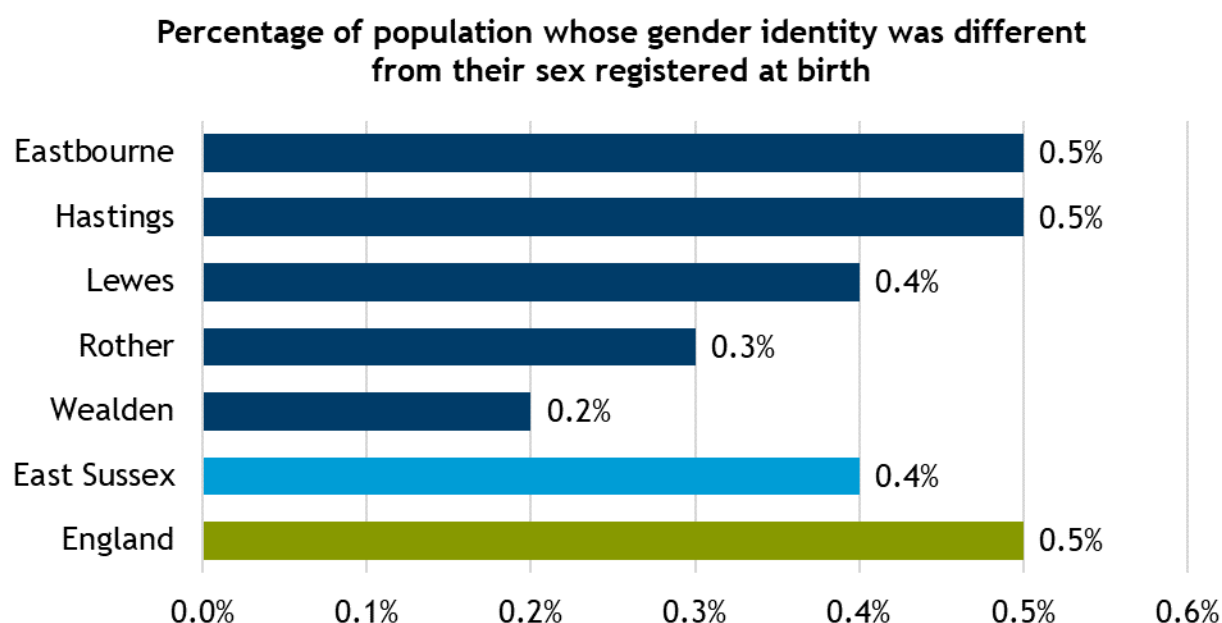
The 2021 Census indicates that 3.3% of the East Sussex population identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other (LGB+). This is similar to the national average of 3.2%. Hastings had the highest percentage of people identifying as LGB+ at 4.6%.



Note: A significant percentage of people across the county provided no response, therefore the percentage of people identifying as LBG+ could be either higher or lower than estimated. Source: Census 2021

Gender identity

Gender identity was included in the national census questions for the first time in 2021. A significant percentage of people did not respond to this question, but this is still the best data we have on this topic. 0.4% of the East Sussex population recorded that their gender identity is different to their sex registered at birth. This equates to 1,640 people.

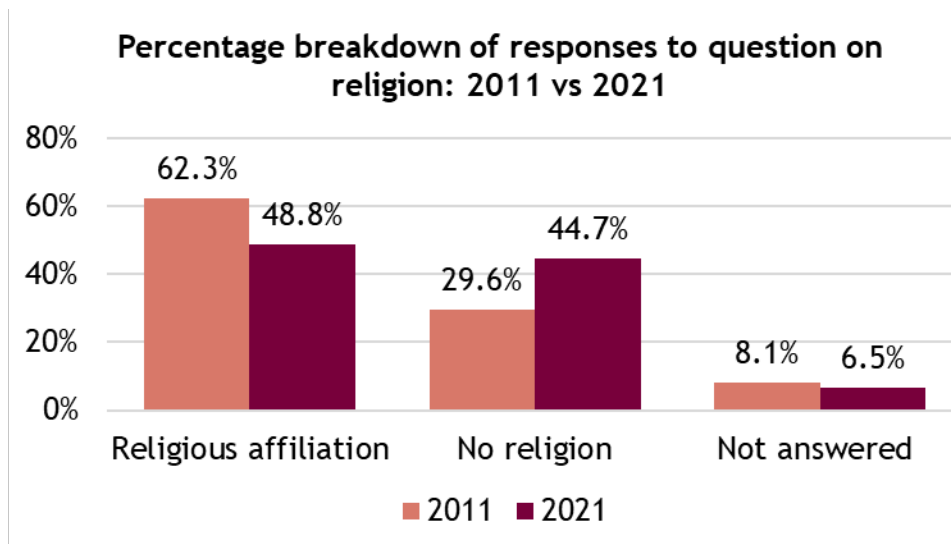


Note: A significant percentage of people across the county provided no response, therefore the percentage of people with a different gender identity to their sex registered at birth could be either higher or lower than shown. Source: Census 2021

Religion

For the 2021 Census, 45.9% of the population in East Sussex stated their religion was Christian, 1.1% stated their religion was Islam, 0.5% as Buddhism and 0.3% as Hindu. 44.7% of the population selected 'no religion' as their response.

The percentage of people who indicated an affiliation to a religion fell between 2011 and 2021, while the number of people who gave 'no religion' as their response grew.



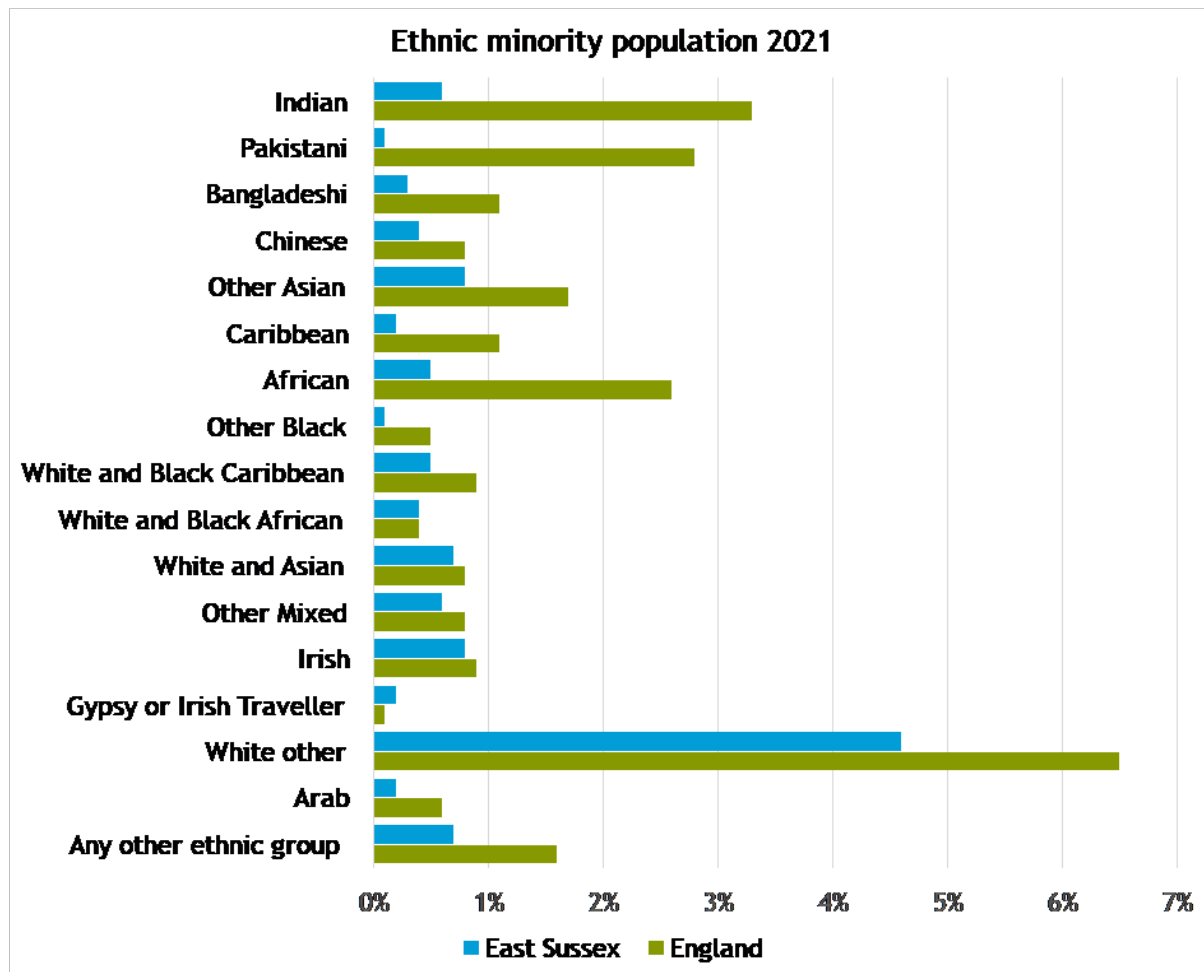
Source: Census 2021

Marital status

Data from the 2021 Census shows that 31.9% of respondents from East Sussex were single and 46.8% of respondents were married or in a civil partnership. 2.3% of respondents were separated from their partners and 11.2% were divorced or had a civil partnership which was dissolved. The remaining 7.7% of respondents were widowed.

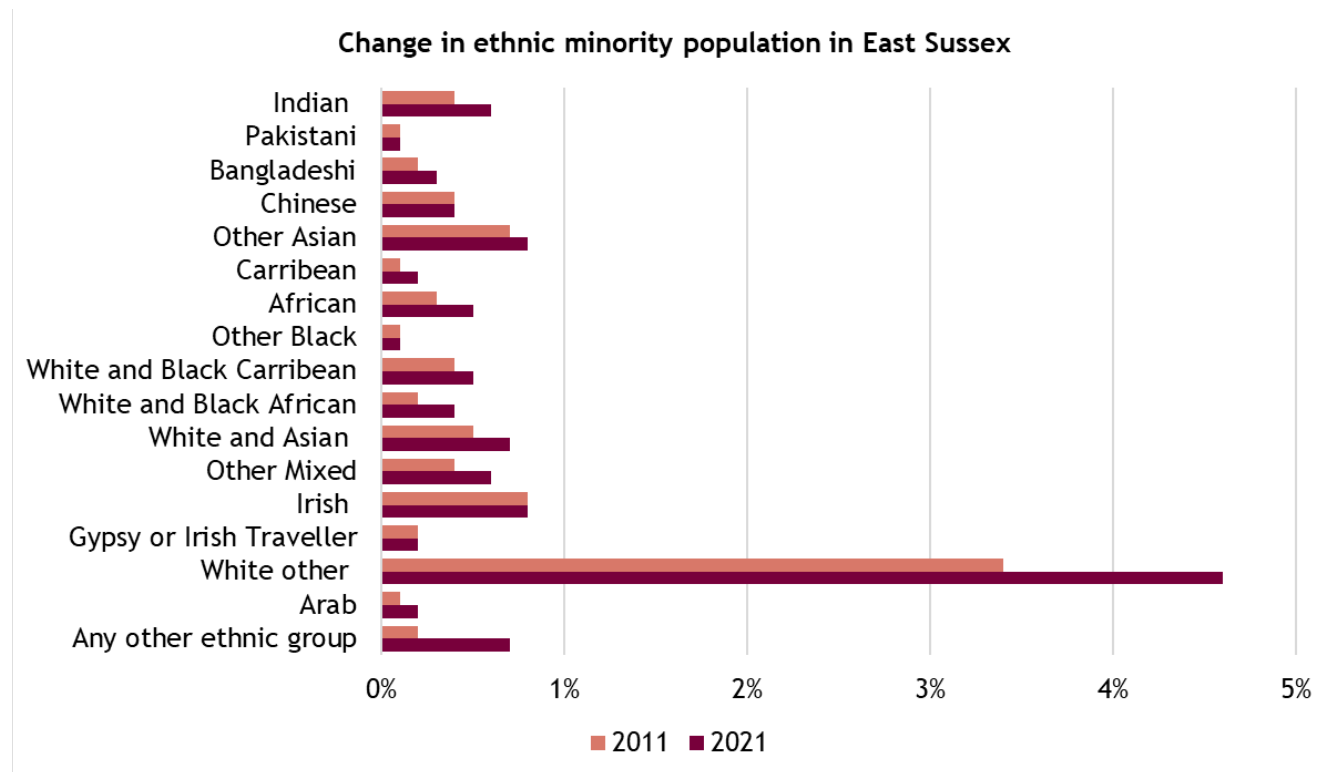
Ethnicity

The latest ethnicity data for the county is from the 2021 Census. 88.3% of the county's population identified as White: British and Northern Irish, compared to the regional average of 78.8% and the national average of 73.5%. A higher percentage of the population in East Sussex identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller than the national average (0.2% compared to 0.1%).



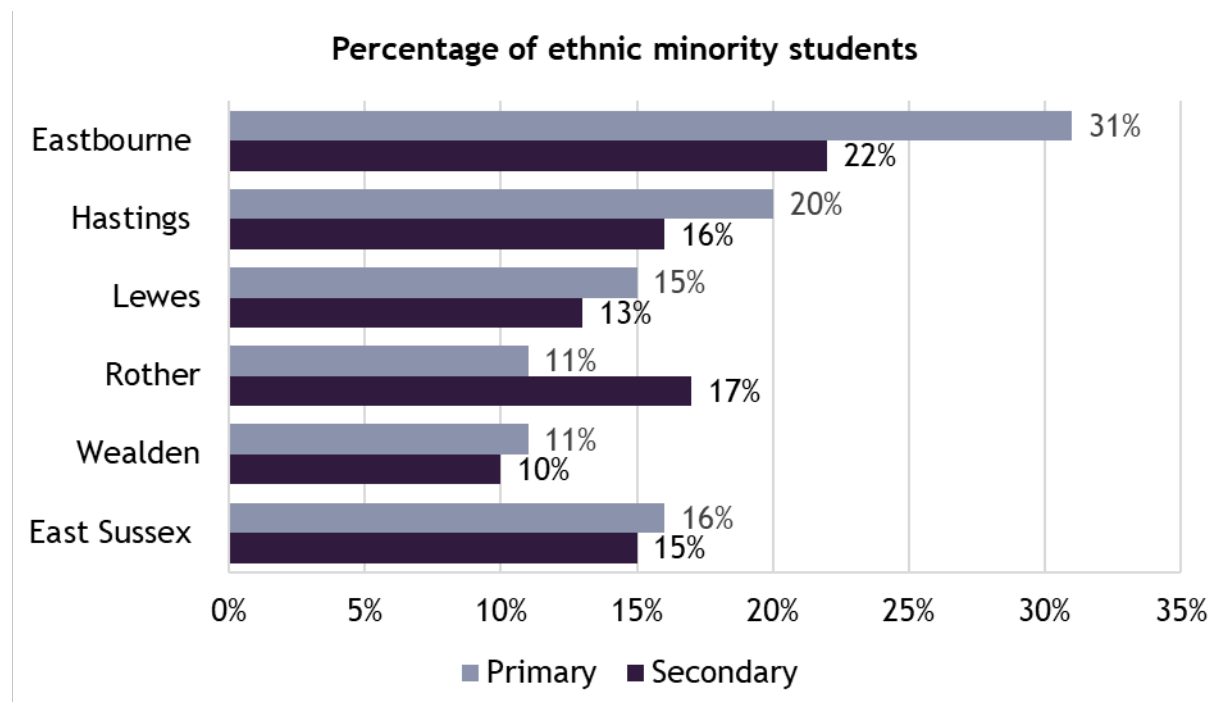
Source: Census 2021

Overall, the percentage of the population in East Sussex in each ethnic minority group has either stayed the same or increased between 2011 and 2021.



Source: Census 2021

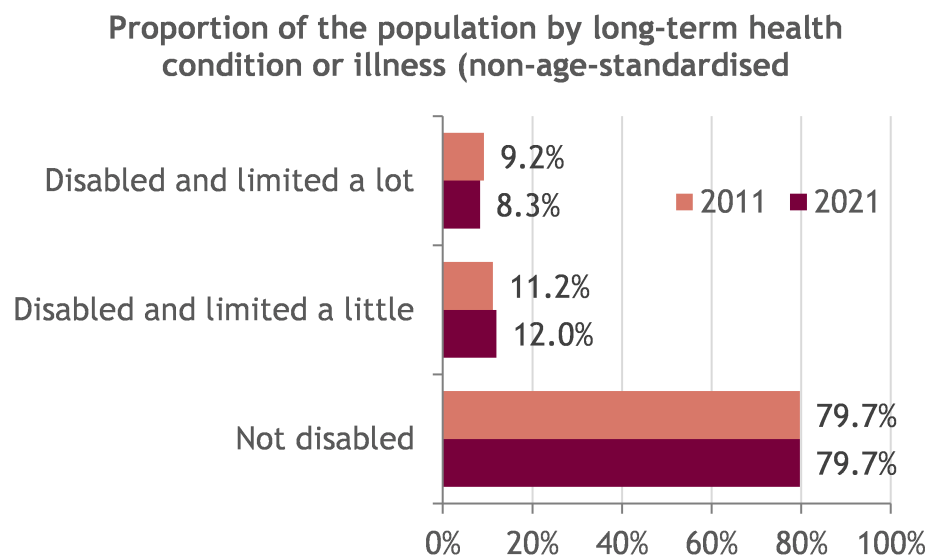
A higher percentage of pupils (15%) are from ethnic minority backgrounds, compared to the adult population. Overall, Eastbourne has the highest percentage of students from ethnic minority backgrounds in the county for both primary (31%) and secondary (22%) schools.



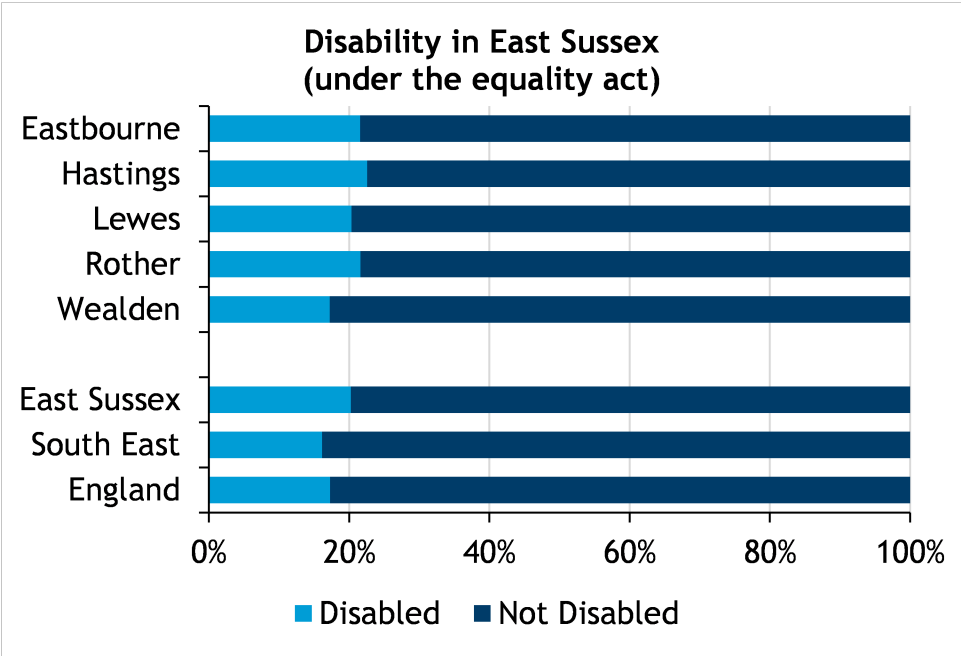
Source: ESCC Schools Census January 2023

Disability

In the 2021 Census, the proportion of the East Sussex population that identified as disabled was 20.3% (110,550). This is the same as the proportion that identified as disabled in the 2011 Census (20.3%, 107,150).

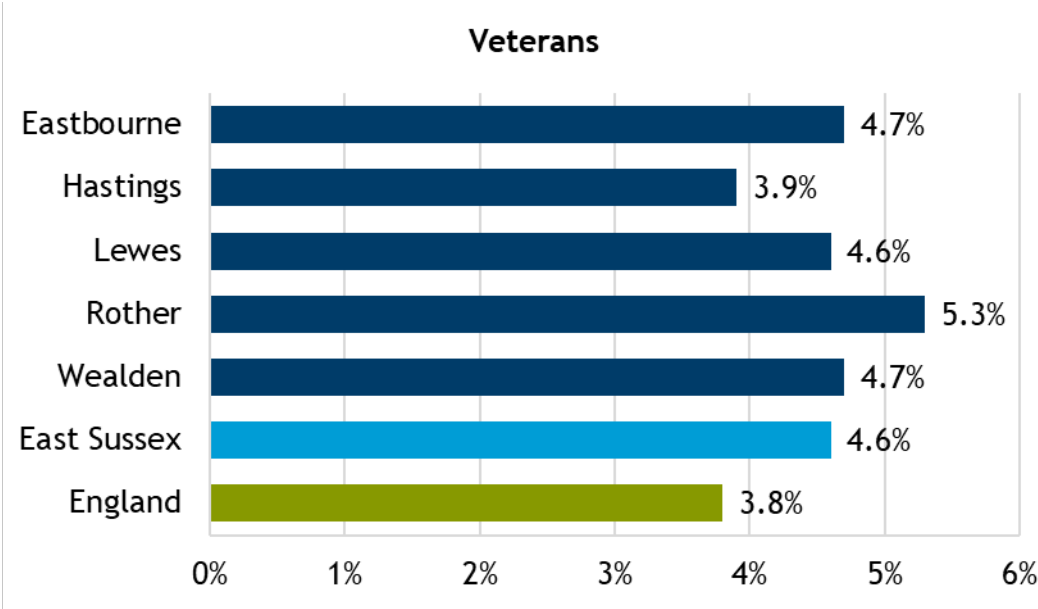


The percentage of people identifying themselves as disabled varied slightly across the district and boroughs, but rates across the county were higher than the South East average.



Veterans

2021 Census data shows that 4.6% of the population in East Sussex were Veterans, compared to the national average of 3.8%. This equates to 21,200 Veterans living in East Sussex.



Pregnancy and maternity

The ONS births data provides an indication of the number of women in East Sussex who may be pregnant or on maternity.

Pregnancy and maternity	East Sussex	Eastbourne	Hastings	Lewes	Rother	Wealden
Live births - 2022	4,519	838	909	769	631	1,372
Births per 1,000 females - 2022	15.4	15.4	19.2	13.7	13.7	15.4

Source: Office for National Statistics

Population change

The latest ONS population estimates suggest that the East Sussex population increased by 0.7% between 2021 and 2022, lower than the increase in England at 1.0% and the South East at 0.9%. Over this period the population grew fastest in Wealden, up 1.4%, and declined slightly in Hastings, down 0.4%. Wealden has seen the fastest population growth over the past 10 years, with an increase of 8.2%, while Hastings has seen the slowest rate of growth, with only a 0.1% increase.

Based on the information currently available we estimate that around 558,400 people live in the county in 2024. We expect that to increase to around 580,300 people in 2028, an increase of 3.9%.

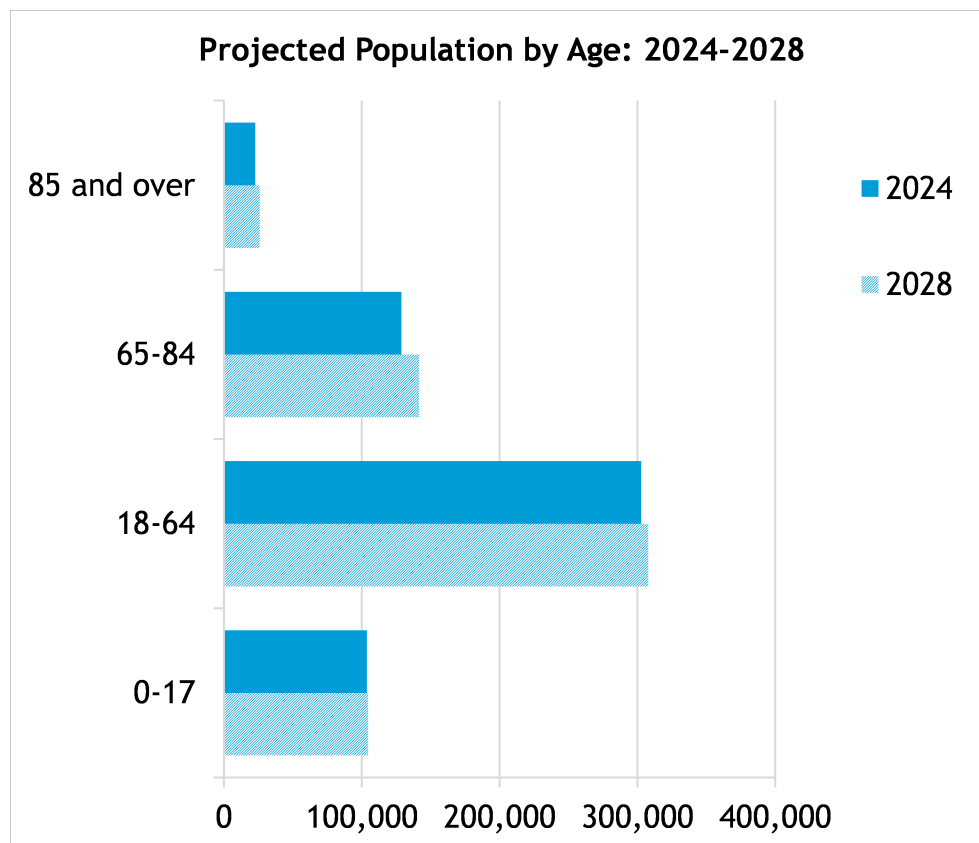
We expect the increase in population to be driven by people moving into the county from elsewhere in the UK. Many of the people who choose to come to East Sussex are older adults, as a result the over 65 age group is growing faster than younger age groups. In 2028 we expect that just over half of our population will be aged 18-64 (53%), with over a quarter (29%) aged 65 and over.

Between 2024 and 2028 we are expecting that there will be around 19,200 births in the county and around 26,500 deaths. This reflects the fact that we have a larger population of older adults in East Sussex. Over the same period, we are expecting around 141,600 people to move into the county, offset by around 112,500 people moving out of the county.

Overall, these changes mean that compared to 2024, we estimate that by 2028 there will be:

State of the County 2024: Focus on East Sussex

- An increase of 0.9% (930 people) in the number of children and young people.
- An increase of 1.6% (4,960 people) in the working age population.
- 9.9% more people aged 65-84 (12,760 people).
- 14.2% more people aged 85+ (3,230 people).



Note: These dwelling-led population projections (sometimes known as policy-based projections) are constrained to reflect the number of extra dwellings being planned for future years by local authorities in East Sussex. They are also based on the latest 2022 data on population estimates and migration released by ONS in November 2023, which included rebased population estimates for the period 2012-2021, which take into account the results of the 2021 Census. These rebased mid-year estimates show that the population in 2020 was more than 14,000 lower than had been estimated by the ONS previously.

Projected Population in 2028

Age Range	East Sussex	England
0-17	18.1%	19.6%
18-64	53.1%	60.6%
65-84	24.4%	17.1%
85+	4.5%	2.7%

Population Change: 2024-2028

Age Range	2024	2028	Actual change
0-17	103,850	104,780	930
18-64	302,970	307,930	4,960
65-84	128,760	141,520	12,760
85+	22,800	26,030	3,230
All people	558,390	580,260	21,870

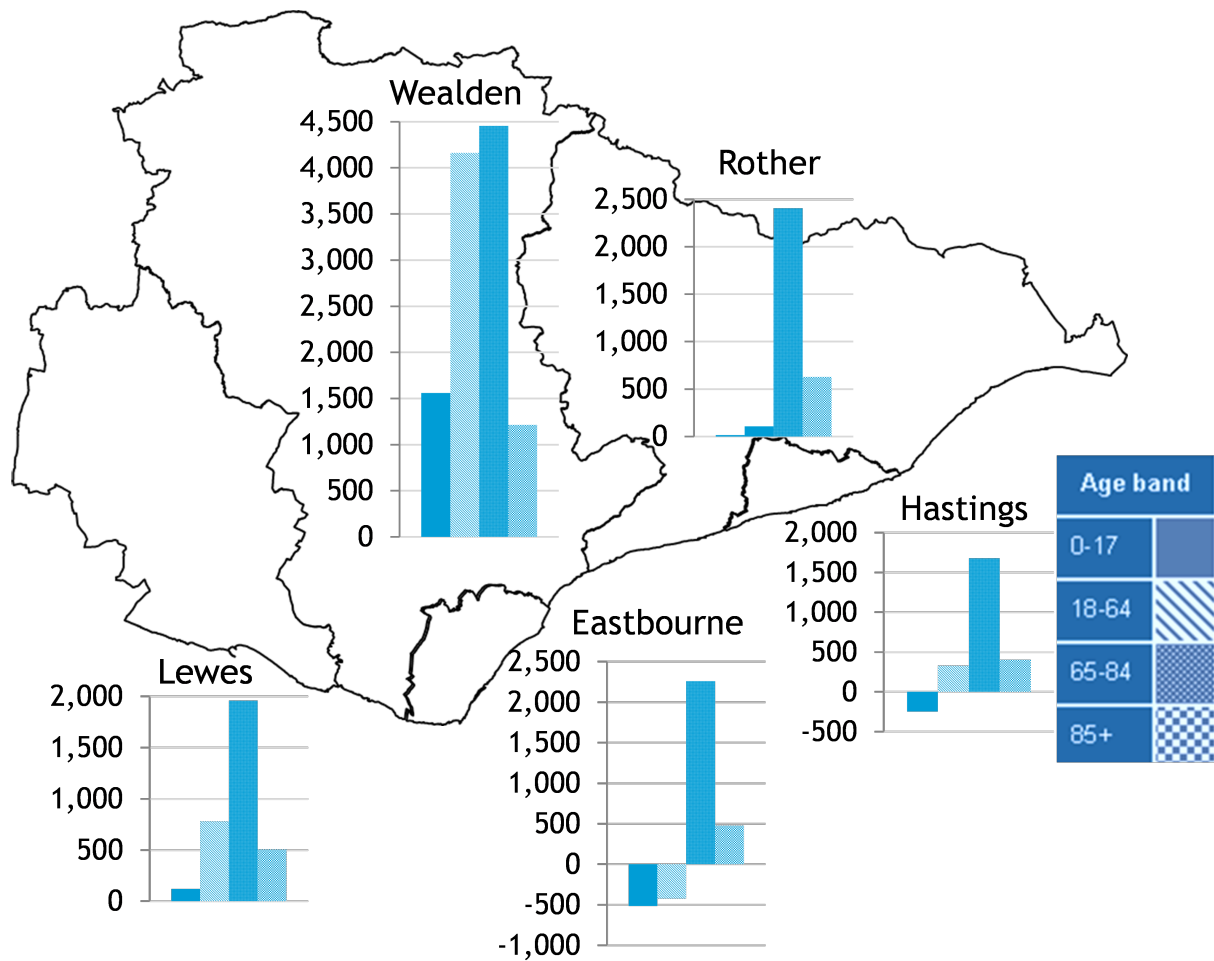
Source: ESCC data, ESCC interim population projections (dwelling led) January 2024. National Data, ONS trend-based projections, from 2021. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 and therefore may not sum.

District population change

We expect that how our population changes will be different in different parts of the county. By 2028 our projections suggest:

- An increase of 19% (1,200) more people aged 85+ in Wealden; the smallest increase will be in Eastbourne, 11% (500).
- 11% (4,500) more people aged 65-84 in Wealden, 10% (2,300) more people in Eastbourne, and 8% (2,000) more in Lewes.
- Only Wealden is projected to see a significant increase of 5% (4,200) in the working age population (18-64).
- Eastbourne (down 0.7%, 400 people) is projected to see a fall in the working age population over this period.

District population change 2024 - 2028



Source: ESCC data, ESCC interim population projections (dwelling led) January 2024.

Children and young people

Early Years

East Sussex received 1,612 applications for a funded place for eligible 2-year-olds in the spring 2024 funding period. Of these, 306 children were not eligible to receive funding. 80% (1,045) of the remaining 1,306 eligible children have accessed a place with an early years provider, compared to the England average of 74% (Source: ESCC Children's Services).

Attainment

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

In early years, children in East Sussex achieve above the national averages for Good Level of Development which is the expected standard for: communication and language; physical development; personal, social and emotional development; literacy and mathematics.

In 2023 the percentage point gap between children eligible for free school meals achieving a good level of development and their peers was -20.5, which is just above the England average gap for this cohort of -19.9.

Key Stage 2 Attainment

The percentage of pupils working at the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined at Key Stage 2 is 56%, which is below the England average of 60%.

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils working at the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined at Key Stage 2 is 39%, which is below the England average of 44%.

Key Stage 4: Progress 8

Progress 8 is a measure of students' progress across the Attainment 8 subjects from the end of primary school (Key Stage 2) to the end of secondary school (Key Stage 4). Scores for East Sussex are -0.19 which is below the England average of -

0.03.

Key Stage 4: Attainment 8

Attainment 8 is the students' average achievement across eight subjects: English, mathematics, three English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects (from sciences, computer science, geography, history and languages), and three further subjects, from the range of EBacc subjects, or any other GCSE or approved, high-value arts, academic, or vocational qualifications. Overall pupils in East Sussex, including disadvantaged pupils, achieved 43.6%, lower than the England average of 46.4%. Disadvantaged pupils achieved 30.3%, lower than the England average of 35.1%.

Attendance

The pandemic had a significant adverse impact on school attendance, both nationally and locally. The proportion of children persistently absent from school, defined as missing more than 10% of sessions, has doubled. In May 2022, the Government published attendance guidance to clarify responsibilities for local authorities, schools, parents and carers. This outlines the expectation that all councils should strengthen their oversight of attendance through regular individual dialogue with all schools, and provide whole family early help support, free of any charge, to schools and all families of children whose attendance is less than 50%. This guidance will become statutory in August 2024.

Absence for academic year 2022-2023 (Source Department for Education):

School type	Persistent Absence (%)	Overall Absence (%)
East Sussex Primary Schools	16.5	6.1
East Sussex Secondary Schools	30.0	10.4
East Sussex Special Schools	39.9	14.4
East Sussex schools overall	23.1	8.2
England National Primary Schools	16.2	5.9
England National Secondary Schools	26.5	9.0

East Sussex has high levels of suspension and exclusion, and these are rising further in line with national trends. School leaders are experiencing increased levels and complexity of need in their school populations and the demand for support services remains high.

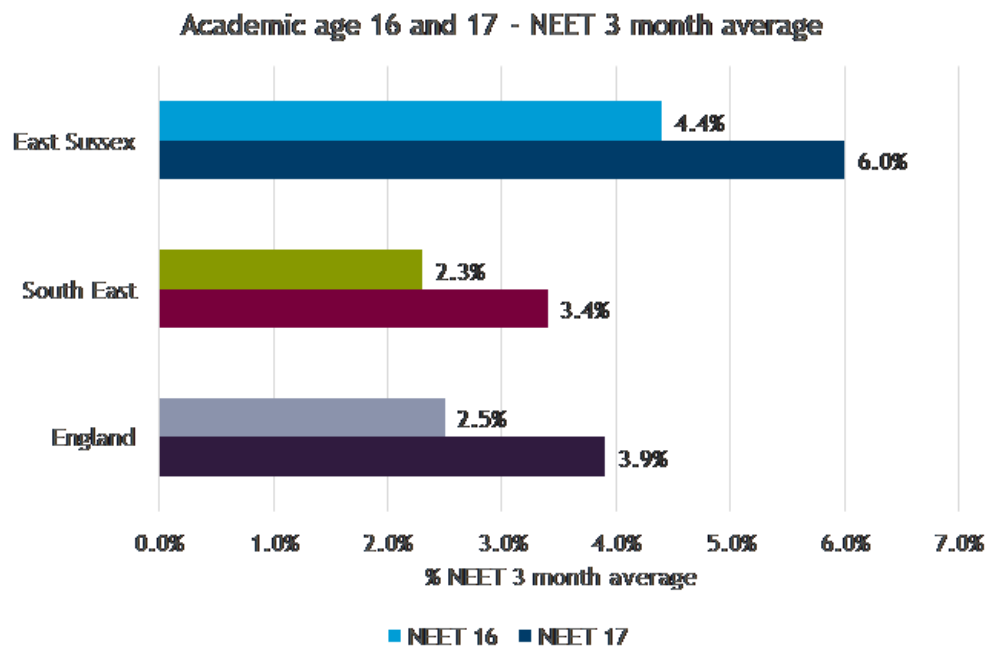
School type	Permanent exclusions	Fixed term exclusions
East Sussex Primary Schools 2022/23	0.08%	1.81%
England National Primary Schools 2021/22	0.02%	1.42%
East Sussex Secondary Schools 2022/23	0.34%	31.58%
England National Secondary Schools 2021/22	0.16%	13.96%

Source: Children's Services Department and Department for Education

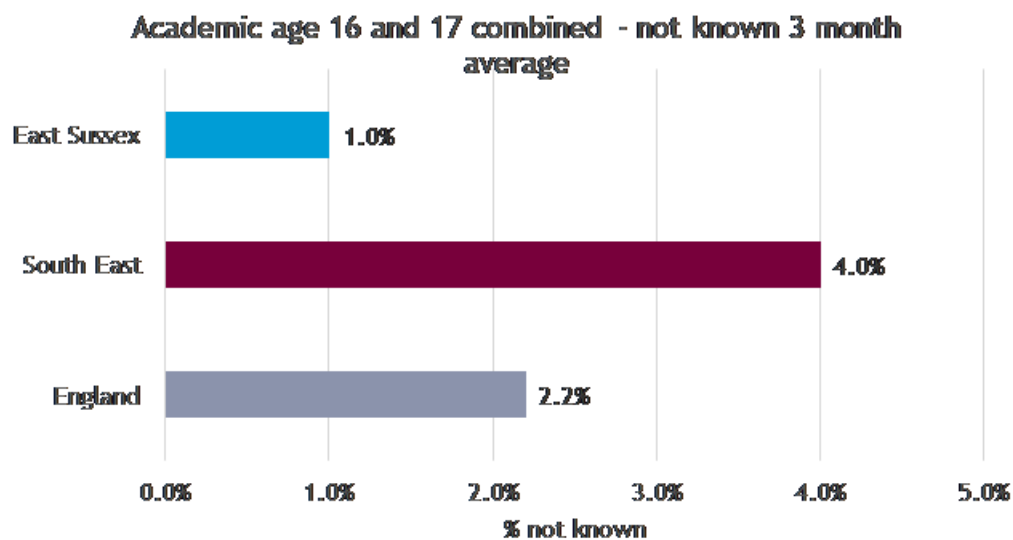
Young people in education, employment and training

At the end of 2023/24 95.6% of 16 years old and 94% of 17 year olds were participating in some form of education, training or employment - this includes those in employment without DfE regulated training or part-time/temporary employment. Local Authority comparisons data indicate East Sussex is slightly above the south east and national averages. There are concerns about the impact for young people of the national Traineeship programme ceasing in summer 2023, as well as European Social Fund not in education, training or employment (NEET) provision.

While the figures for the percentages of young people aged 16 and 17 who are known to be NEET are higher than the regional and national averages these need to be considered alongside the figures for young people whose activities were not known. We have a smaller percentage of young people whose activities were not known and it is likely that a significant proportion of the people across the South East and nationally whose activities were not known were actually NEET.



Source: ESCC Children's Services



Source: ESCC Children's Services

School places

Although our overall population of under 18s is expected to increase slightly over the period 2024 - 2027, the highest rate of growth is expected in those aged 16 - 17, with an expected fall in numbers of children aged 4 - 10. During the period

State of the County 2024: Focus on East Sussex

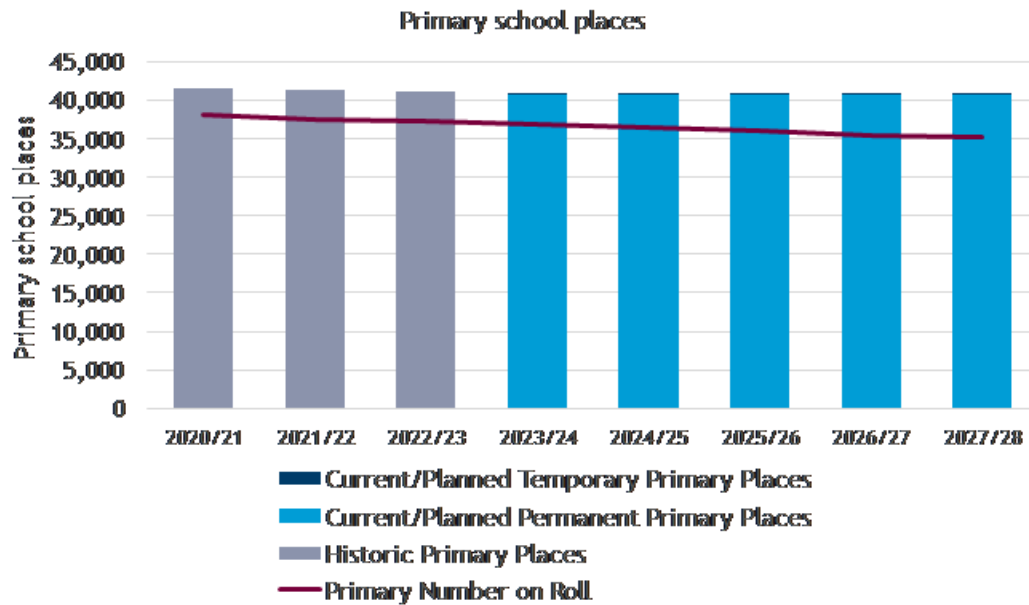
2028 - 2032 numbers of children aged 11-15 and 16-17 are expected to fall, but the total number of children aged 0-17 are expected to increase slightly.

Age/year	2024	2027	% change 2024-2027	2028	2032	% change 2028-2032
0-3	19,650	20,150	2.5%	20,180	20,840	3.3%
4-10	39,190	38,870	-0.8%	38,770	39,390	1.6%
11-15	31,180	31,390	0.7%	31,160	30,600	-1.8%
16-17	12,280	12,870	4.8%	13,190	12,890	-2.3%

Source: ESCC data, ESCC interim population projections (dwelling led) January 2024, numbers rounded to 10. Note: Care should be taken when using the projected population figures above. Due to ONS revised mid-year population estimates not currently being available these are interim projections based on dwelling-led population projections.

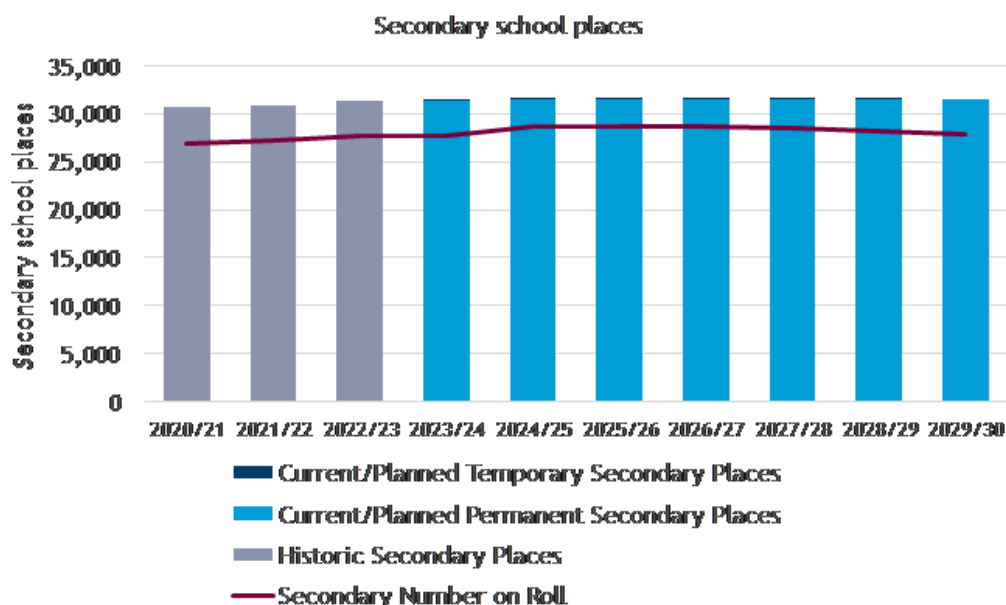
The total number of pupils in primary schools peaked in 2018/19 and are now in decline. As a result, some of the temporary additional capacity in schools that was created to accommodate the peak is being removed. This, together with the closures of Holy Cross CE Primary School on 31 December 2023 and St Pancras Catholic Primary School on 31 August 2024, will lead to a net reduction in capacity of 405 places between the start of the 2023/24 academic year and the start of the 2024/25 academic year.

State of the County 2024: Focus on East Sussex



Source: Pupil Forecasts, July 2023, and Pupil Model, March 2024

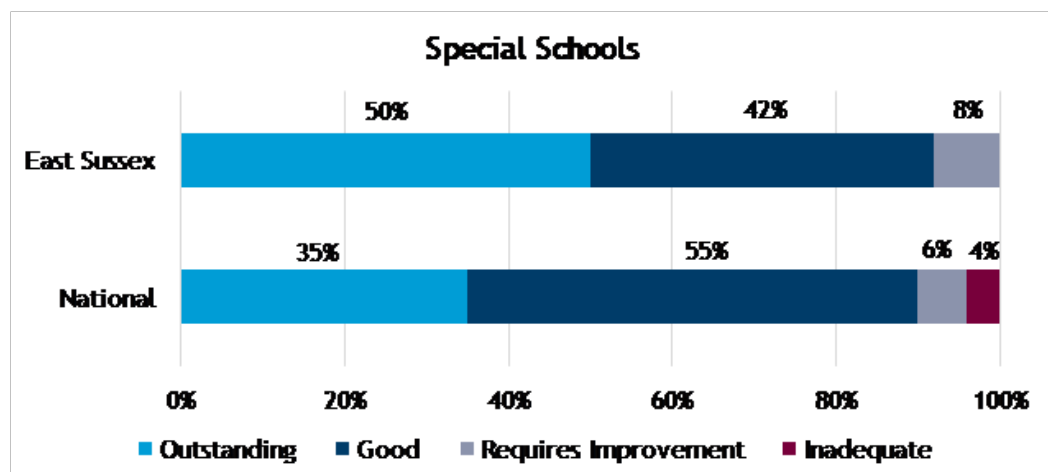
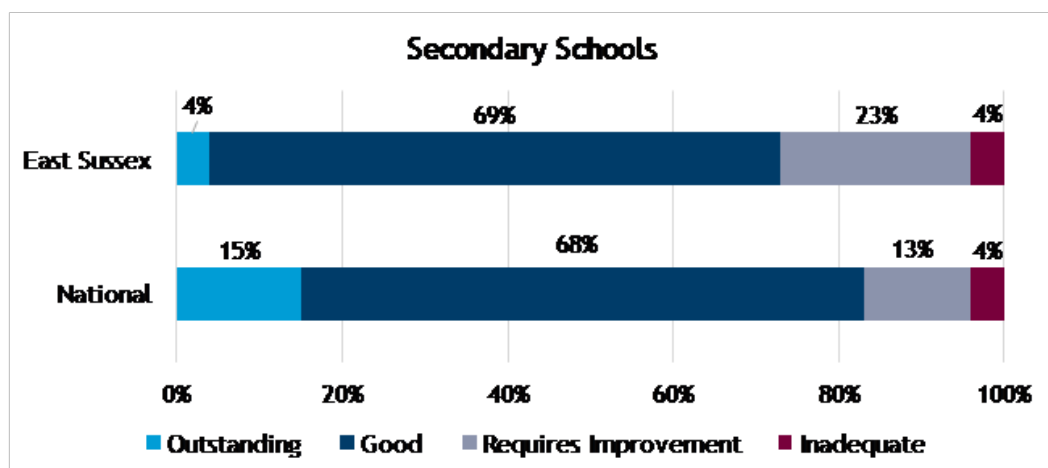
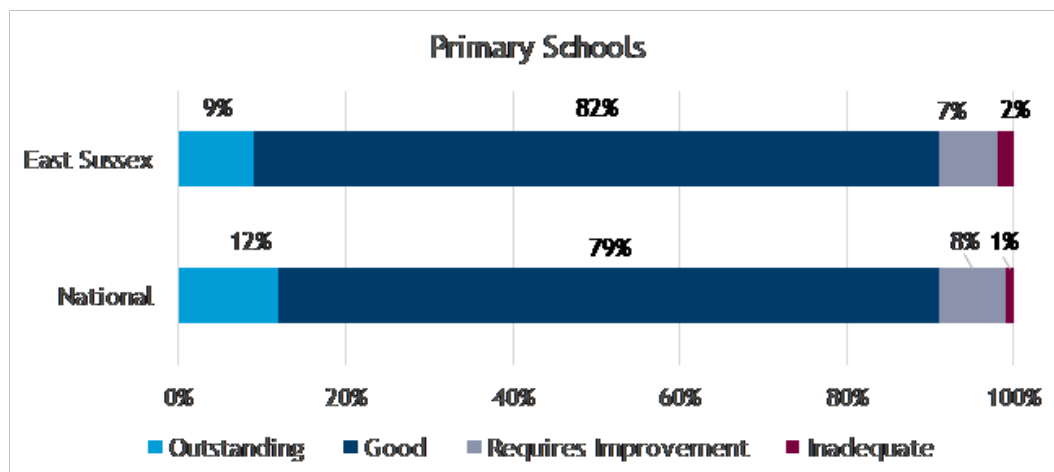
Secondary pupil numbers have been rising and are expected to peak around 2024/25. 105 additional permanent places and 30 additional temporary places will be added between 2023/24 and 2025/26 to meet forecast demand in local areas.



Source: Pupil Forecasts, July 2023, and Pupil Model, March 2024

State funded schools, percentage overall effectiveness Ofsted 2022

The majority of schools in East Sussex are outstanding or good as assessed by Ofsted.

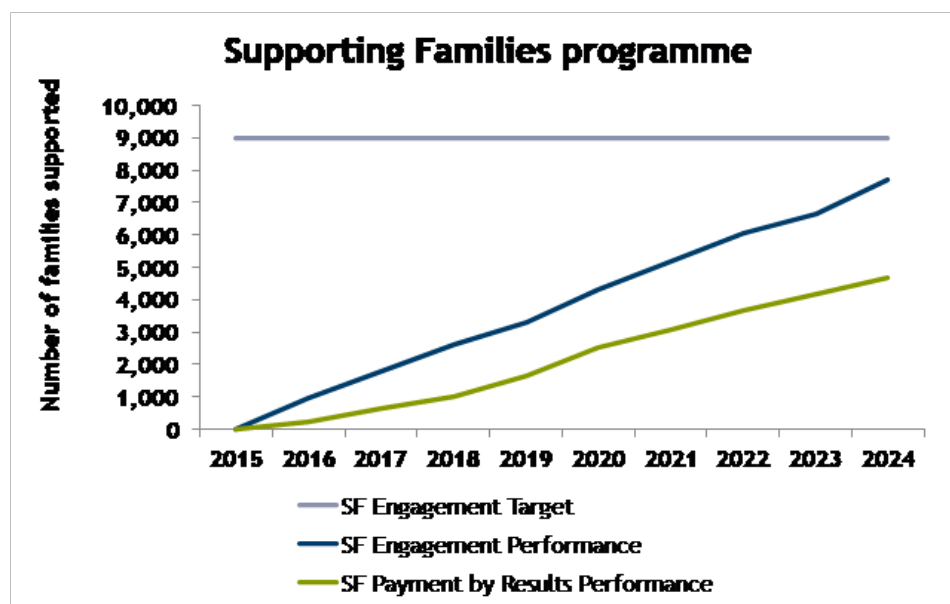


Supporting Families

Our Supporting Families programme supports vulnerable families who are facing multiple challenges to achieve better outcomes. The key outcomes for the programme are:

- Getting a good education.
- Good early years development.
- Improved mental and physical health.
- Promoting recovery and reducing harm from substance use.
- Improved family relationships.
- Children safe from abuse and exploitation.
- Crime prevention and tackling crime.
- Safe from domestic abuse.
- Secure housing.
- Financial stability.

We receive payment from Government for each family that we help to achieve significant and sustained progress across each of the outcomes where they need support. By the end of 2023/24, 8,251 families had received or were receiving support and 4,849 had achieved Payment by Results outcomes.

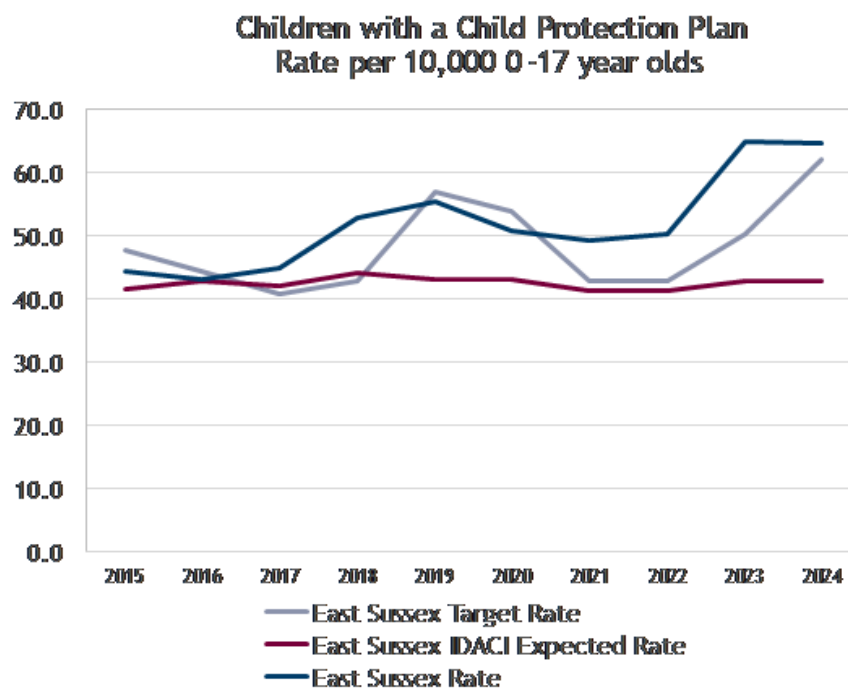


Source: ESCC Children's Services

Child Protection (CP) Plans

At the end of March 2024, the number of CP plans was 688, a rate of 64.6 per 10,000 children aged 0-17. This is significantly above the expected rate benchmarked for child deprivation using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI).

This reflects the significantly higher levels of demand and complexity seen over the past four years due to the pandemic, the impact of cost-of-living pressures and an increase in child and adult mental health concerns. We have a continued emphasis on enabling children to live safely at home where possible, resulting in relatively lower rates of looked after children.

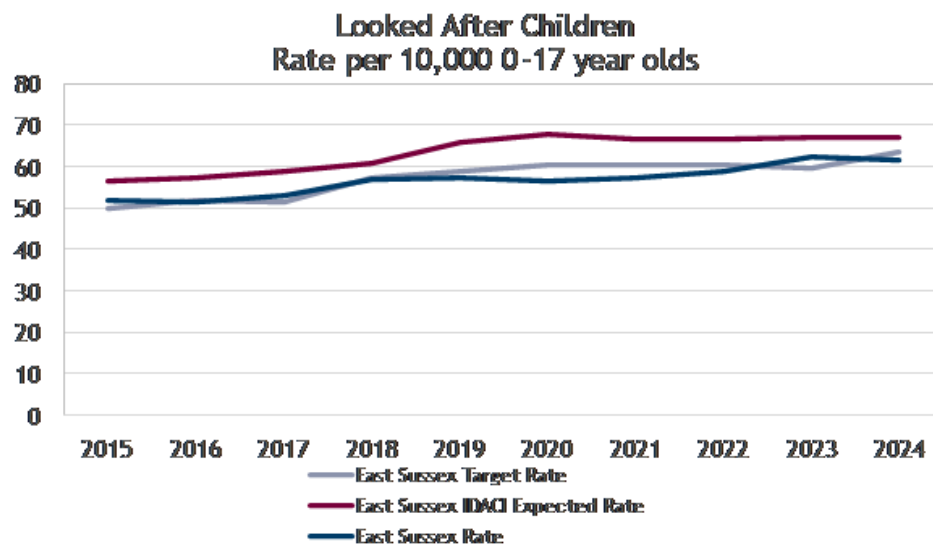


Source: ESCC Children's Services

Looked After Children

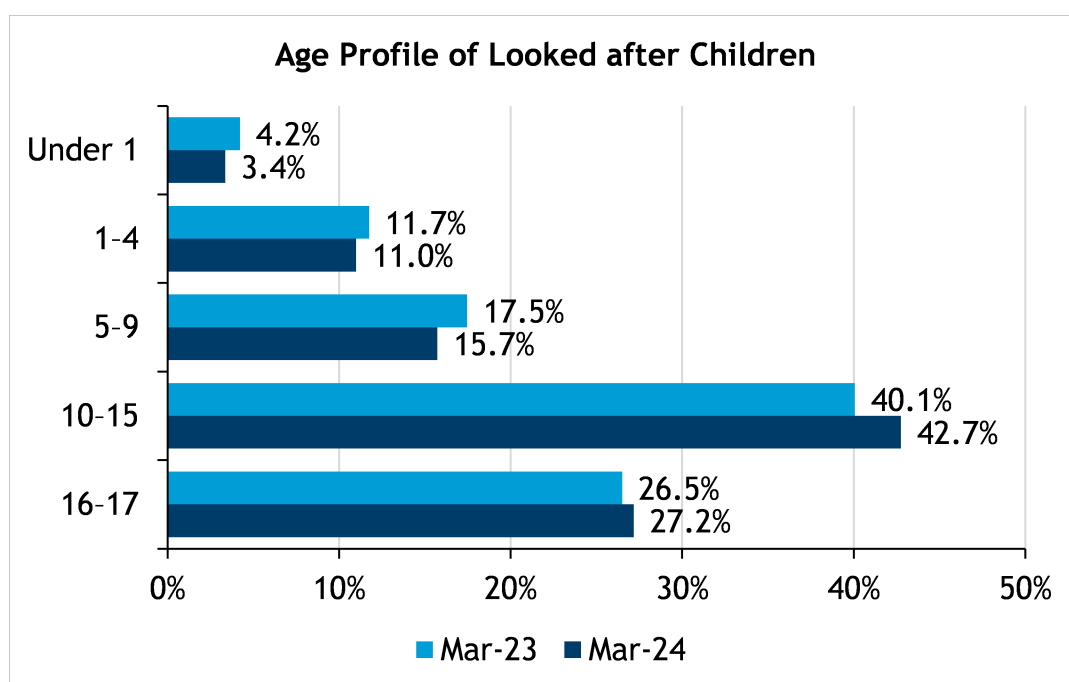
At the end of March 2024, the number of Looked After Children was 655, a rate of 61.5 per 10,000 children. Of the 655 children, 74 were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC), this group represented 23% of our new entrants to care in 2023-24. The rate of Looked After Children is below the expected rate

benchmarked for child deprivation using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) but remains higher than the average rate across those of our statistical neighbours who have been rated as Good and Outstanding (57.3 per 10,000 in 2023).



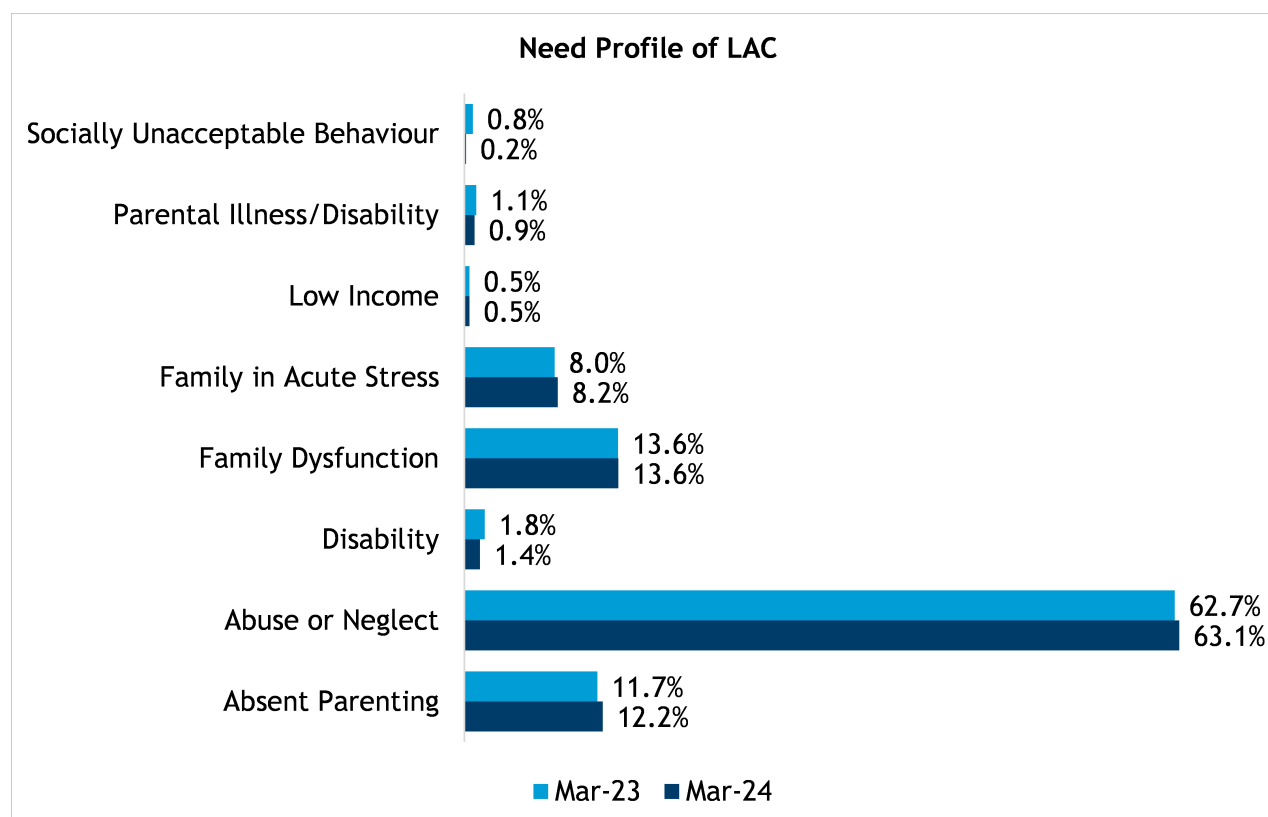
Source: ESCC Children's Services

The age profile of Looked after Children has increased between March 2023 and March 2024, with a higher percentage of children aged 10 and over.



Source: ESCC Children's Services

The 4 categories, Families in Acute Stress, Family Dysfunction, Abuse and Neglect and Absent Parenting accounted for over 97% of Looked after Children in March 2024. The percentage of all Looked After Children in these groups has increased between March 2023 and March 2024. The number of children in the remaining groups is very low in comparison.



Source: ESCC Children's Services

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

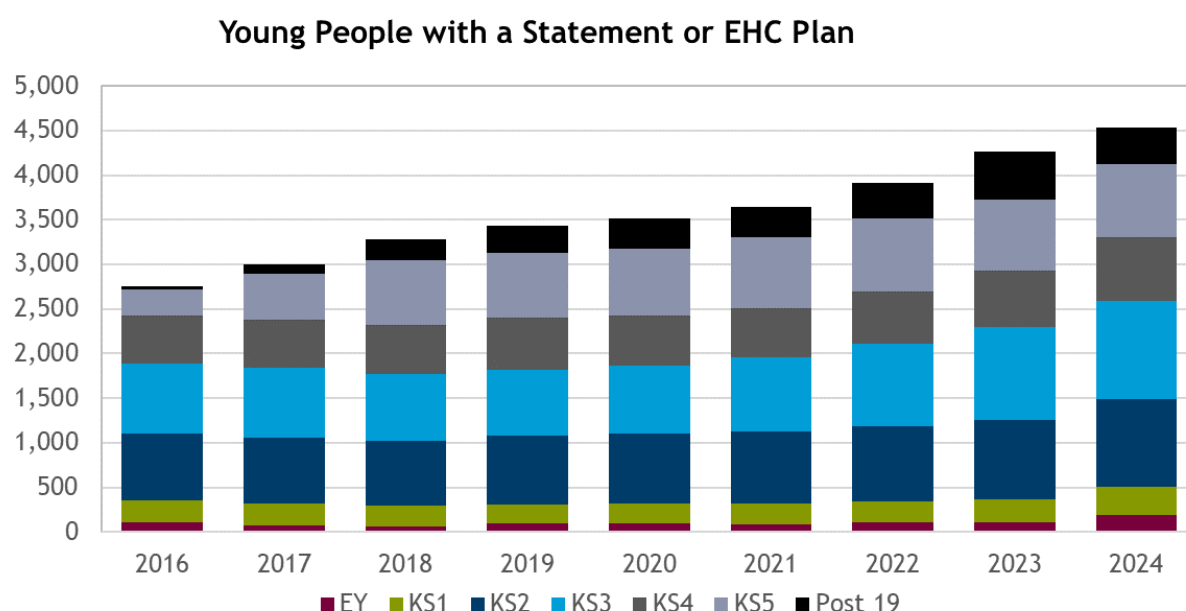
In line with the national picture, East Sussex continues to see significant increases in demands for statutory assessments and specialist provision for children and young people with SEND.

Over 40% of all children and young people aged 0-25 with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in East Sussex are placed in special schools which is over seven percentage points higher than the England average. 64.3% of all new EHCPs were

placed in mainstream schools, compared to 72.1% nationally. Council funded high-cost placements at Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools have increased significantly since 2015 and account for 9.8% of all EHCPs - greater than the England average of 6.1%.

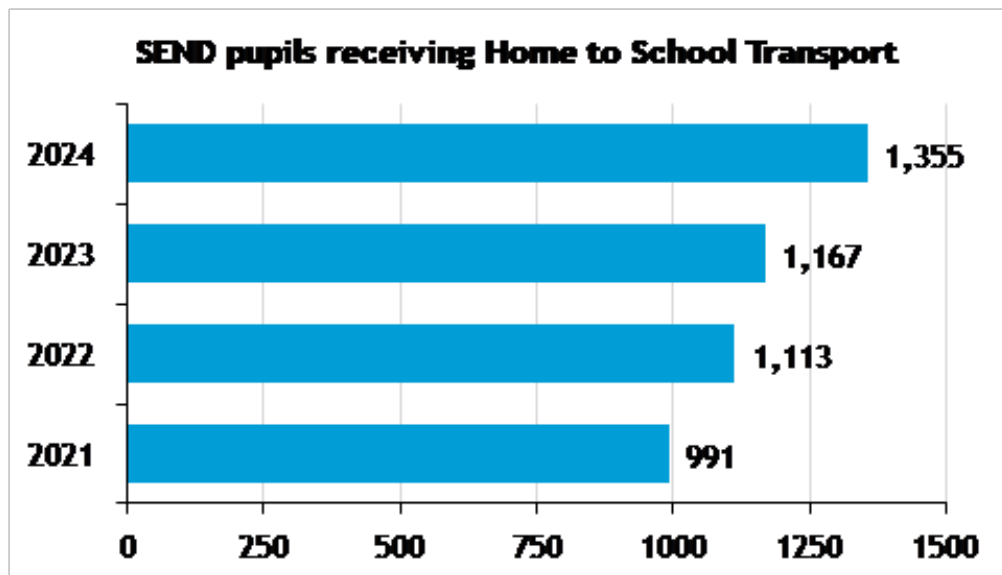
EHCPs of SEND maintained by the Council increased by 68% from 2014 (2,690) to 2024 (4,529). Most of the increase since 2015 has been in the Key Stage 5 and Post 19 groups; this is predominantly due to young people retaining EHCPs Post-16.

The number of school-aged pupils with an EHCP is forecast to rise in East Sussex by 24.2% over the next three years, having increased by 25.7% in the last three years.



Source: ESCC Children's Services

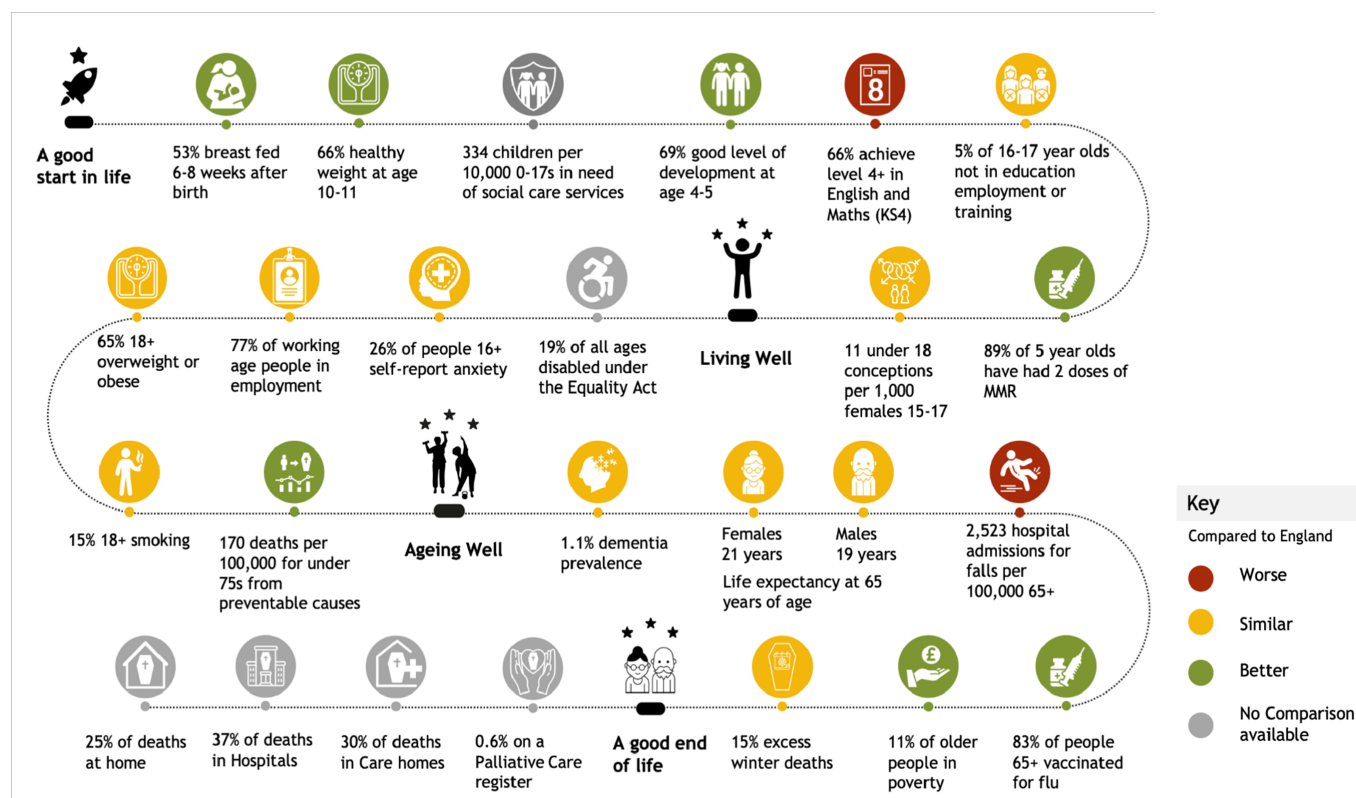
There have been increases in the number of pupils receiving Home to School Transport since 2021. These increases have been particularly acute with regards to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) with a 36.7% increase in the number of children requiring transport. There have also been significant increases in the cost of providing transport due to inflationary pressures on fuel and staff. The increased number of SEND pupils receiving Home to School Transport and the inflationary pressures has led to a 75% increase in costs of transporting SEND children since 2021.



Source: ESCC Communities Economy and Transport Department

Health and wellbeing

Life course summary

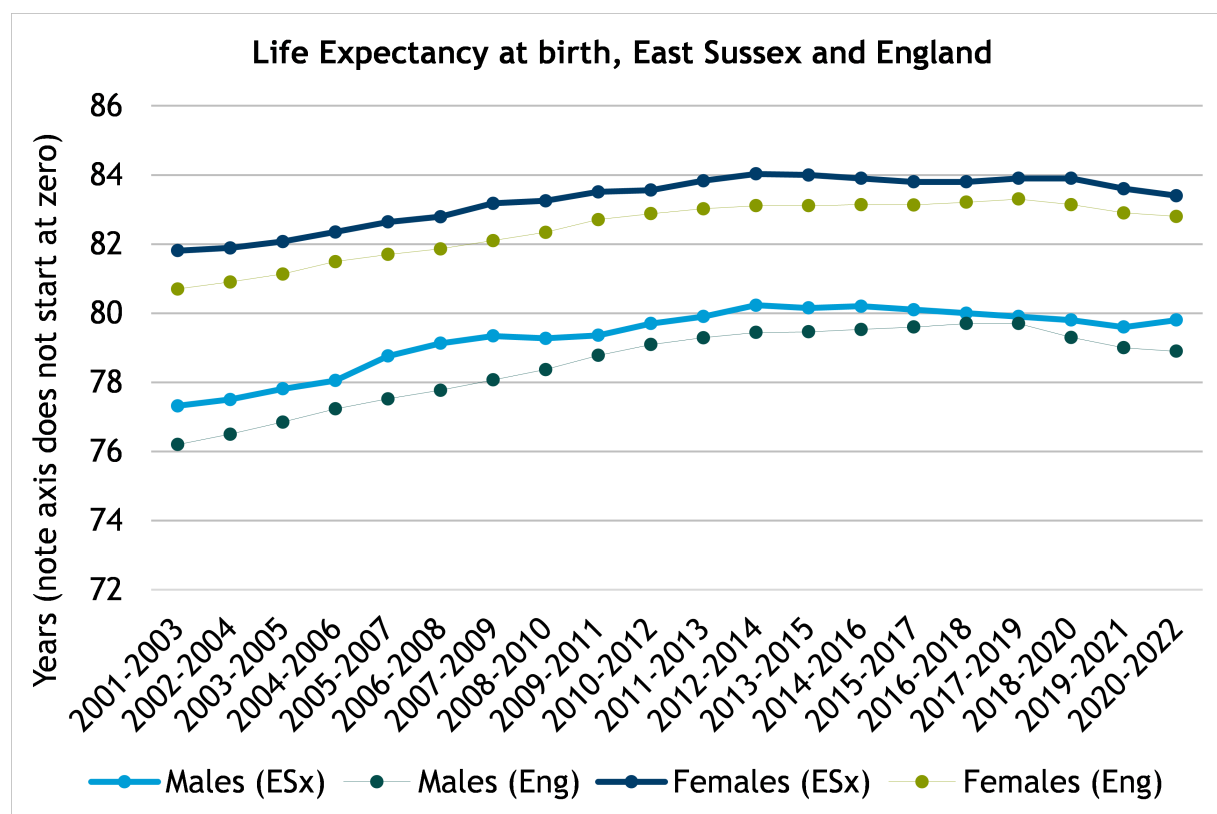


Source: ESCC Adult Social Care and Health department

This chart shows a timeline for the population of East Sussex, from having a good start in life, through living well and ageing well, to a good end of life. This is called a life course approach. It shows the protective factors and risk factors that can influence a person's physical and mental health and well-being throughout their life. There are many indicators that can be measured, but this chart selects a few key ones to paint a picture of the East Sussex population. Each indicator is compared to England where possible. For most indicators in East Sussex where comparison is possible the results are similar to or better than England overall. There are two indicators where the County is significantly worse, educational achievement in English and Maths at GCSE, and admissions to hospital for falls amongst older people.

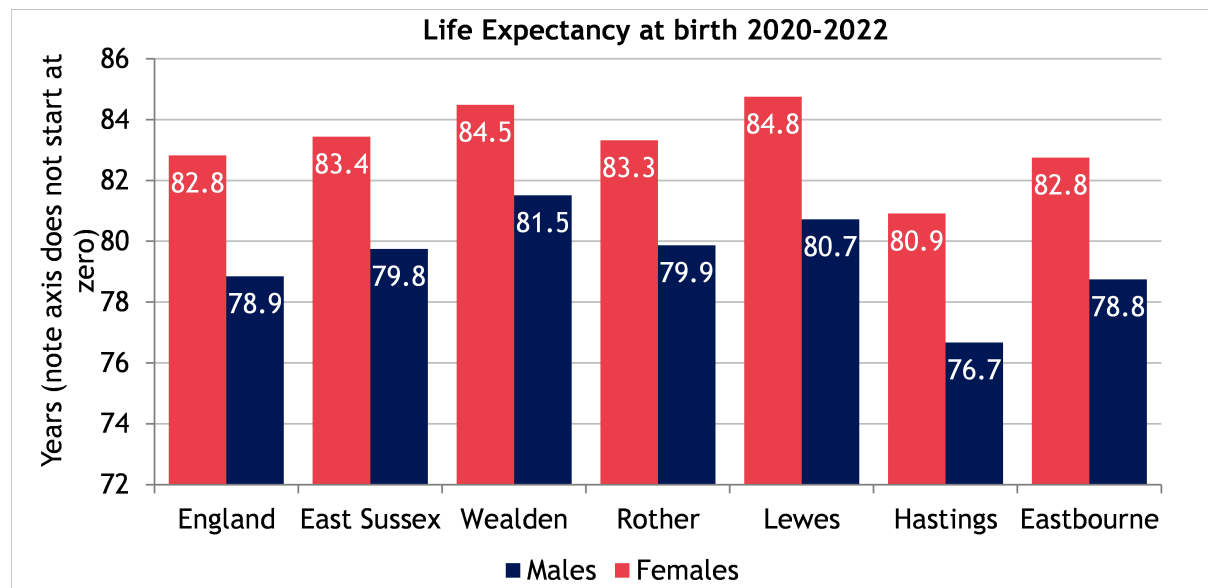
Life expectancy at birth

Life expectancy at birth is an estimate of the average number of years that a person born can expect to live. East Sussex has consistently had a higher life expectancy for both men and women than the national average. Life expectancy has generally increased gradually since the early 2000s, however it has plateaued, or begun to reduce, in recent years.



Source: Office for National Statistics Life expectancy at birth and selected older ages

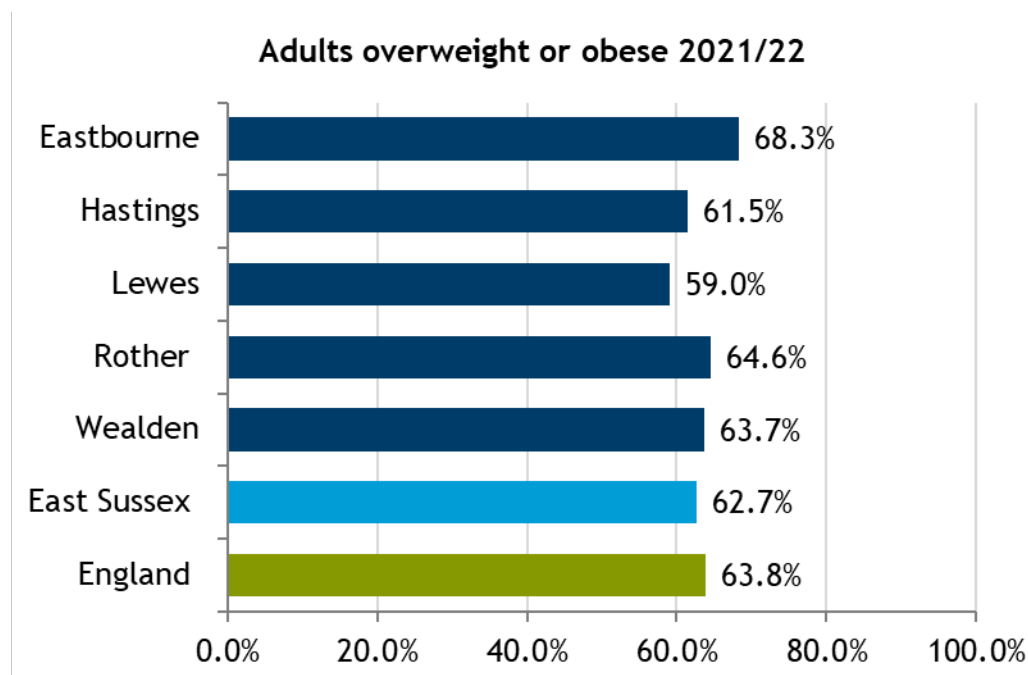
Wealden has the highest levels of life expectancy at birth for men in the county, the highest levels for women are in Lewes. The lowest levels are in Hastings. Countywide life expectancy levels are higher at birth for both men and women than nationally.



Source: Office for National Statistics

Excess Weight

Overall, the percentage of adults in East Sussex who were overweight or obese in 2021/22 was lower than the national average, however the picture varied across the county.

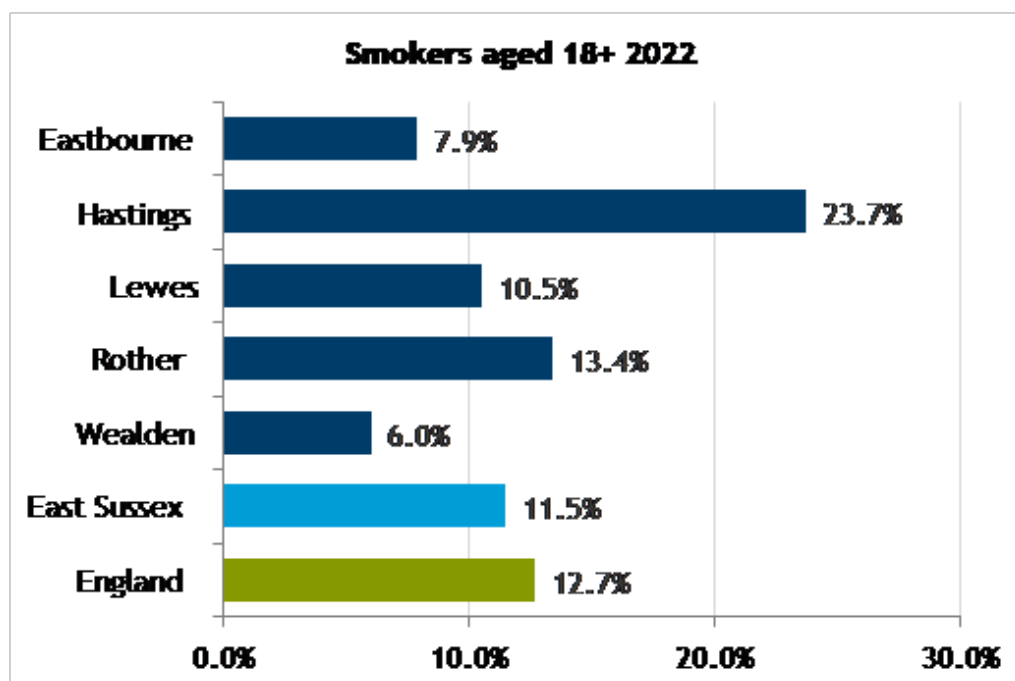


Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework

Eastbourne had the highest percentage of adults overweight or obese in East Sussex in 2021/22, at 68%. The lowest percentage in the county was for Lewes, at 59%.

Prevalence of Smokers

Hastings has the highest proportion of people aged 18 or over who smoke in East Sussex at almost 24% in 2022. The lowest prevalence is in Wealden with 6%.

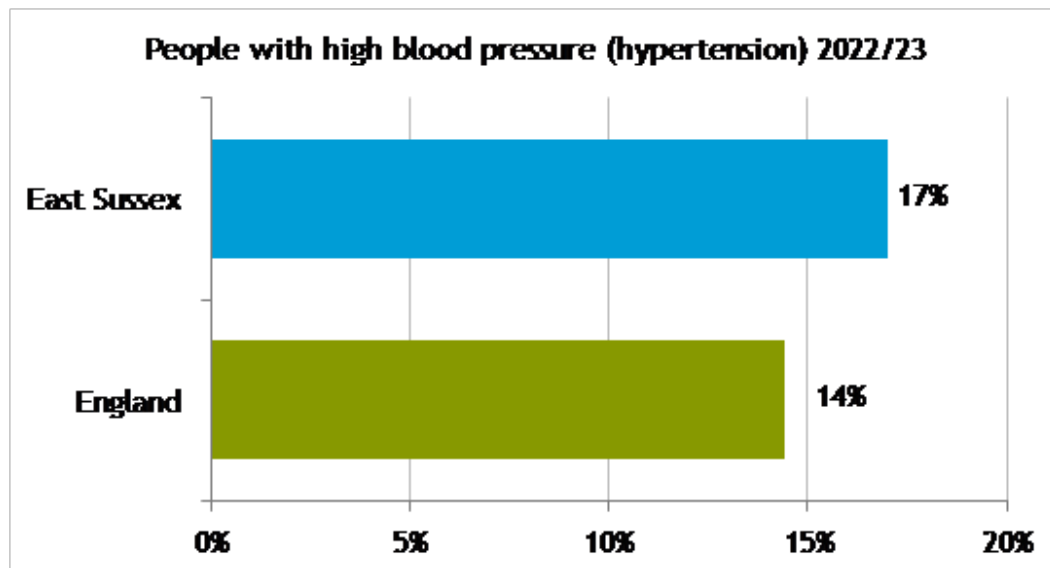


Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework

Prevalence of Hypertension

East Sussex has a higher prevalence of diagnosed high blood pressure (17%) compared to the national average for England (14%). Persistent high blood pressure can increase the risk of developing a number of serious and potentially life-threatening health conditions such as heart disease, heart attacks, strokes and

arterial disease.



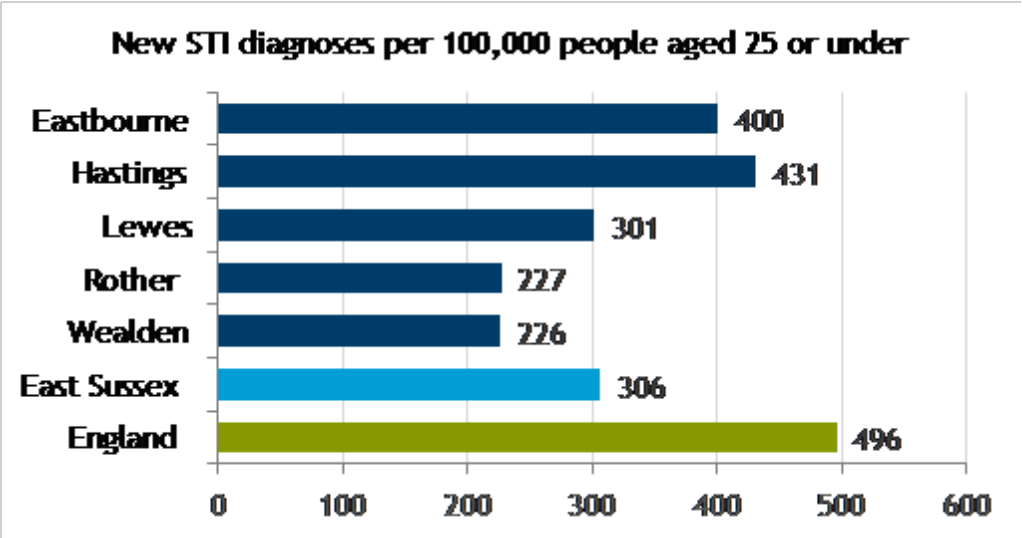
Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework

Physical Activity

Over 70% of people in East Sussex did 150 or more minutes of physical activity per week in 2021/22. Almost 20% did less than 30 minutes per week with the remaining 10% falling in between these categories (source: Public Health Outcomes Framework).

Sexual Health

East Sussex has fewer new Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) diagnoses per 100,000 population compared to England. Within the county rates are lower than for England in all areas.



Note: This data does not include diagnoses of Chlamydia and only represents people aged 25 or younger. Source: UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)

Mental health

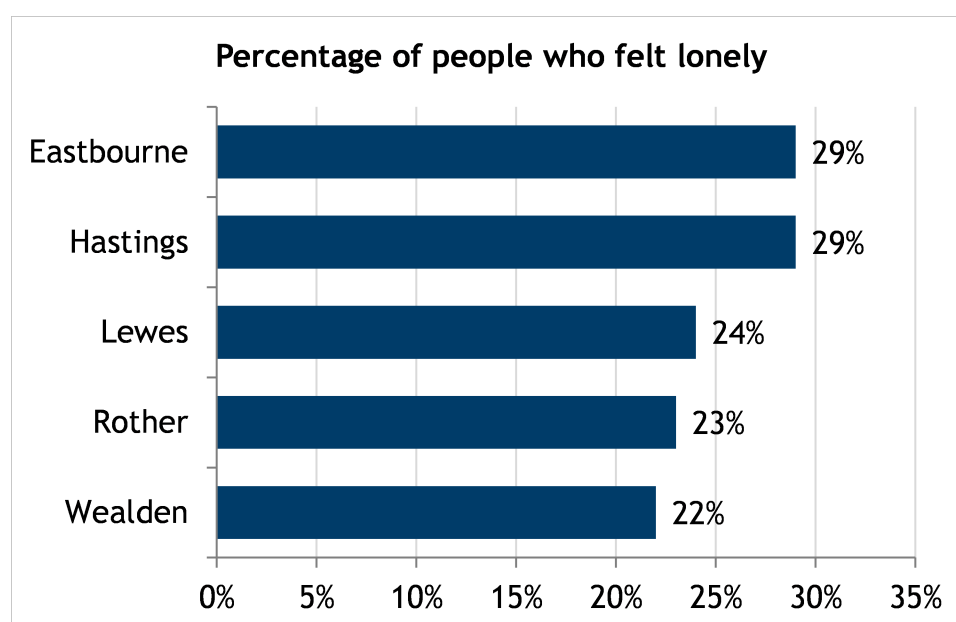
It is estimated that 1 in 6 people will have a mental health condition at any one time. Latest survey figures show a higher percentage of adults in East Sussex reported low happiness, high anxiety and low satisfaction with life compared to the national average.

Indicator (persons aged 16+ years) 2022/23	East Sussex	England
Self-reported low satisfaction with life	7.5%	5.6%
Self-reported low worthwhile score	3.5%	4.4%
Self-reported low happiness score	13.0%	8.9%
Self-reported high anxiety score	24.1%	23.3%

Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework

Loneliness

In East Sussex, 25% respondents reported feeling lonely often (5%) or some of the time (20%), with feelings of loneliness not changing markedly from the 2015 (24%) and 2017 (25%) East Sussex Community Surveys.



Note: Percentages are derived by combining the number of people who answered as feeling lonely often and some of the time. Source: East Sussex Community Survey 2019

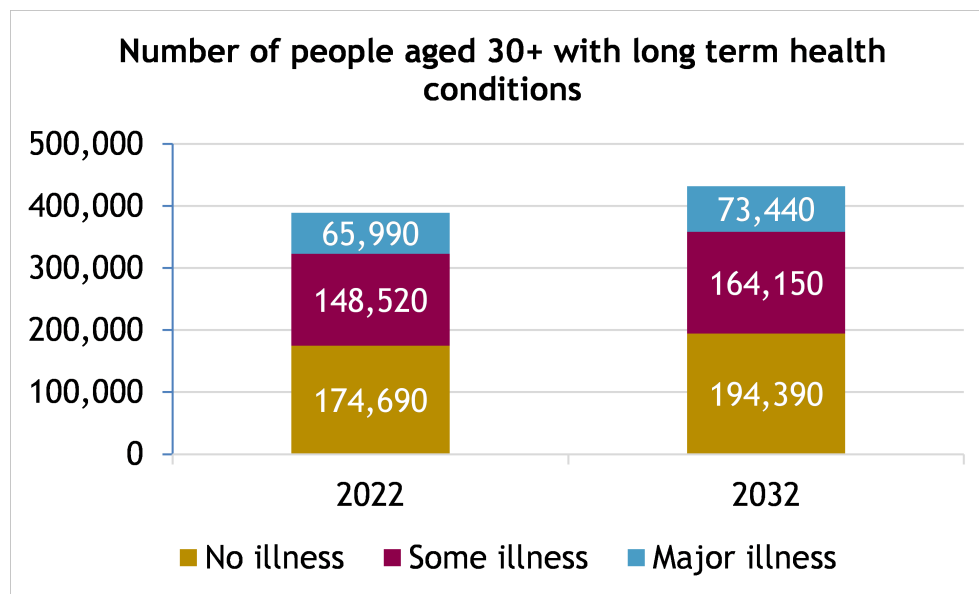
Data from the 2019 survey shows that feelings of loneliness are more prevalent among groups who are more likely to spend more time at home (e.g. due to mobility issues), workless residents (56% vs. 20% of those in work); those in poor health (55% vs. 18% of those in good health); those with a disability (44% vs. 19% of those without); single person households (38%) and single parents (47% vs. 25% overall). Other groups who are more likely to feel lonely include: social tenants (46%) and private renters (39% vs. 20% of owner occupiers); people with no qualifications (34% vs. 25% overall), and women (26% vs. 24% of men). At district and borough level, those in Hastings and Eastbourne are more likely than average to feel lonely often or some of the time (both 29% vs. 25% overall). The population in these areas are more likely to be comprised of the groups listed above. Those living in Rother and Wealden are more likely to say they hardly ever/never feel this way (77% and 78% respectively).

Multiple long term health conditions

The number of people with multiple long-term conditions (multi-morbidity) in the East Sussex population is expected to increase in line with the growth in the

general population over the next ten years. Multi-morbidity is the presence of 2 or more conditions, and therefore greatly increases the complexity and overall costs of managing care for people, families and services.

For the purposes of looking at health problems at a population level these can be classified using the Cambridge Multimorbidity Score into three groups: people with no illness, some illness and major illness.



Source: Ref Watt T, Raymond A, Rachet-Jacquet L, Head A, Kypridemos C, Kelly E, Charlesworth A. Health in 2040: projected patterns of illness in England. The Health Foundation; 2023 (<https://doi.org/10.37829/HF-2023-RC03>). Population figures based on East Sussex population projections 2022 rounded to the nearest 10.

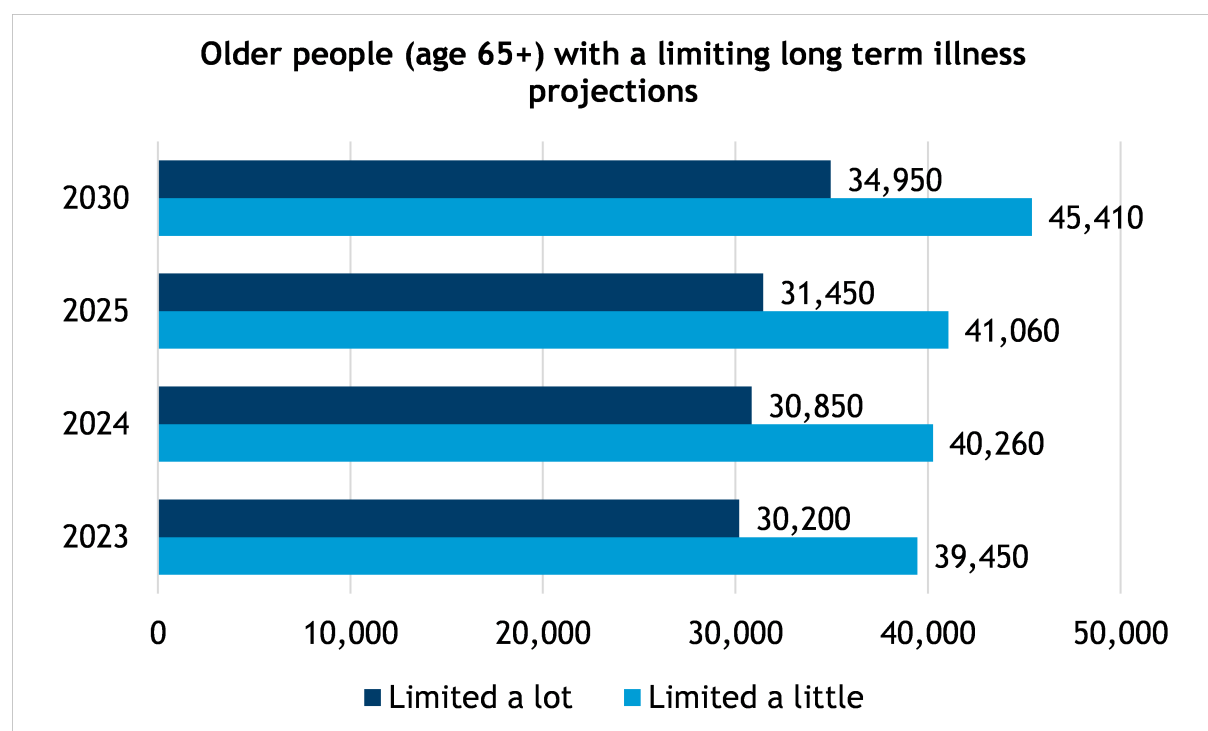
The Cambridge Multimorbidity Score (CMS) assigns a weight (score) to 20 conditions based on how the illness is likely to affect people's use of primary care and emergency health services and the likelihood of their death.

Adults

Long Term Illness

It is estimated that in 2023 there are 69,650 older people (age 65+) in East Sussex who are living with a long-term illness which limits their day-to-day activities. 39,450 of these people are ‘limited a little’ in their day-to-day activities, while the other 30,200 are ‘limited a lot’.

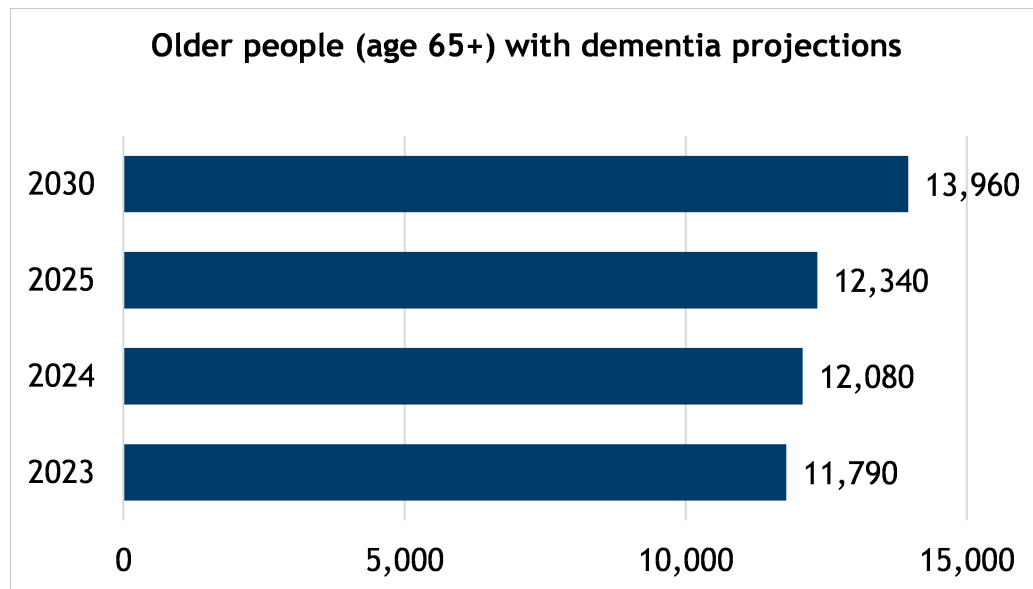
These figures are projected to rise to an estimated 80,360 older people living with a long-term illness which limits their day-to-day activities in 2030, an increase of 15.4% compared to 2023. 45,410 of these people are projected to be ‘limited a little’ (up 15.1% compared to 2023), and the other 34,950 are projected to be ‘limited a lot’ (up 15.8% compared to 2023).



Source: POPPI. Note: These figures are based on population projections produced before the latest population figures from the 2021 Census were available

Dementia Projections

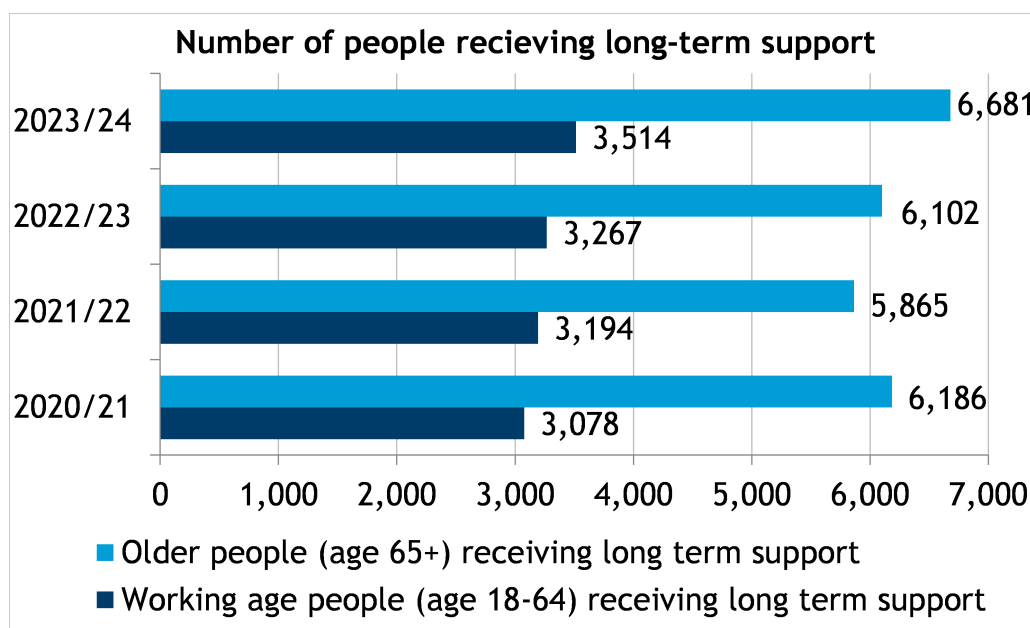
13,960 older people (age 65+) are projected to have dementia by 2030, an increase of 18.4% from 2023.



Source: POPPI. Note: These figures are based on population projections produced before the latest population figures from the 2021 Census were available.

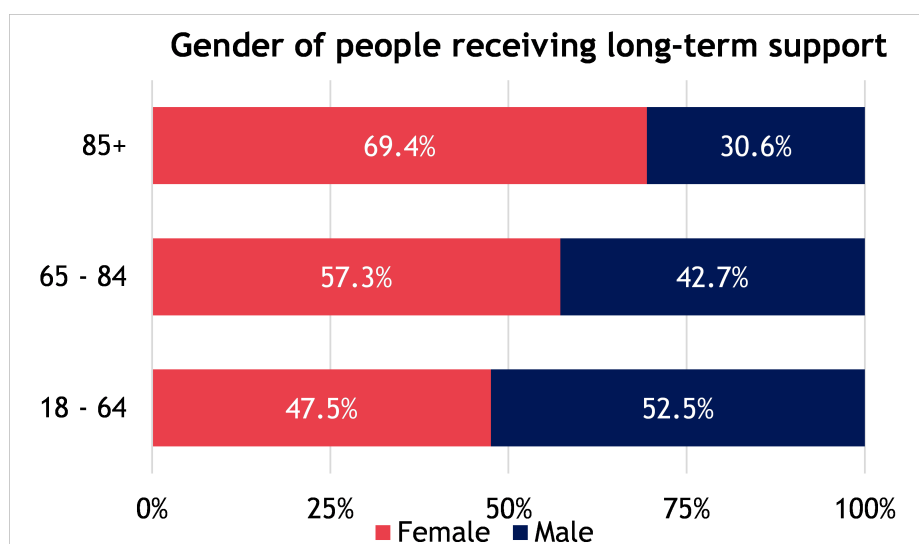
People receiving long term support

The total number of Adult Social Care clients receiving long term support increased by 8.8% in 2023/24 to 10,195. The majority of clients receiving long term support are older adults (those aged 65 and over).



Source: East Sussex SALT Return

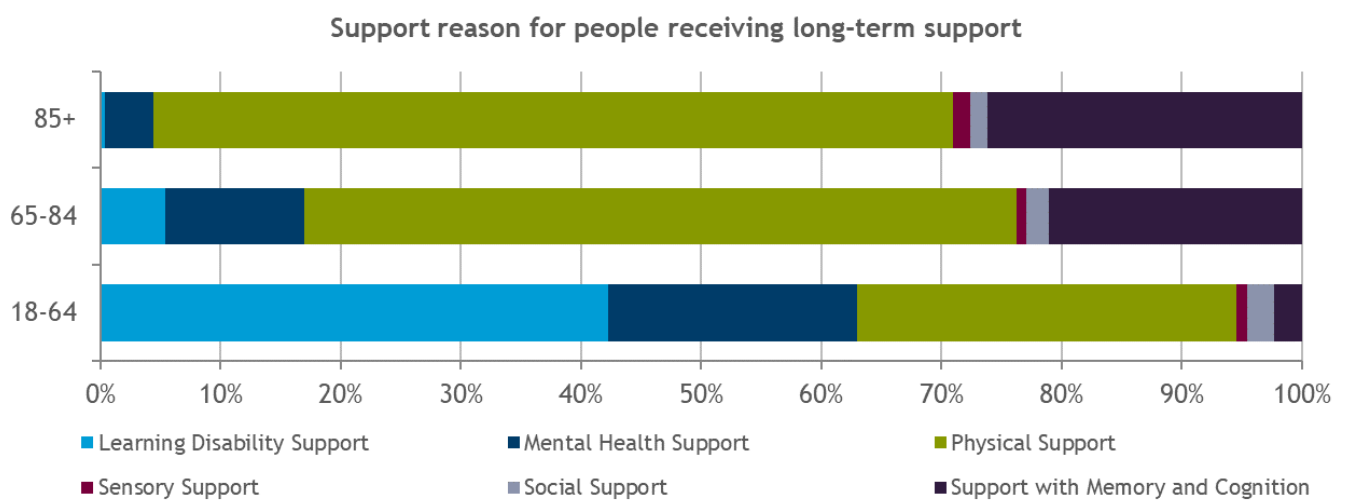
The percentage of women receiving long term support is higher than the number of men for older people, especially those above the age of 85. This reflects the fact that women on average have a longer life expectancy than men and make up a higher proportion of the population among older age groups. The percentage of men receiving long term support is slightly higher than women for the working age population.



Source: East Sussex SALT Returns

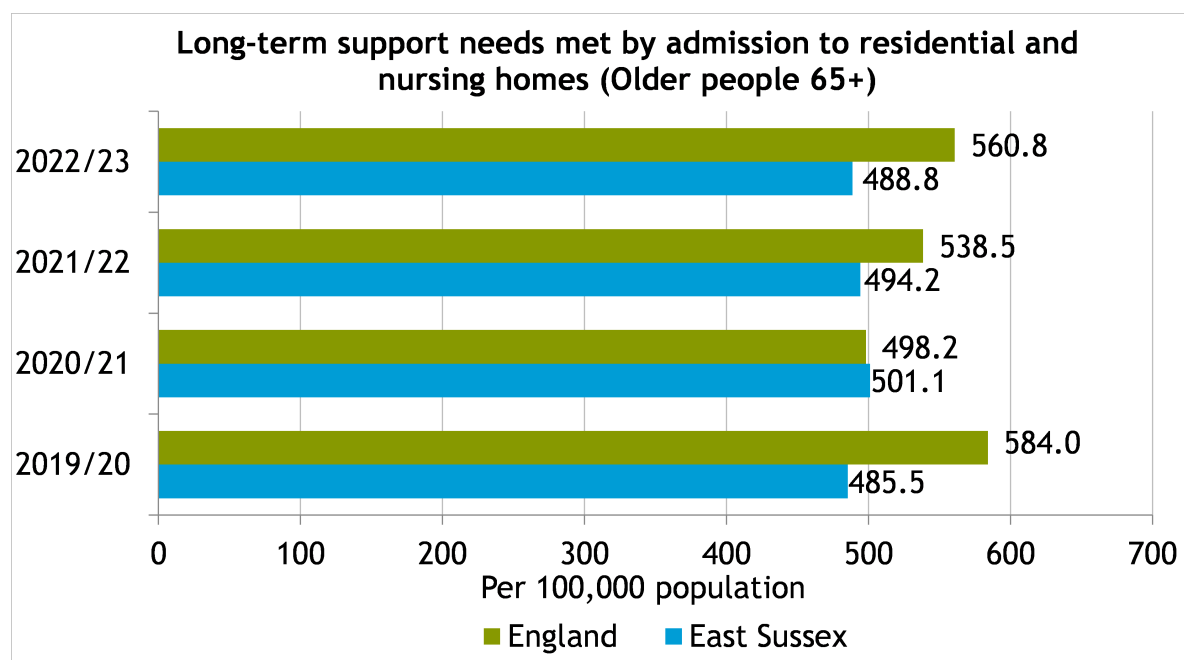
State of the County 2024: Focus on East Sussex

People receive long-term support for a variety of different needs. The percentage of people receiving long term support due to Learning Disability Support and Mental Health Support reduces as you move up the age ranges, whilst the percentage of people needing support for Physical Support, Sensory Support and Support with Memory and Cognition increases.



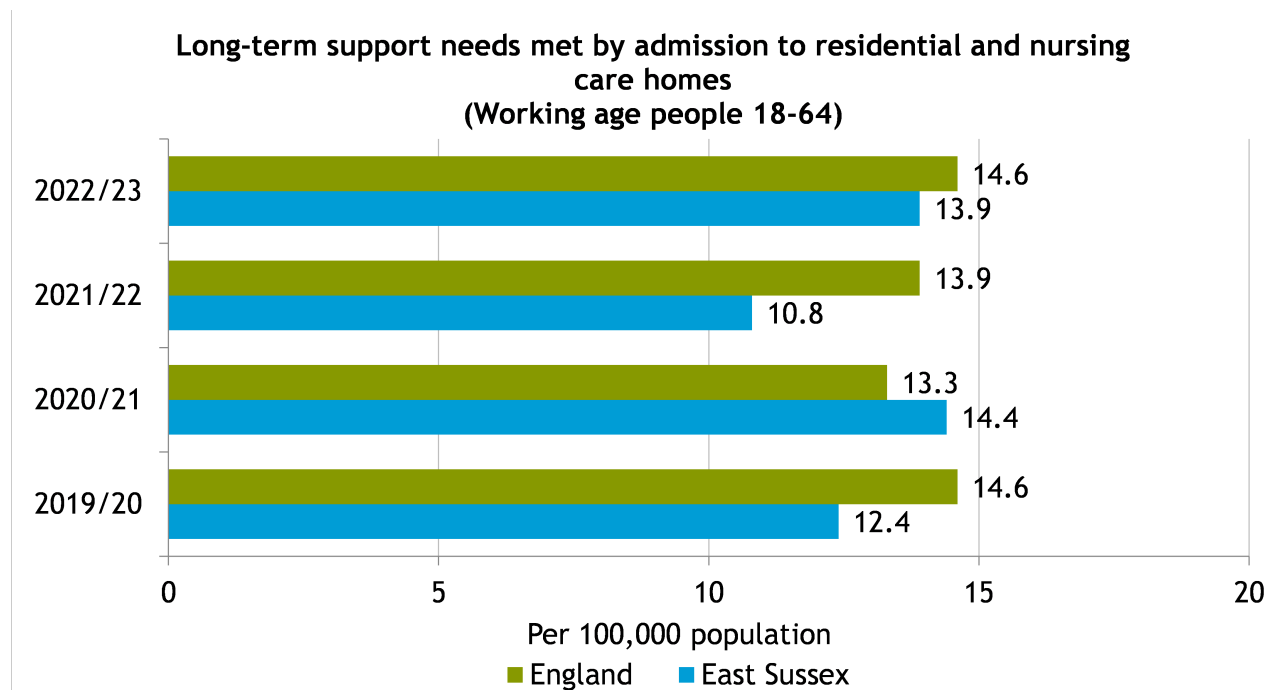
Source: East Sussex SALT Return

Permanent admissions of older people aged 65 and over to residential and nursing homes per 100,000 population aged 65 and over slightly decreased in East Sussex in 2022/23.



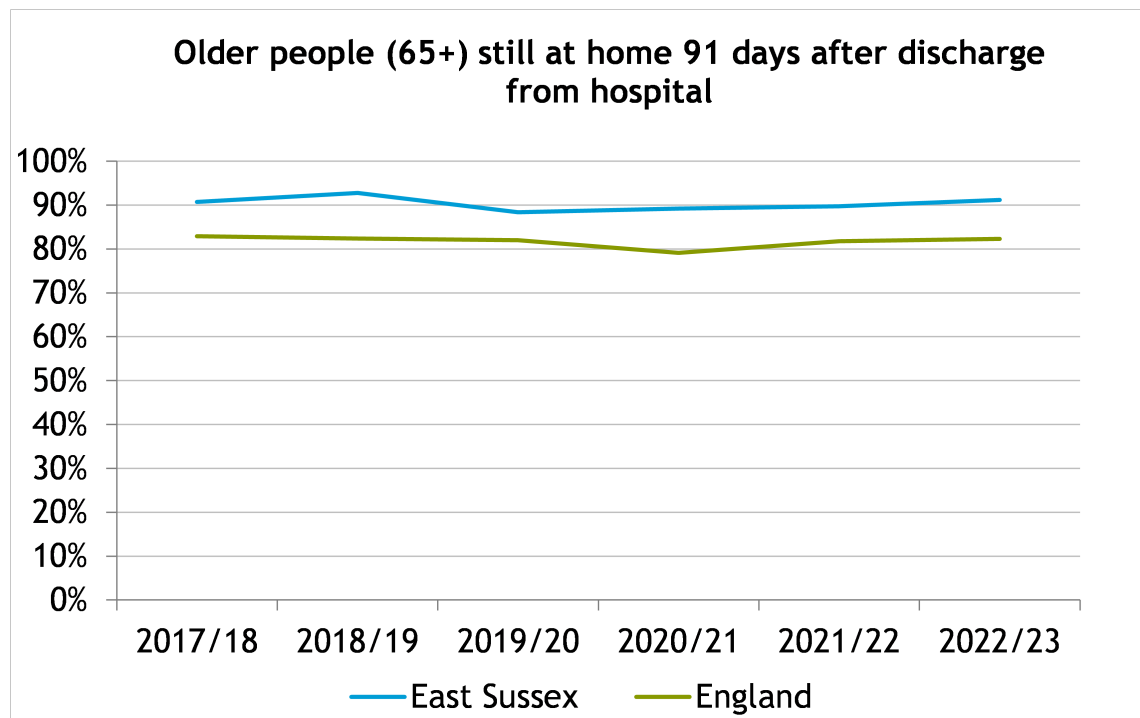
Source: NHS Digital Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework data ASCOF 2A2

Permanent admissions of working age people (18-64) to long term residential care increased in East Sussex in 2022/23 and is now similar to the national rate.



Source: NHS Digital Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework data ASCOF 2A1

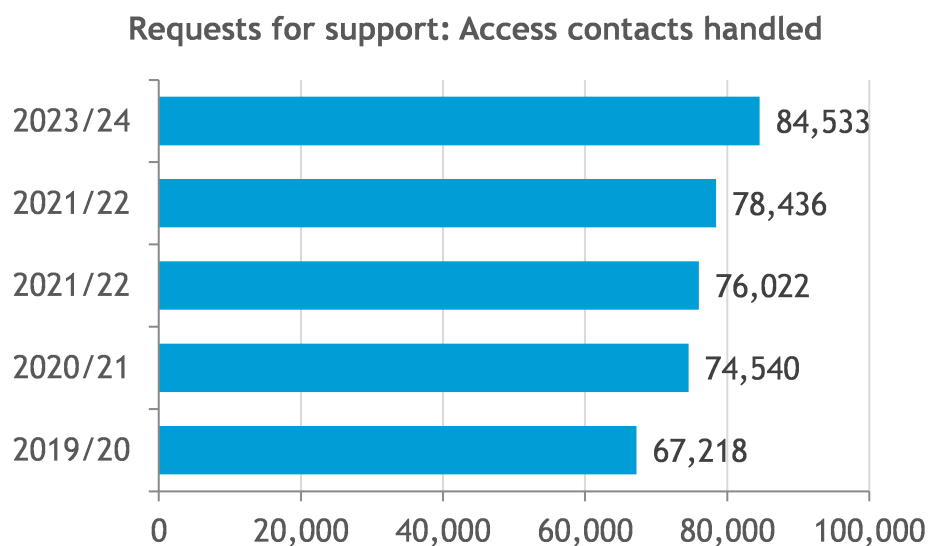
The proportion of older people (age 65+) still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services increased in 2022/23 to 91.2% and remains significantly above the national figure of 82.3%.



Source: NHS Digital Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework ASCOF 2B1

Access contacts

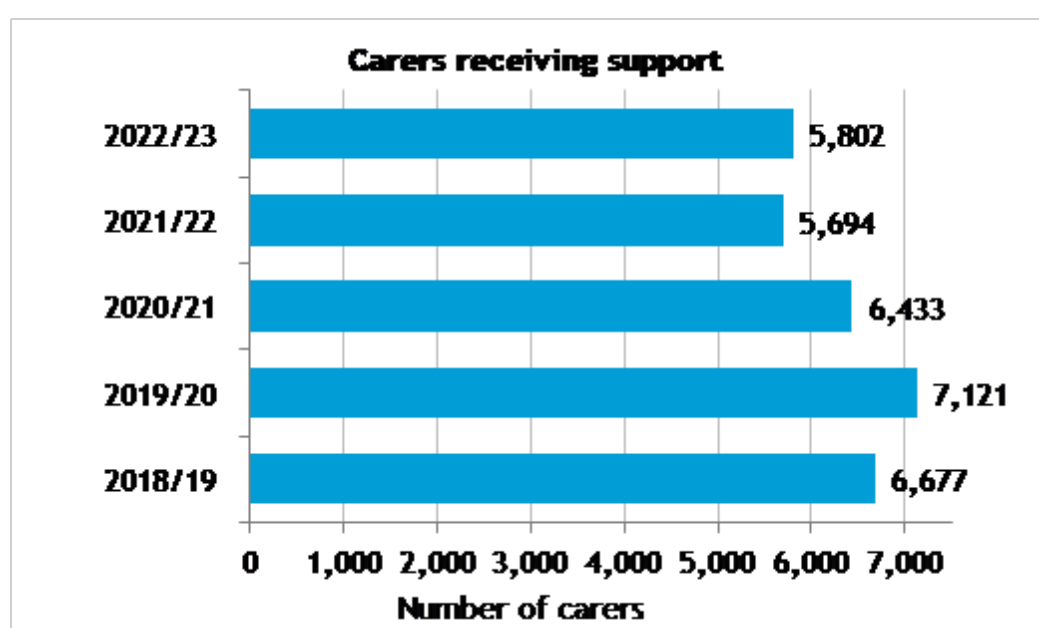
The Access team in Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC) handled 84,533 contacts in 2023/24, an increase of 6,097 (7.8%) compared to 2022/23.



Source: East Sussex Adult Social Care and Health department

Carers receiving support

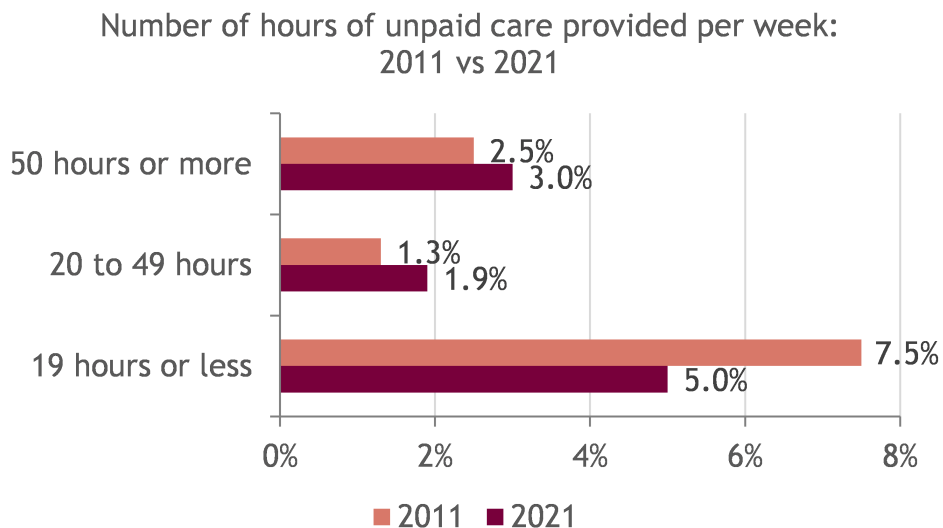
The total number of carers receiving support from Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) in East Sussex increased slightly in 2022/23, however the numbers are still well below the peak seen in 2019/20. This decrease is partly due to the impact of the pandemic, during which carers were less likely to contact Adult Social Care for help, and also due to an increase in the number of carers being supported by Care for the Carers, a partner organisation who provide support, guidance and information to carers in East Sussex.



Source: East Sussex SALT Return

Unpaid Carers

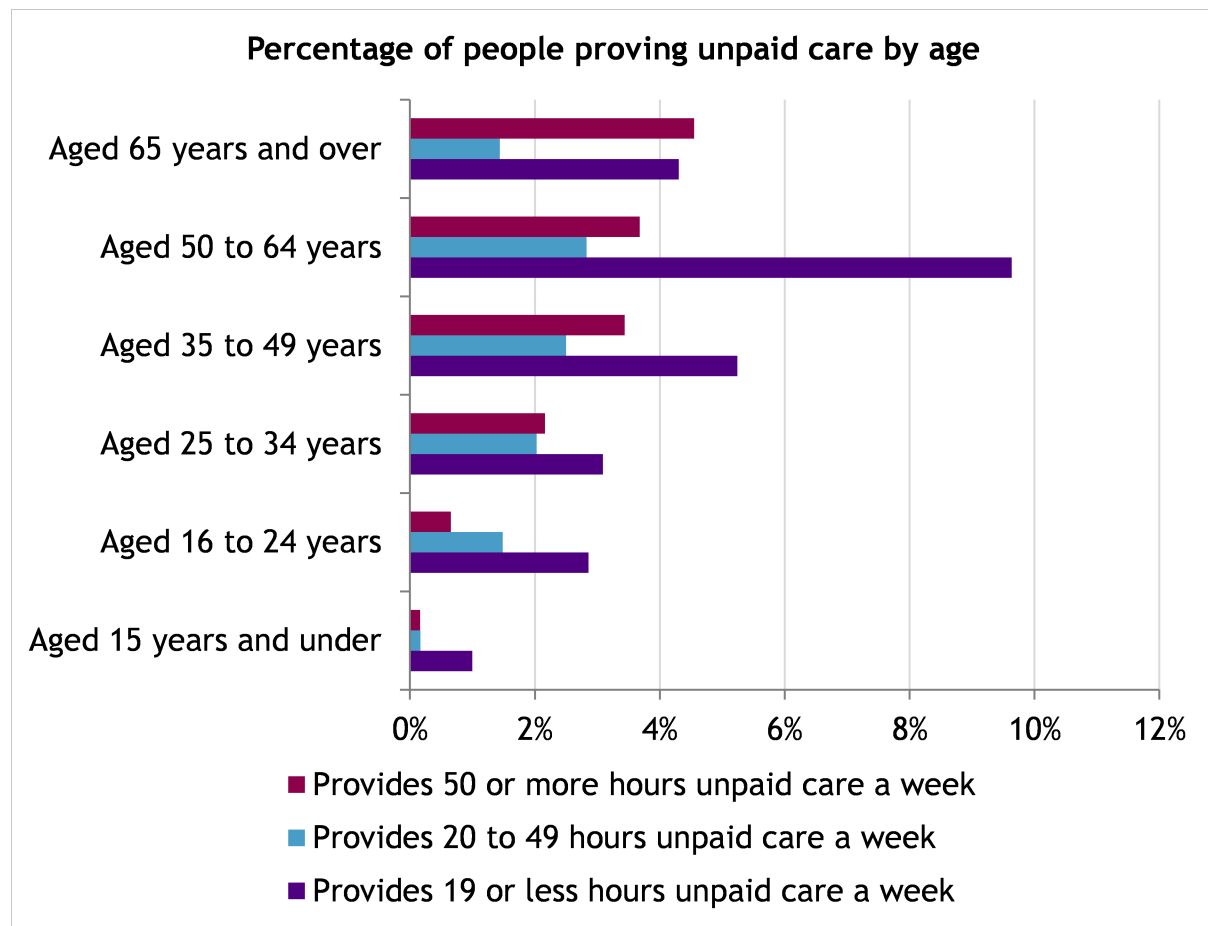
Data from the 2021 Census suggests that 9.9% of the population in East Sussex provides any form of unpaid care, compared to the national average of 8.8%. Compared to the 2011 Census however, the proportion of unpaid carers has decreased by 1.8 percentage points within East Sussex. The proportion of people providing 19 hours or less of unpaid care a week decreased from 7.5% in 2011 to 5.0% in 2021, those providing 20 to 49 hours of unpaid care increased from 1.3% to 1.9% and those providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care increased from 2.5% to 3.0%.



Note: Percentages are representative of the population aged 5 years or above.

Source: Office for National Statistics

The percentage of people providing unpaid care varies by age. 16.1% of those aged 50 to 64 provided some unpaid care a week, with the majority providing 19 or less hours unpaid care a week. Although the percentage of those aged 65 and over providing unpaid care is lower, people in this age group were more likely to be providing 50 or more hours unpaid care a week.

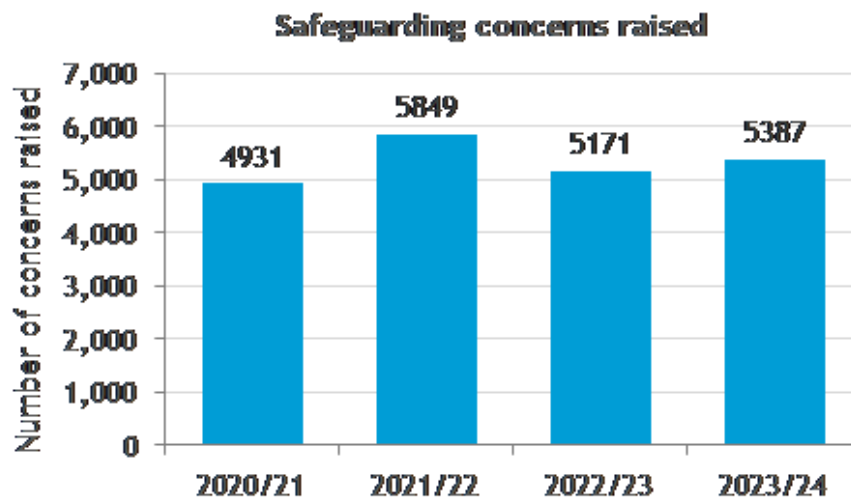


Note: Percentages are representative of the population aged 5 years or above.

Source: ONS

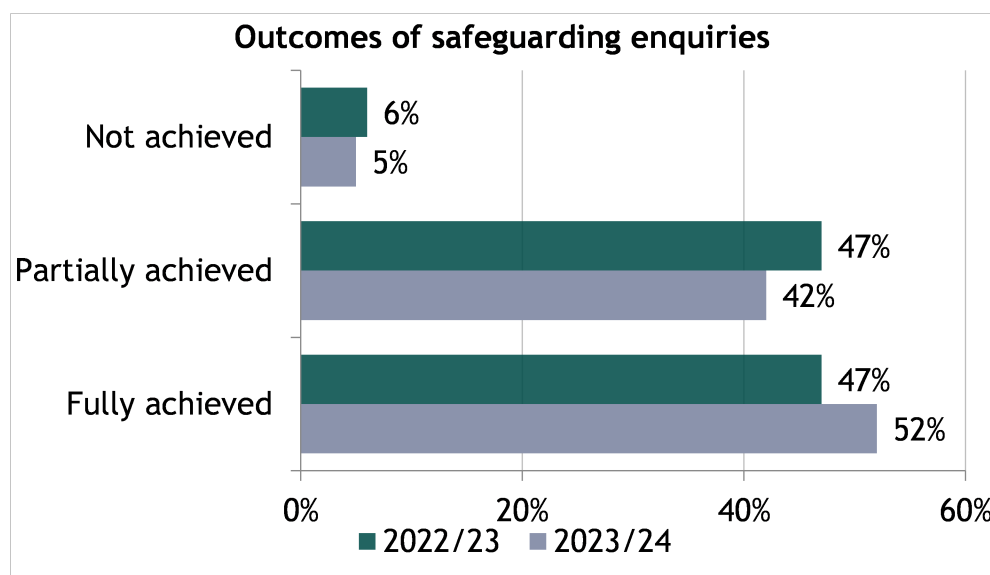
Adult safeguarding

5,387 adult safeguarding concerns were received in 2023/24. This is an increase of 4.2% compared to the 5,171 concerns received in 2022/23, but below the 5,819 received in 2021/22.



Source: East Sussex Adult Social Care and Health department

Part of a safeguarding enquiry is to identify desired outcomes for the adult concerned. In 2023/24, there was an increase of 5 percentage points in the number of safeguarding enquiries where outcomes were fully achieved compared to the previous year. The number of enquiries where outcomes were partially achieved fell by 5 percentage points.

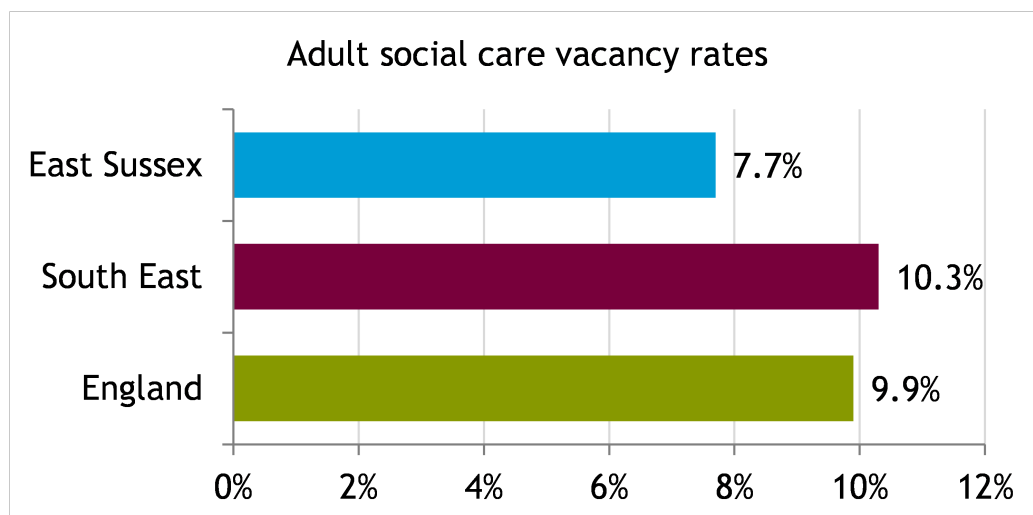


Source: East Sussex Adult Social Care and Health department. Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding issues

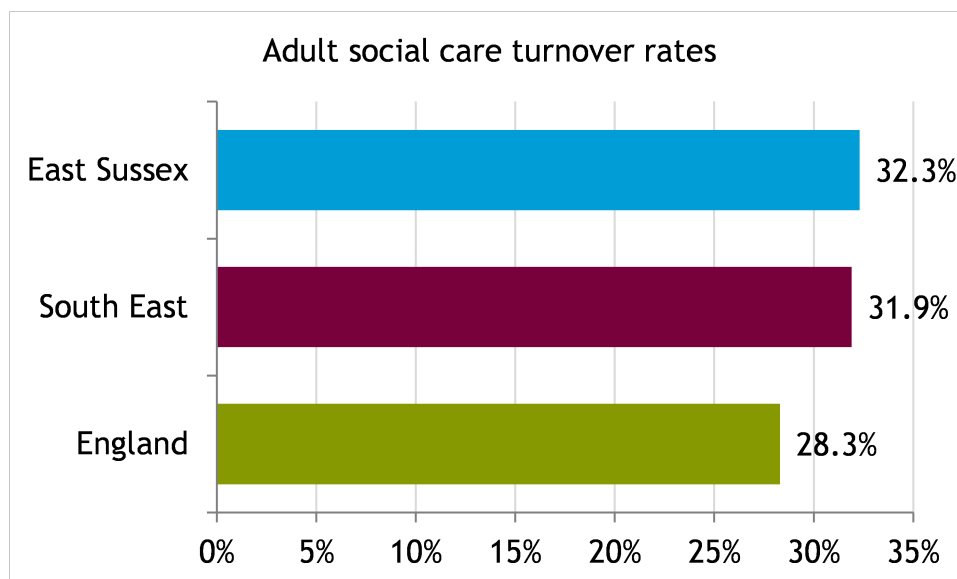
Adult social care workforce

As the demand for support in adult social care increases it is important that we have a sufficient supply of highly skilled workers for the sector. The adult social care workforce includes all staff working in adult social care settings, in both the independent sector and for the Council. There were 17,000 staff in post in the adult social care workforce in East Sussex in 2022/23, with 1,500 posts vacant. Projections show that between 2023 and 2035 the workforce required in the county will grow by 28%.

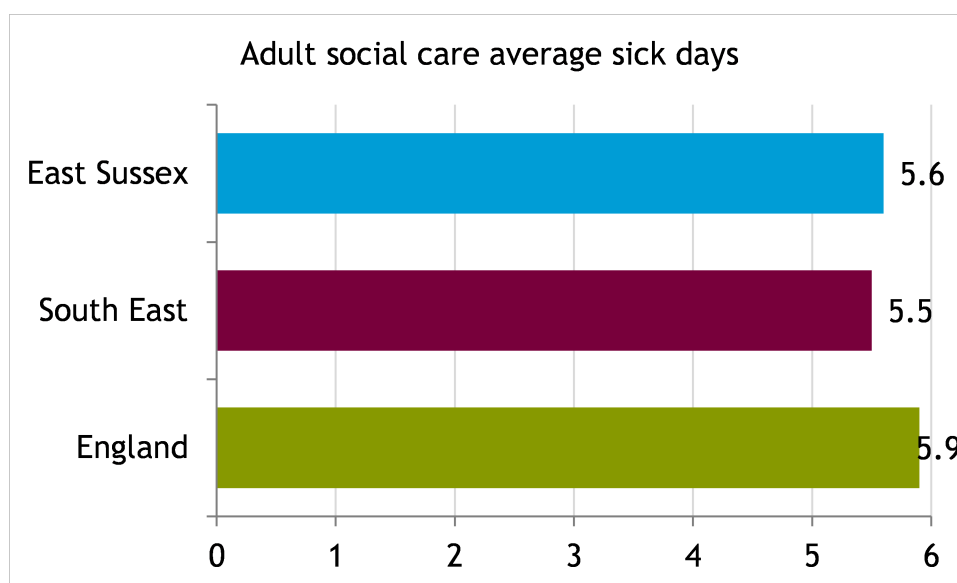
The vacancy rate in the adult social care workforce in East Sussex was lower than both the South East and England averages in 2022/23.



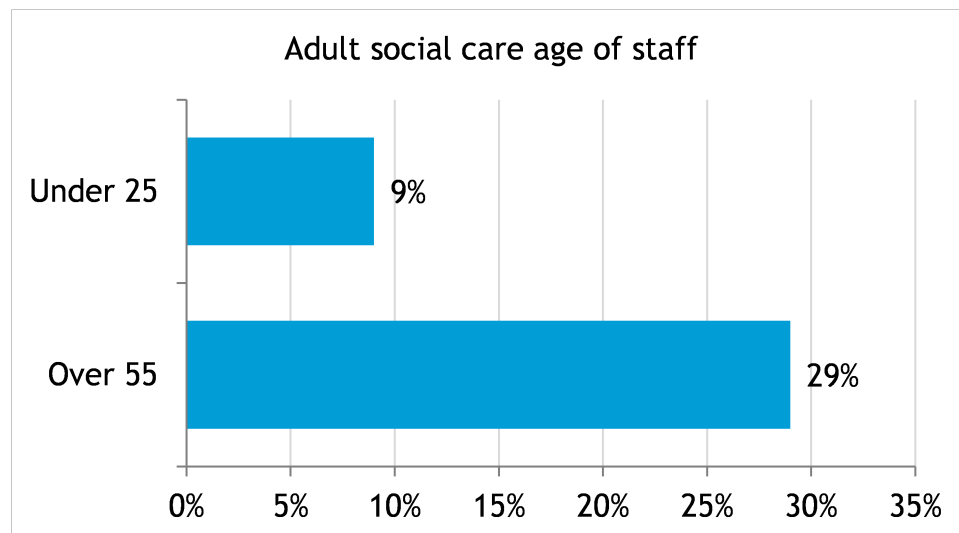
However, the rate of staff turnover was higher than the South East and England averages.



The average number of sick days taken by adult social care staff in East Sussex in 2022/23 was similar to the average across the South East and for England.



Only 9% of people working in the adult social care sector in East Sussex in 2022/23 were under 25, while 29% were over 55. It is expected that 5,000 workers in the sector will reach retirement age in the next 10 years.

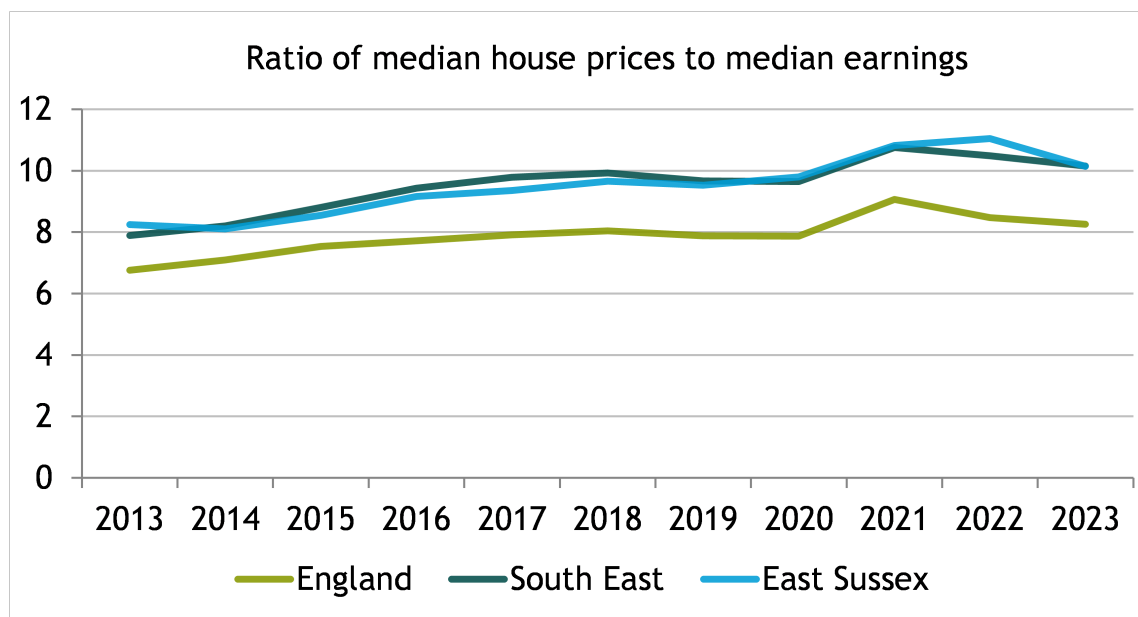


Housing

Housing affordability

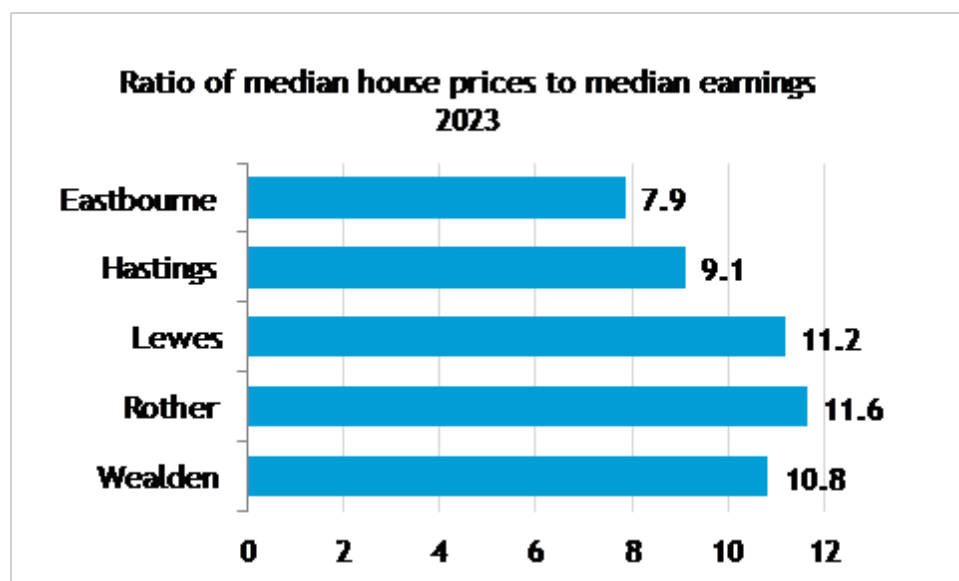
East Sussex is an attractive area to live, however this means that house prices are higher than the national average. In 2023 in East Sussex the average (median) house price was £345,000, 10.1 times the average annual earnings of residents, which were £34,028. In comparison the average house price in England was £290,000, 8.3 times average annual earnings, which were £35,100.

The average ratio of median house prices to median earnings in East Sussex is higher than for England and is the same as the South East average.



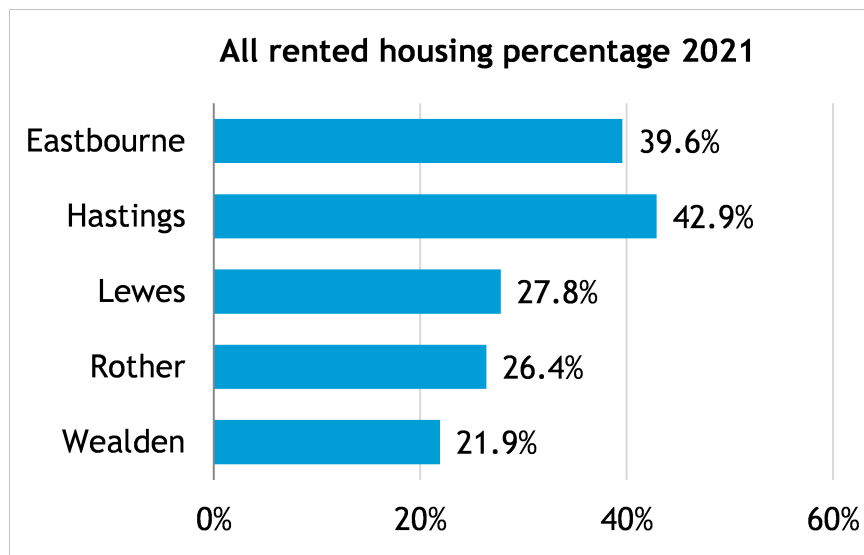
Source: ONS

The median average house prices were over 10 times the average annual earnings of residents in Lewes, Rother and Wealden.



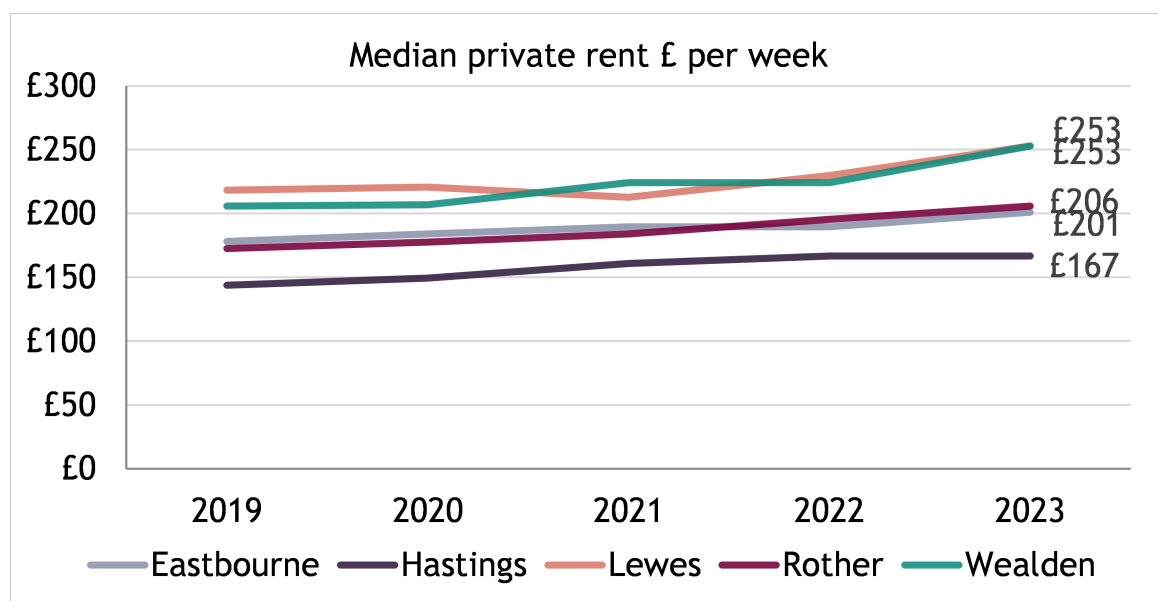
Source: ONS

Rented housing is a significant sector in East Sussex, making up 21.9% of housing in Wealden and 42.9% in Hastings.



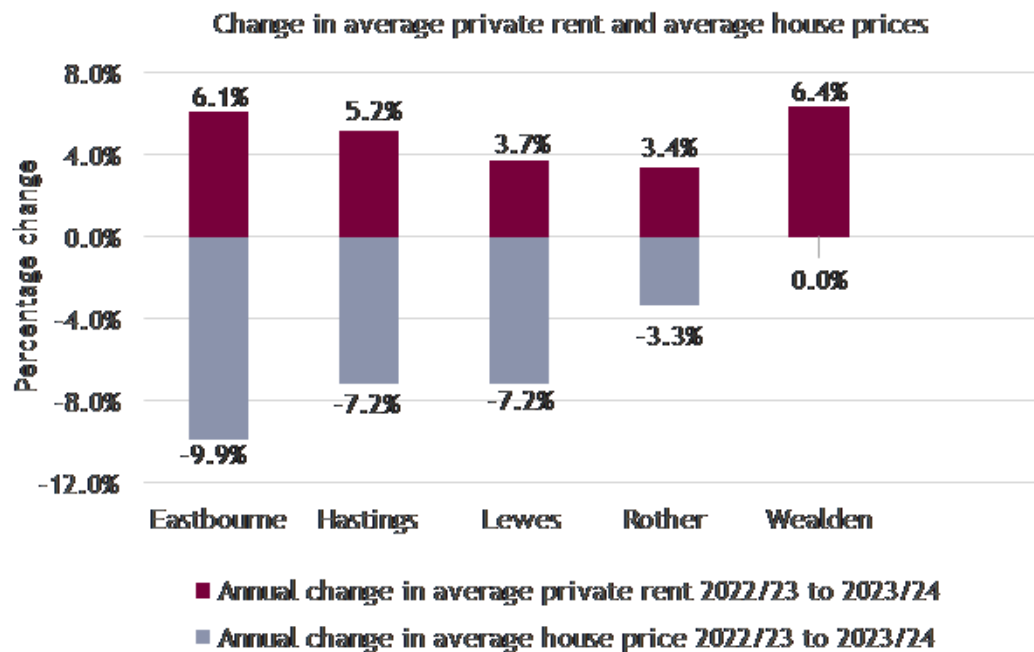
Source: Census 2021.

The cost of private rented housing rose by up to 27% between 2019 and 2023. Average private rents ranged from £167 to £253 a week across districts.



Source: ONS/Valuation Office Agency

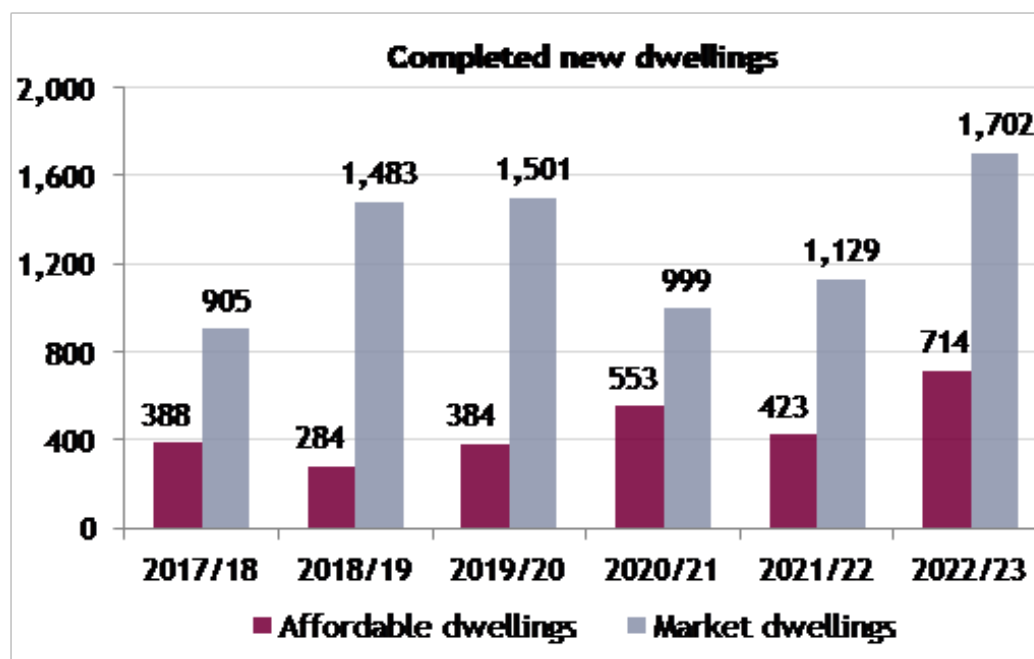
The cost of private rented housing in East Sussex continued to rise during 2023 to 2024, while the cost of house purchases across the county fell by up to 9.9%.



Source: Price index of Private Rents and UK House Prices from the ONS

Households and housing delivery

2,416 new dwellings were completed across the county in 2022/23. Of these, 714 (29.6%) were classed as affordable.



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Homelessness

There was an increase in the number of households in East Sussex in temporary accommodation in September 2023 compared to the previous year. The rate of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households shows Hastings having the highest rate in East Sussex at 12.16. The highest rate in the country outside of London was for Brighton and Hove at 12.88.

District/Borough	Number of households in temporary accommodation (30 September 2023)
Eastbourne	359
Hastings	532
Lewes	74
Rother	160
Wealden	57

Source: ONS

The Council's Children's Services Department have a duty to help children whose families face destitution. As some immigrant families with children have no recourse to public funds the Council provides assistance to prevent them from becoming homeless. The total number of people assisted with accommodation over the last three years has fluctuated, but the number of households has been consistent.

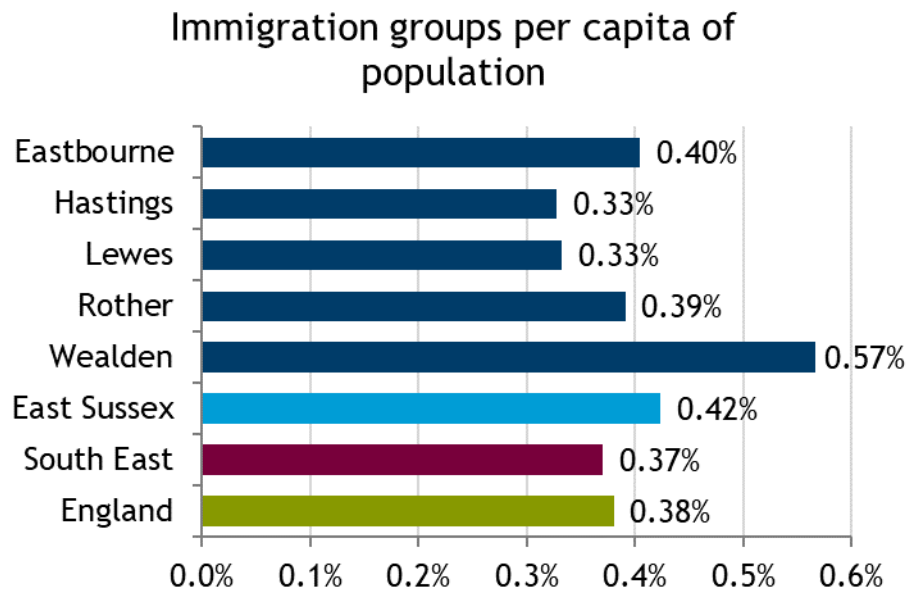
Year	Number of adults	Number of children	Total households
2020/21	23	40	22
2021/22	31	53	22
2022/23	21	34	21
2023/24	38	33	22

Source: ESCC Children's Services department]

Refugees and asylum seekers

The rate of immigrants who have arrived in East Sussex as refugees, asylum seekers or displaced persons of another type as a percentage of the total population shows that East Sussex had a higher rate at the end of 2023 than both the South East and England. The rates differed across the county, with the highest

level in Wealden and the lowest in Lewes and Hastings.



Source: Office for National Statistics. Note: the groups above include those who have arrived as part of the Homes for Ukraine, Afghan Resettlement Programme and as part of Supported Asylum.

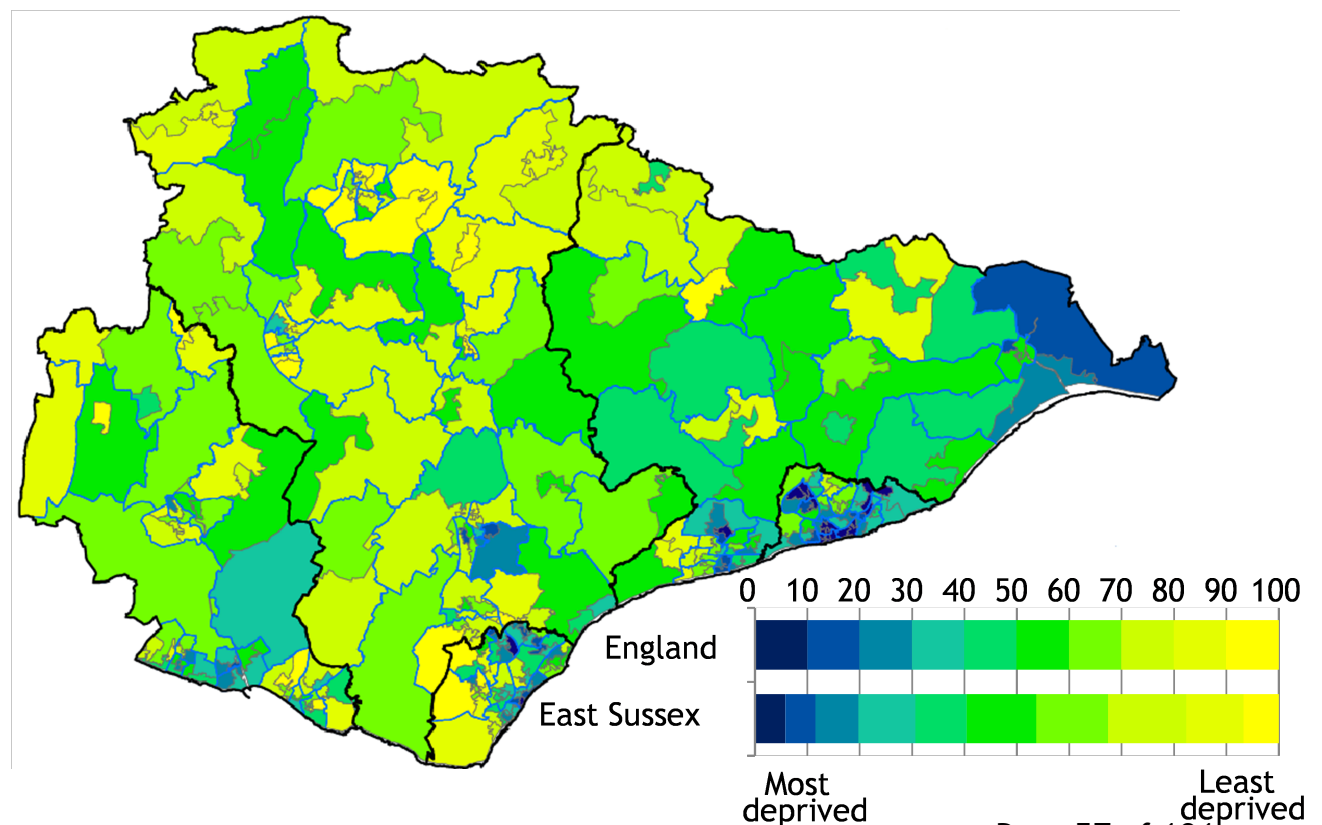
Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 measures relative deprivation for small areas in England. It takes into account a number of factors including health, access to services, environment, crime and housing, however income and employment have the greatest effect on the deprivation score given to an area.

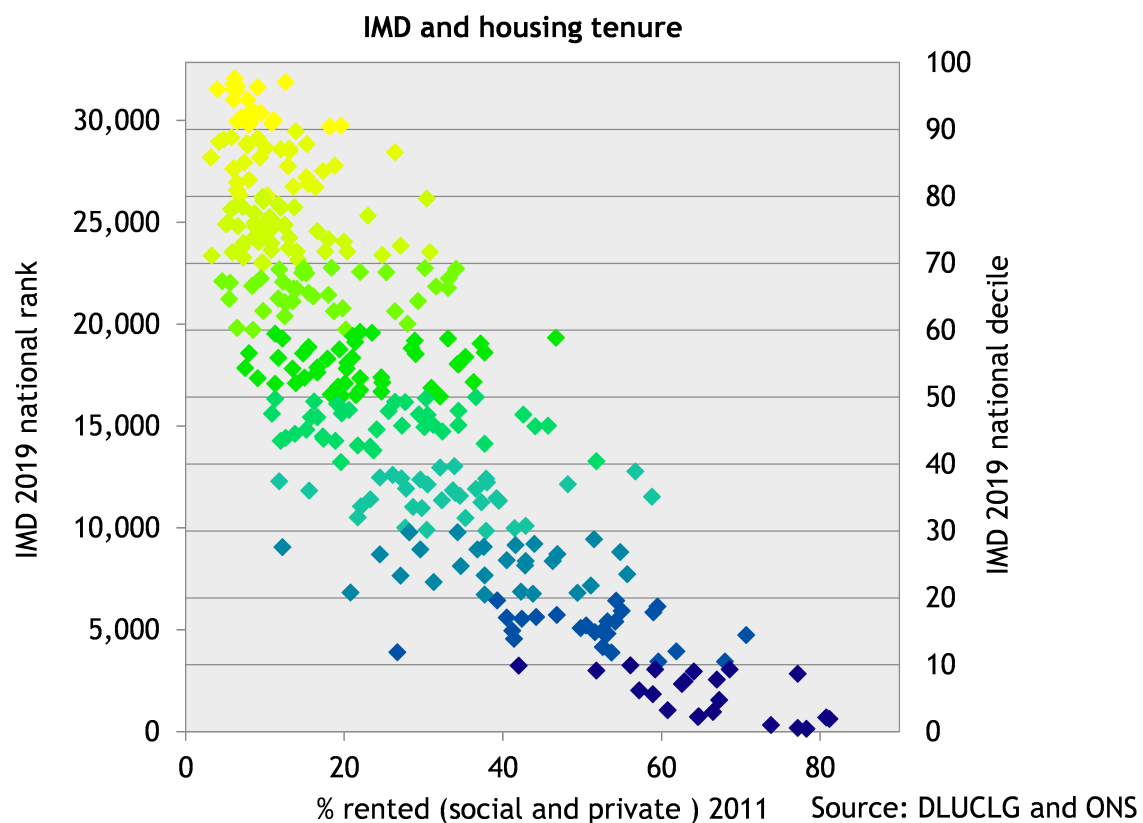
East Sussex has a significant variation across the county in levels of deprivation. Hastings is the 13 most deprived Lower Tier Local Authority (LTLA) out of 317 LTLAs in the country, with similar levels of deprivation as Newham, and Blackburn with Darwen. Wealden is the least deprived LTLA in East Sussex, with a rank of 254, which means it has similar levels of deprivation as Sevenoaks and Hambleton.

Overall, as a county East Sussex is ranked 93 out of 151 Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLA) on the IMD rank. This is a similar level of deprivation as Lincolnshire, Somerset and Kent. Blackpool is the most deprived UTLA, whilst Wokingham is the least deprived.

The map shows how deprived individual parts of the county are compared to the national average. Map of East Sussex showing LSOA deciles of deprivation



The IMD is calculated for small areas called Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), as shown on the map, each of which have approximately 1,500 residents. In East Sussex there are 329 LSOAs. 22 of these are in the most deprived 10% nationally. 16 of these are in Hastings, four in Eastbourne, and two in Rother. 21 LSOAs are in the least deprived 10%, 13 are in Wealden, six in Lewes, and two in Eastbourne.



Areas of high deprivation correlate with some areas of predominately rented housing. This includes concentrations of social rented properties (up to 70%) and private rented properties (up to 68%), and both (up to 81%). Measures of deprivation include the indoor living environment, and in these areas, more properties (excluding social housing) may be in poor condition or without central heating, leading to higher heating costs and other negative outcomes.

People living in more deprived areas often face multiple challenges and therefore may be more likely to access Council and other public services. However, it is important to note that the IMD is based on averages across an area, so it is possible to have people with low levels of deprivation in an area classified as being more deprived and vice versa.

The relationship between multiple deprivation, low income and poor-quality housing means it can be hard to change relative deprivation for people living in an area of predominantly low-cost housing without addressing housing quality.

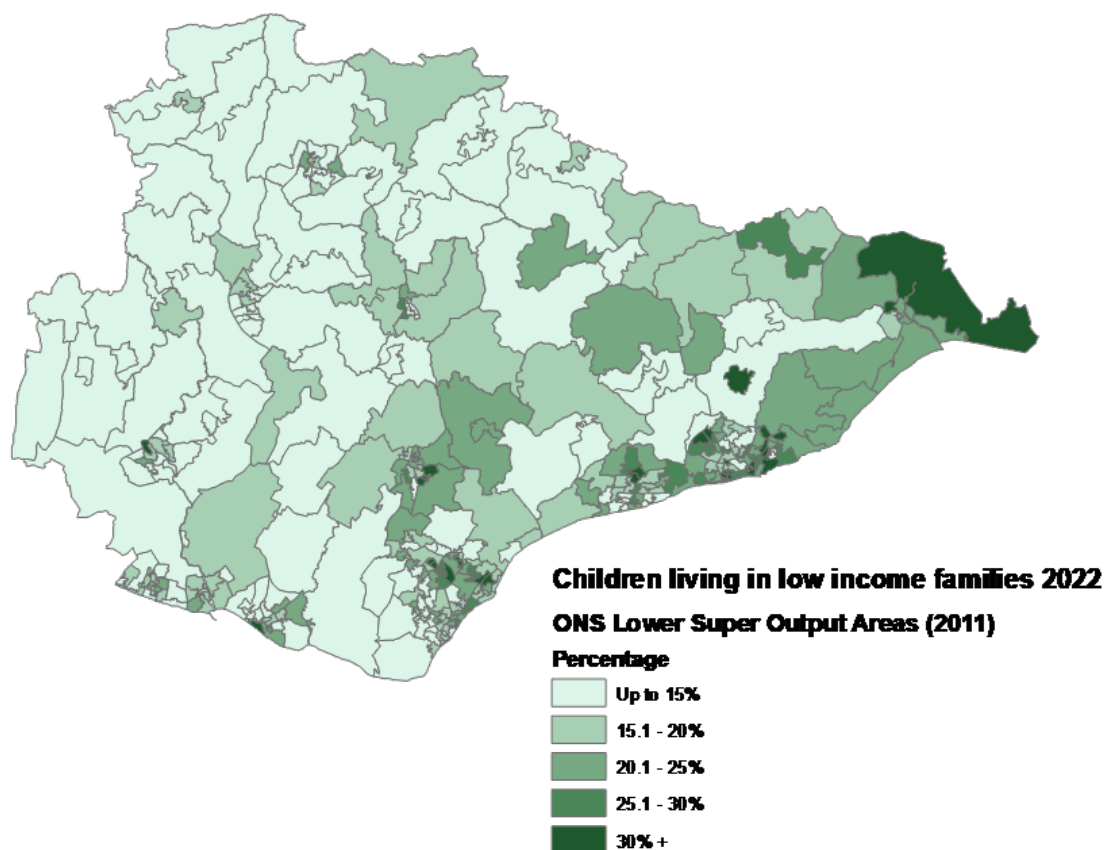
Lower Tier Local Authority	Rank of average rank out of 317 (1=most deprived)
Blackpool	1
Newham	12
Hastings	13
Blackburn with Darwen	14
Northampton	105
Eastbourne	106
Dover	107
Westminster	133
Rother	135
Crawley	136
Exeter	193
Lewes	194
Watford	195
Sevenoaks	253
Wealden	254
Hambleton	255
Hart	317

At the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level the picture across the county is even more nuanced. The most deprived LSOA in the county, Hastings 005A within Baird Ward, is within the most deprived 1% of LSOAs in England. Whereas the least deprived LSOA, Wealden 012D in Uckfield, ranks amongst the least deprived 3%.

	Most deprived LSOA	Least Deprived LSOA
England	1	32,844
Eastbourne	2,352	31,476
Hastings	147	23,407
Lewes	5,233	31,476
Rother	754	28,840
Wealden	4,812	32,075

Some of the data that the IMD is based on is now several years old. However, the latest child poverty data, relating to children living in families with relative low-income, shows a similar pattern in income deprivation across the county.

In 2021/22, there were 20,910 children in East Sussex living in families with relative low-income, which was 18.6% of all children and young people aged 0-19. This is a slightly lower rate than the national average of 19.8%. 87% of all children in relative low-income families in East Sussex were in working families. This compares to the national picture, where 71% of children in relative low-income families were in working families. Only 13% of East Sussex children in low-income families were in families where no-one was in work.

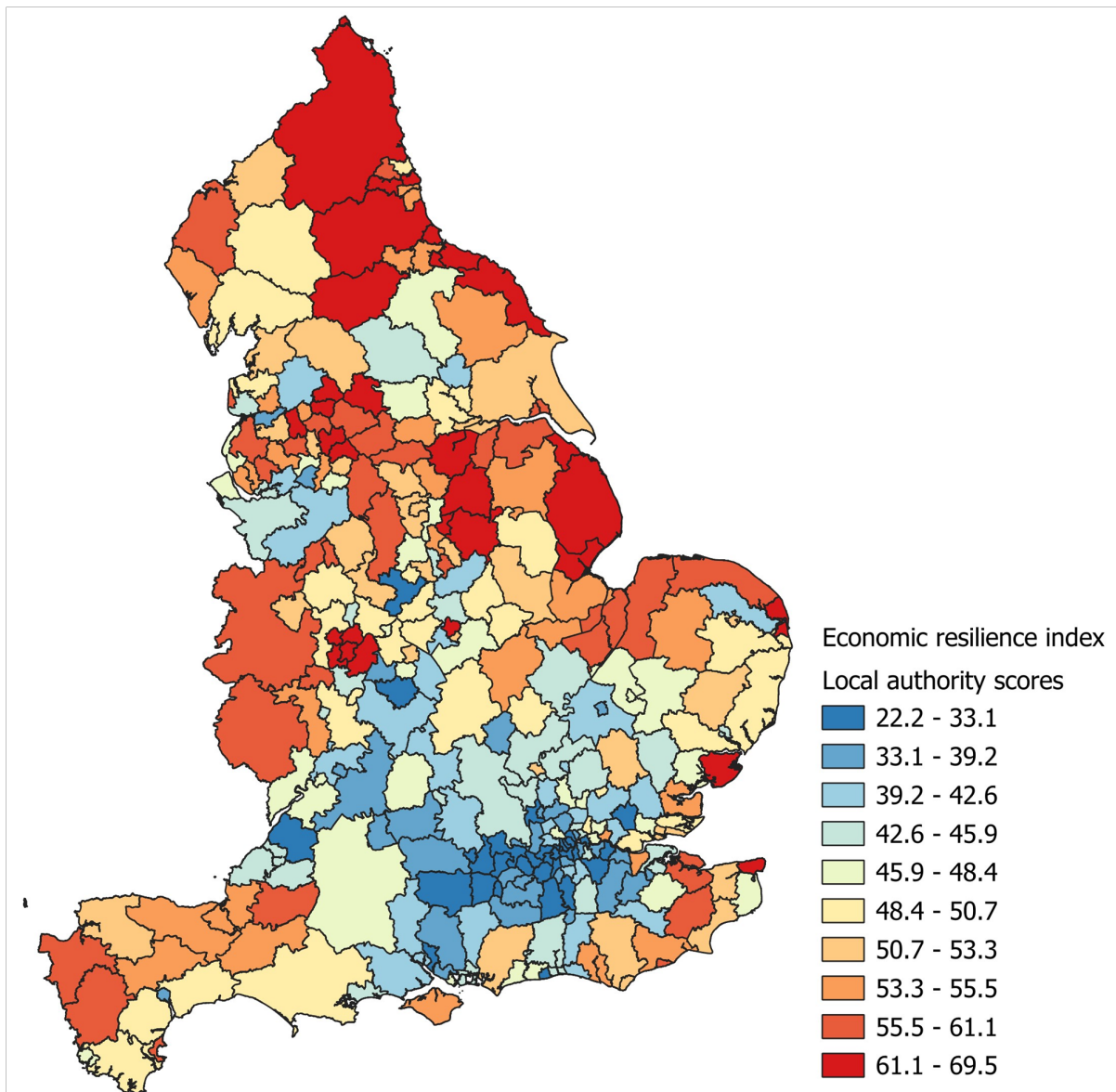


23.5% of East Sussex pupils are known to be eligible for Free School Meals in 2022/23. For England the figure was 23.8% (Source: Department for Education).

The data on deprivation shows some parts of the coastal region of the county face greater challenges. Central Government has established the Levelling Up Fund to

address areas of high need. The Government has identified 4 out of the 5 local authorities in East Sussex as having locations with priority need for ‘levelling up’ funding, which will be used in projects that address economic recovery and growth, improved transport connectivity, and need for regeneration. Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, and Rother have all been identified as having specific locations with the greatest priority need for ‘levelling up’.

The allocation of funding from one of the levelling up funding streams, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, was informed by an economic resilience index. This looked at a range of factors including economic productivity, employment rates, wage levels and skills. The map shows that all of the district and borough areas in East Sussex scored above the national average, indicating higher levels of need for support. The map below also shows most lower tier local authorities in the South East scored lower than the national average.



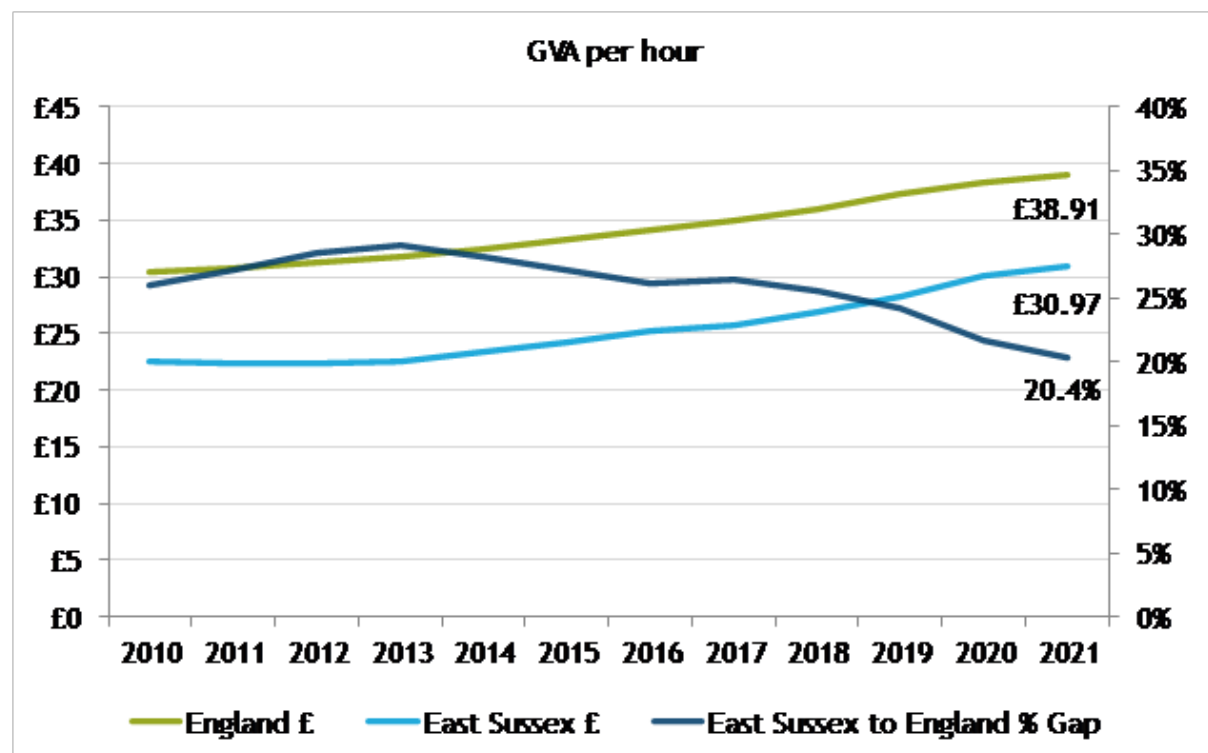
Source: data from DLUHC, Local authority boundary information from Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence v.3.0

Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2024. Note that Cornwall and the City of London were not included in the index.

Economy

GVA per hour

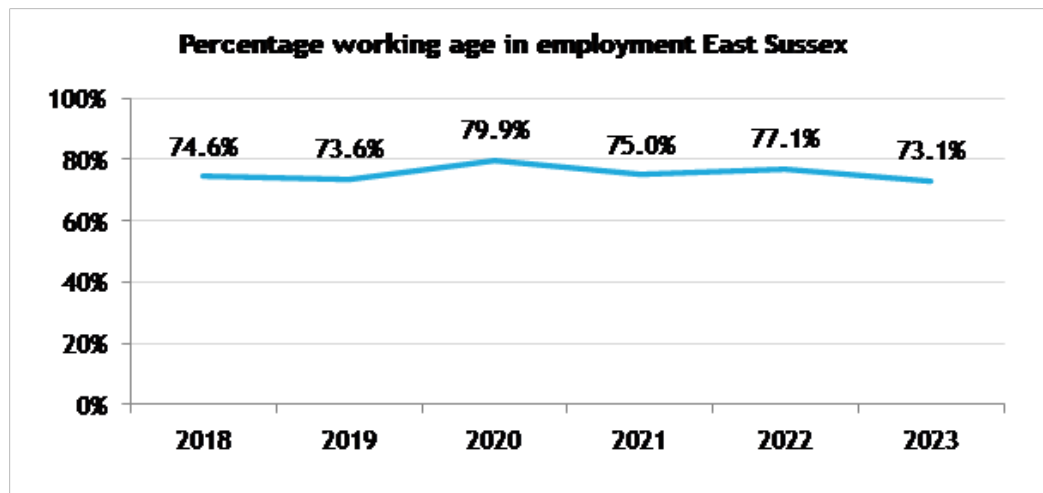
Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour is used to assess the productivity of an area. It measures the value of goods or services produced in an area per hour worked in that area. GVA per hour for East Sussex in 2021 was £30.97, 20.4% below the England level of £38.91. This gap has narrowed from a high point of 29.2% in 2013.



Source: Office for National Statistics

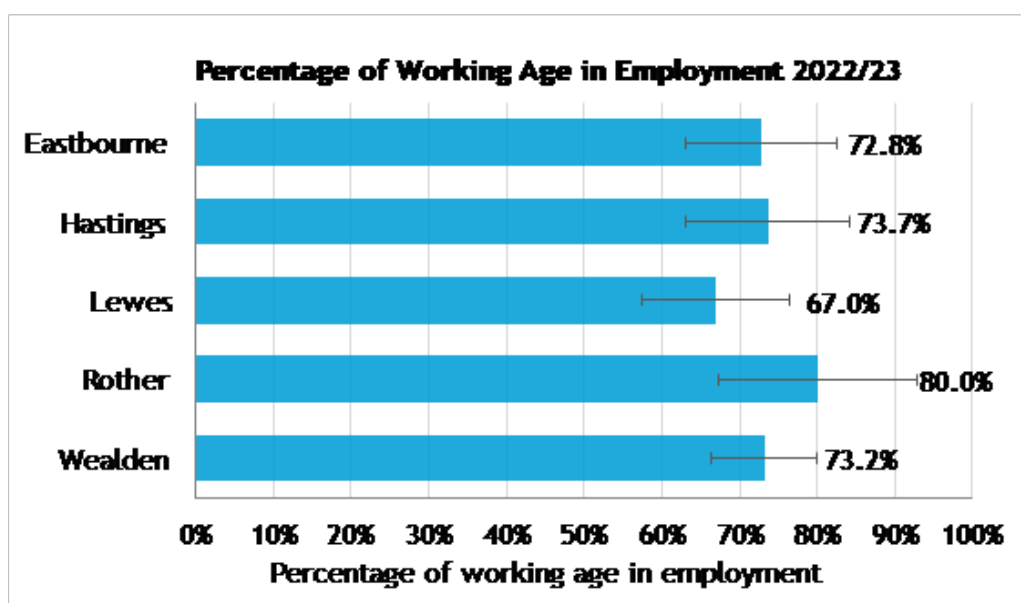
Employment

73.1% of the East Sussex working age population (age 16-64) were in employment between April 2022 - March 2023. This was lower than the national average of 75.7% and the average across the South East of 78.0%.



Sources: Annual Population Survey/Labour Force Survey, NOMIS/ONS

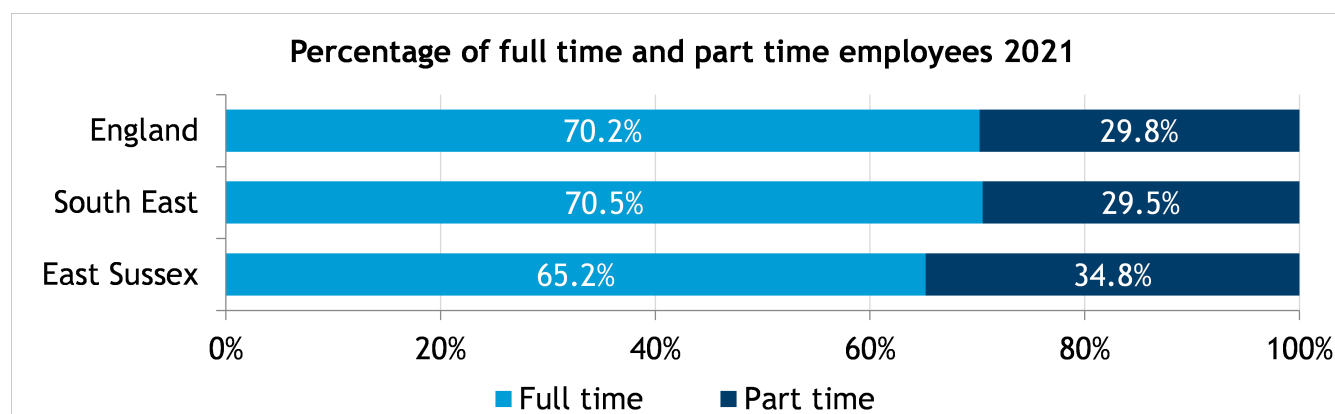
Rother experienced a surge of almost five percentage points since 2022, giving it the highest rate of employment at 80.0%. Meanwhile, Lewes had the lowest at 67.0% following a dip of almost nine percentage points compared to the previous year. However, The Annual Population Survey (APS) can have very small sample sizes at district and borough levels which can result in the data changing significantly year on year and having very broad confidence intervals. The confidence intervals have been added to the chart above, the actual figure may fall anywhere between the lower and higher level.



Sources: Annual National Survey/Labour Force Survey, NOMIS/ONS

Note: The Annual Population Survey (APS) can have very small sample sizes at district and borough levels which can result in the data changing significantly year on year and having very broad confidence intervals. The confidence intervals have been added to the chart above, the actual figure may fall anywhere between the lower and higher level.

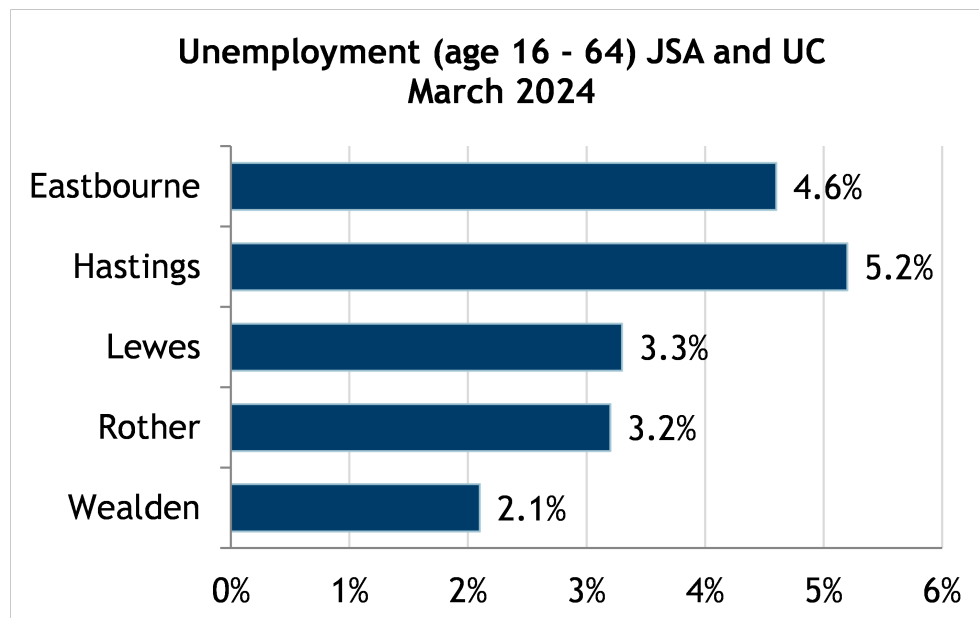
A higher proportion of people work part time in East Sussex (34.8%) than in the South East (29.5%) or England (29.8%).



Sources: Census 2021

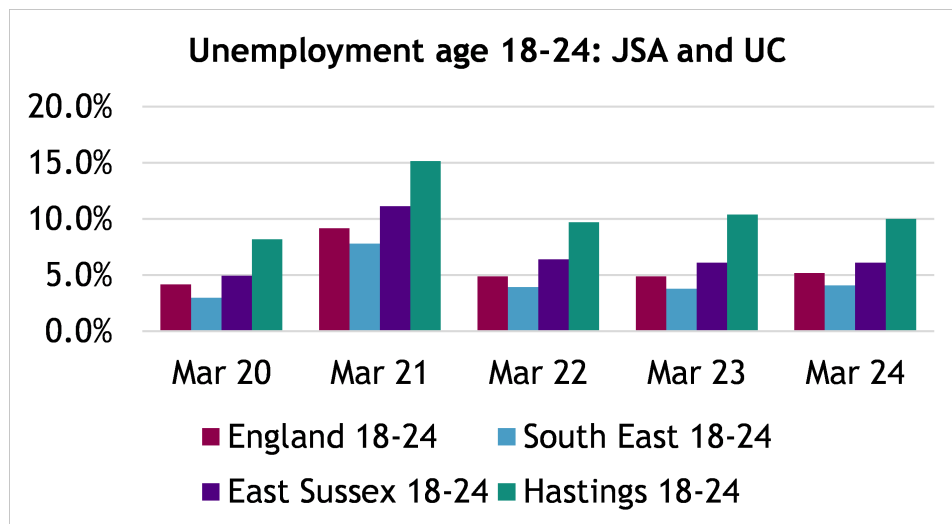
Unemployment

The unemployment rate for March 2024 was 3.5% for East Sussex, lower than the national average of 3.9%, but above the regional average of 3.0%. Hastings had the highest rate of the districts and boroughs at 5.2%.

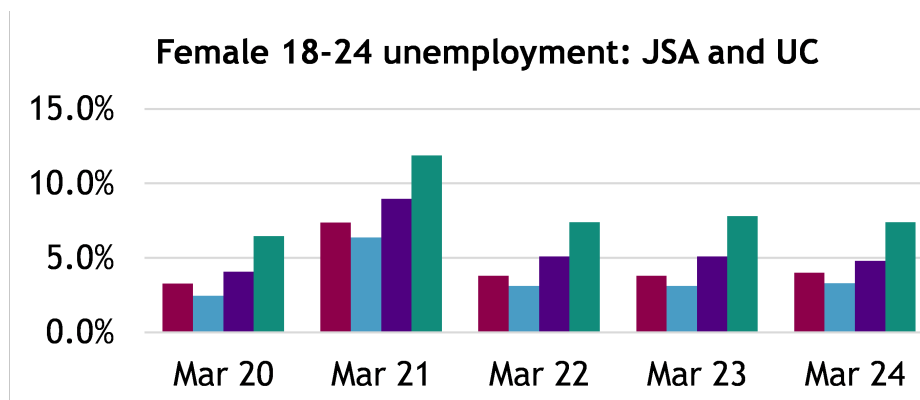


Source: Office for National Statistics/NOMIS - claimants of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) or Universal Credit (UC) who are searching for work age 16 - 64

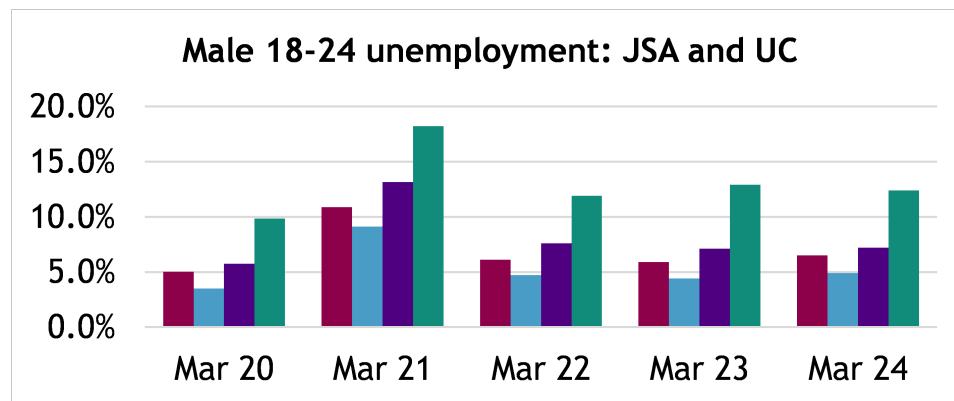
Youth unemployment (age 18-24) is normally higher than the overall rate and this trend is greater at time of economic stress. In March 2023 youth unemployment for East Sussex was 6.1%, whilst the England rate was 4.9%. Hastings had the highest district and borough rate at 10.4%. Rates in East Sussex stayed the same for March 2024 at 6.1%, compared to an increase nationally to 5.2%. Youth unemployment in Hastings fell but remained higher than the county average at 10.0%.



Female unemployment is usually lower than male unemployment. For example, in March 2024 female youth unemployment for Hastings was 7.4%, while the male rate was 12.4%.



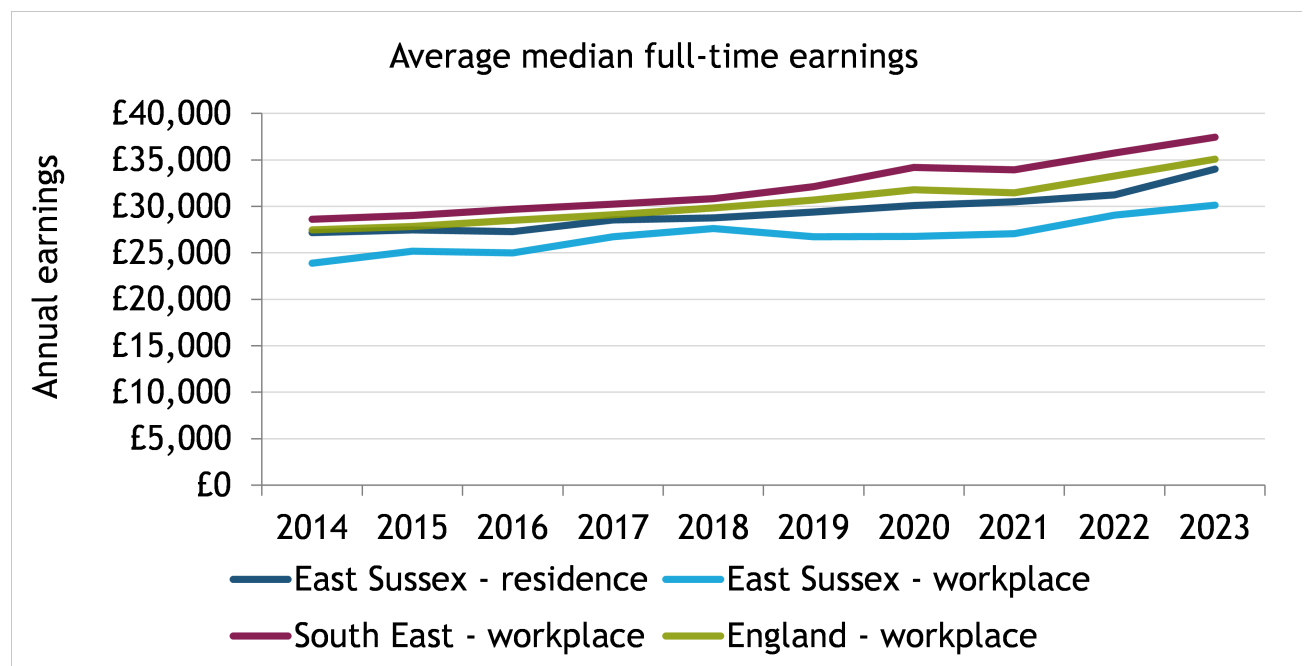
Males are more likely to be economically active, which causes the unemployment rate to result in relatively more unemployed males than the same rate for females. 590 young people were unemployed in Hastings in March 2024, 210 were female and 380 were male.



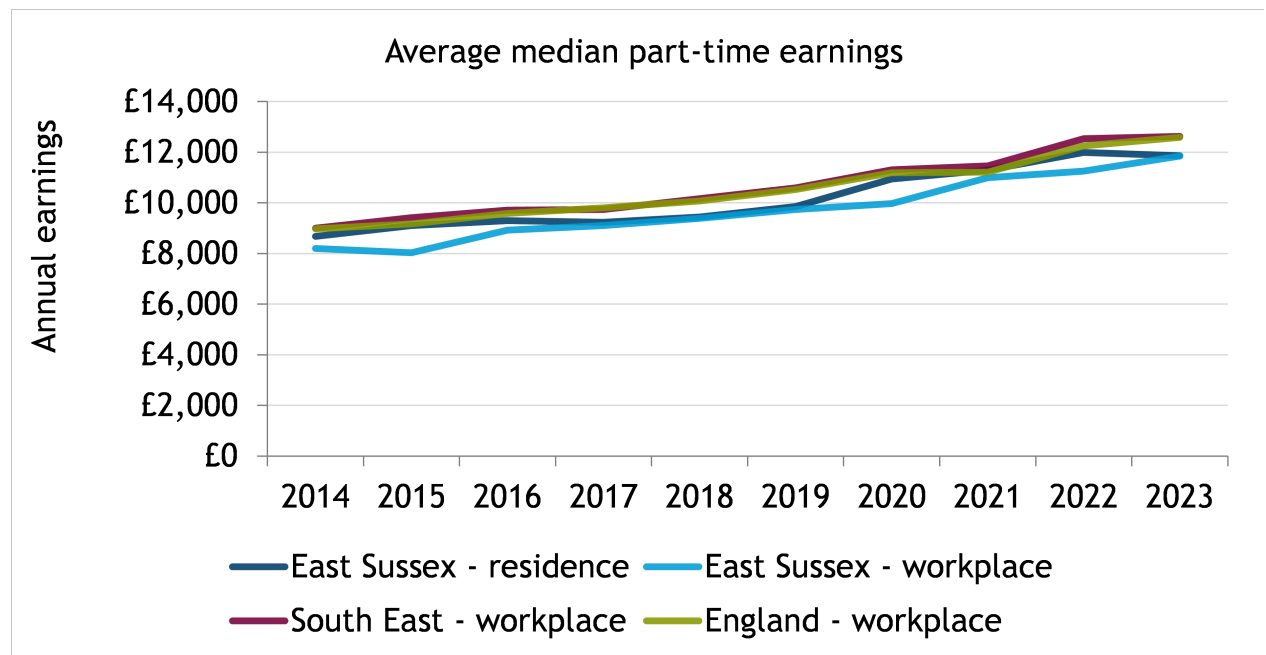
Source all: Office for National Statistics/NOMIS

Earnings

East Sussex residence based earnings increased for full-time employees in 2023, and are now closer to the England average. However, earnings for residence based part-time employees fell in 2023 and are now at a similar level to workplace based employees in the county, and below the average earnings for England and the South East. Residence based earnings are those of people living within East Sussex, some of whom have workplaces outside East Sussex; workplace earnings are those of people whose workplace is within East Sussex.



Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Office for National Statistics



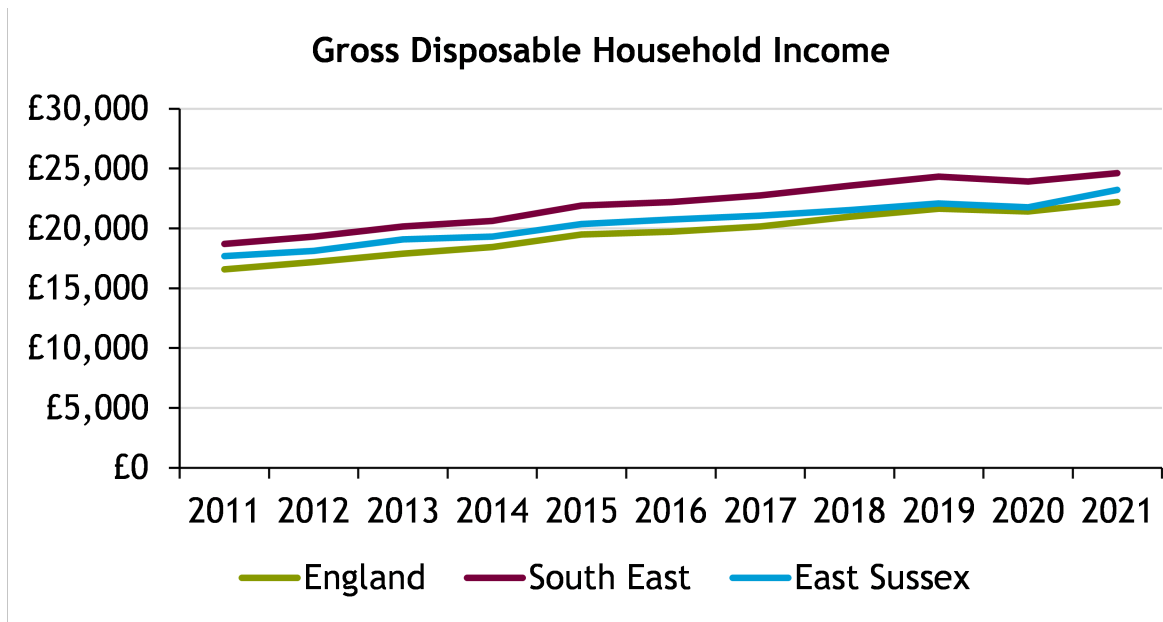
Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Office for National Statistics.

Note: The ASHE can have very broad confidence intervals, so changes in data year on year may not be reflective of a real change in earnings.

Gross Disposable Household Income

Gross disposable household income in 2021 was close to the average in the South East, and slightly above the England rate. There is a time lag with the release of this data so it is unclear how the inflationary rises over the last few years have

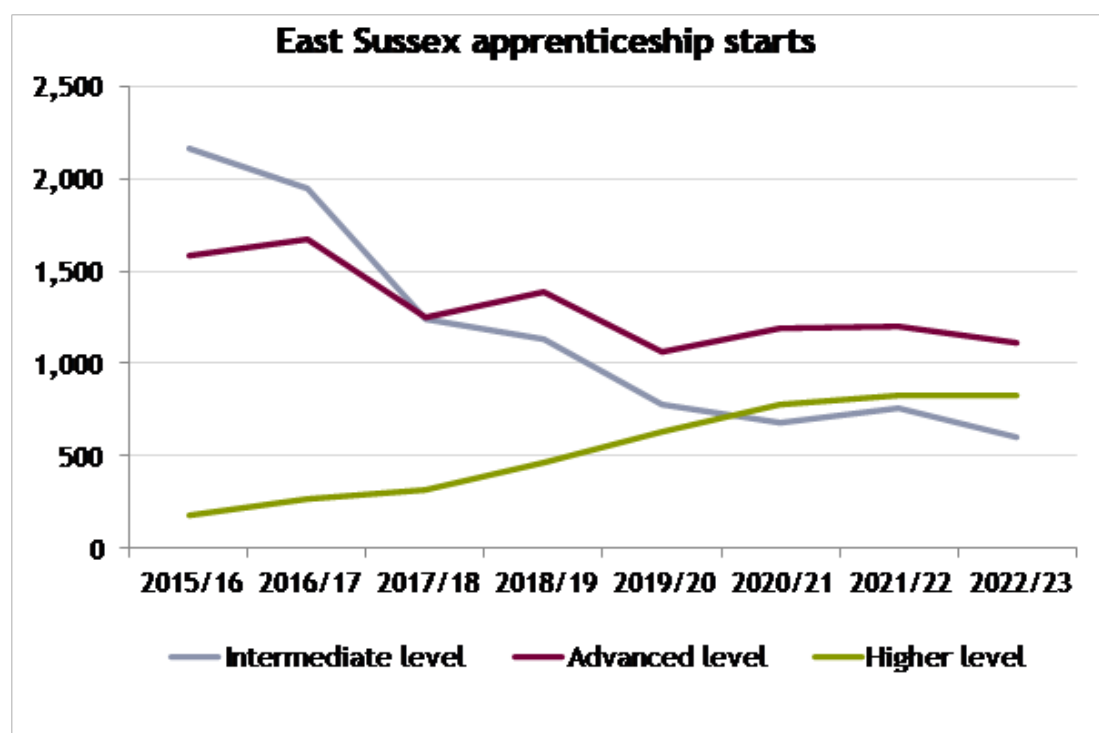
affected current levels of gross disposal household income.



Source: Office for National Statistics

Skills

There were 16,260 apprenticeship starts in East Sussex between 2017 and 2023. Apprenticeship starts in East Sussex in 2022/23 were down 9% on the previous year at 2,540. There were 830 higher level apprenticeship starts in 2022/23, which was the same level as the previous year.



Source: Department for Education further education data library, apprenticeships

Qualification levels across the county are broadly in line with the regional and national averages. Both Lewes and Wealden have a significantly higher proportion of better qualified people compared to the rest of districts and boroughs in the county.

	Qualifications of working age population 2021 (16-64)					
	None	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4+	Other
Eastbourne	12.2%	11.6%	16.7%	20.6%	32.2%	6.7%
Hastings	14.1%	11.9%	17.4%	19.8%	30.6%	6.2%
Lewes	9.2%	10.7%	16.5%	20.4%	37.4%	5.7%
Rother	11.0%	11.7%	17.5%	21.1%	32.6%	6.1%
Wealden	8.1%	10.5%	17.9%	22.1%	35.3%	6.0%
East Sussex	10.6%	11.2%	17.2%	21.0%	33.8%	6.1%
SE region	10.0%	9.9%	15.3%	20.1%	38.8%	5.9%
England	12.4%	9.9%	14.8%	19.5%	37.1%	6.3%

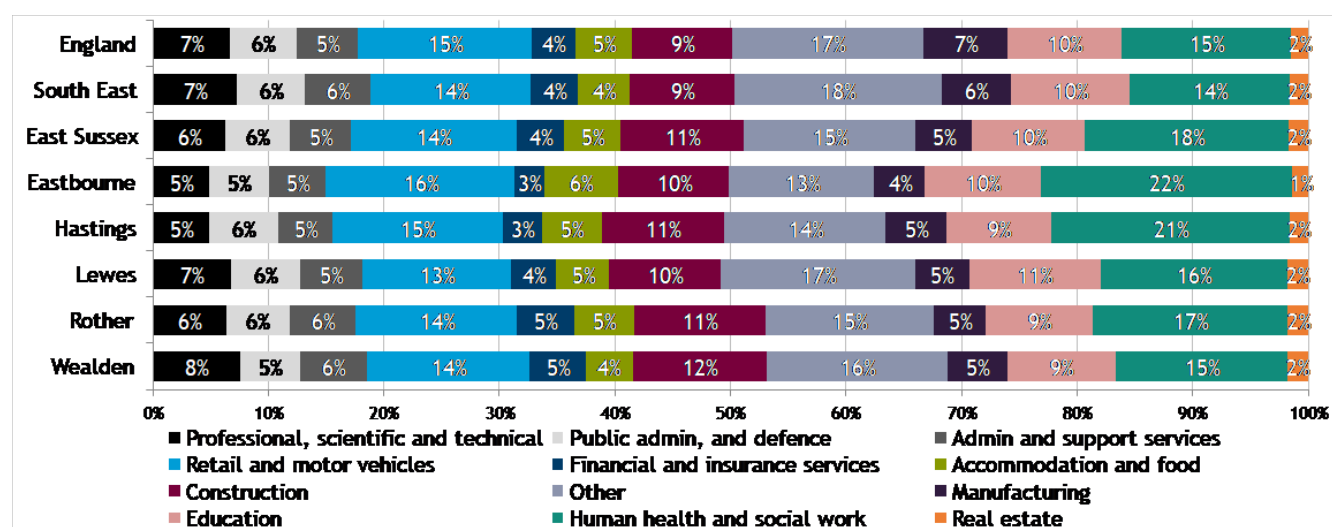
Source: Census 2021

Employment by industry

The proportion of people in East Sussex employed in different industries is broadly

State of the County 2024: Focus on East Sussex

similar to the national picture. We have a higher proportion of people employed in human health and social work and a lower proportion employed in professional, scientific and technical, and manufacturing than the national average. However, employment by industry varies significantly across the county. It is interesting to note that the proportion of people employed within the Accommodation and Food industry reduced by half in Rother compared to 2020 (from 10% to 5%), possibly linked to the impacts of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic.

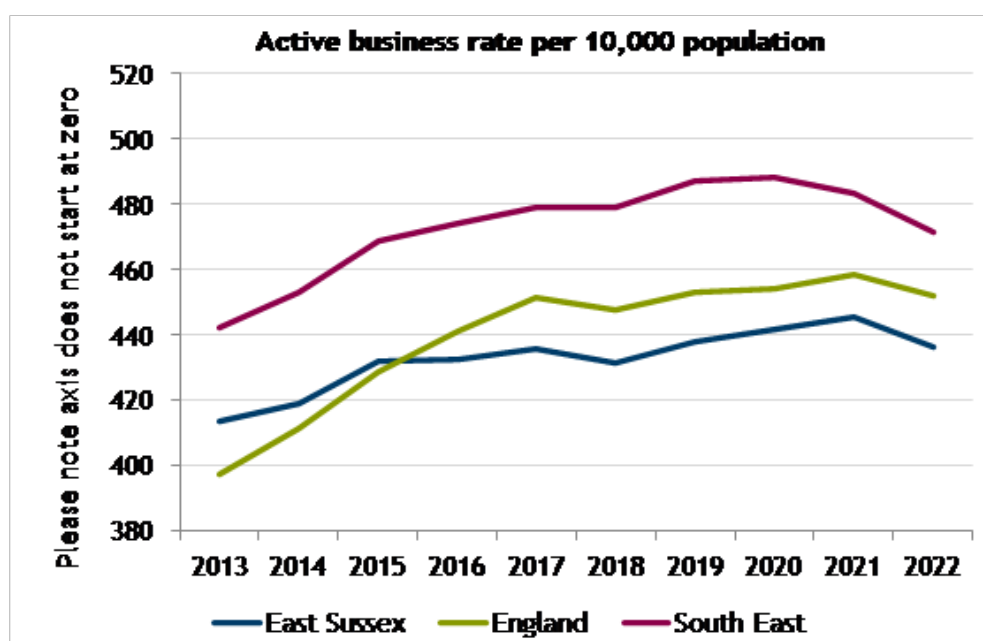
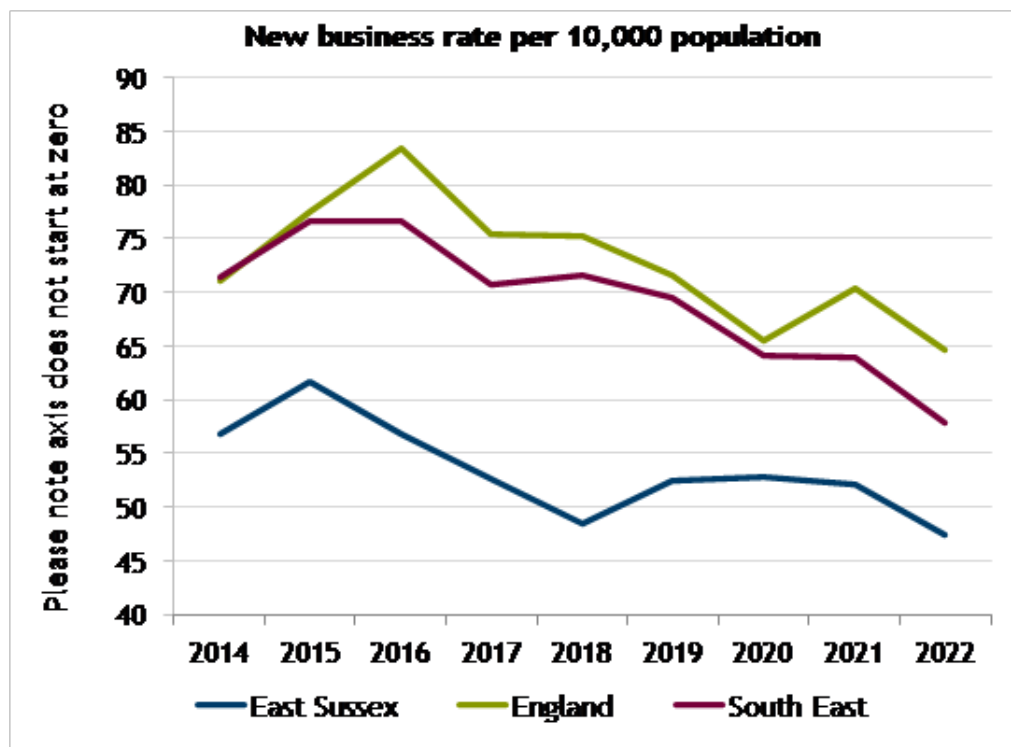


Other includes- Arts, Entertainment and other; Agriculture energy and water, Transportation and storage; and Information and communication.

Source: Census 2021

Businesses

The latest data we have for businesses is for 2022 when the economy was still affected by the impact of the pandemic and there were significant increases in the rate of inflation which will have affected both decisions to start new businesses and business survival rates. In 2022 in East Sussex there were 2,185 business starts and 2,335 business closures. The East Sussex new business registration rate per 10,000 people decreased between 2021 and 2022 to 47.5. The highest rate was in Wealden at 53.3, whilst the lowest was in Rother at 42.3.



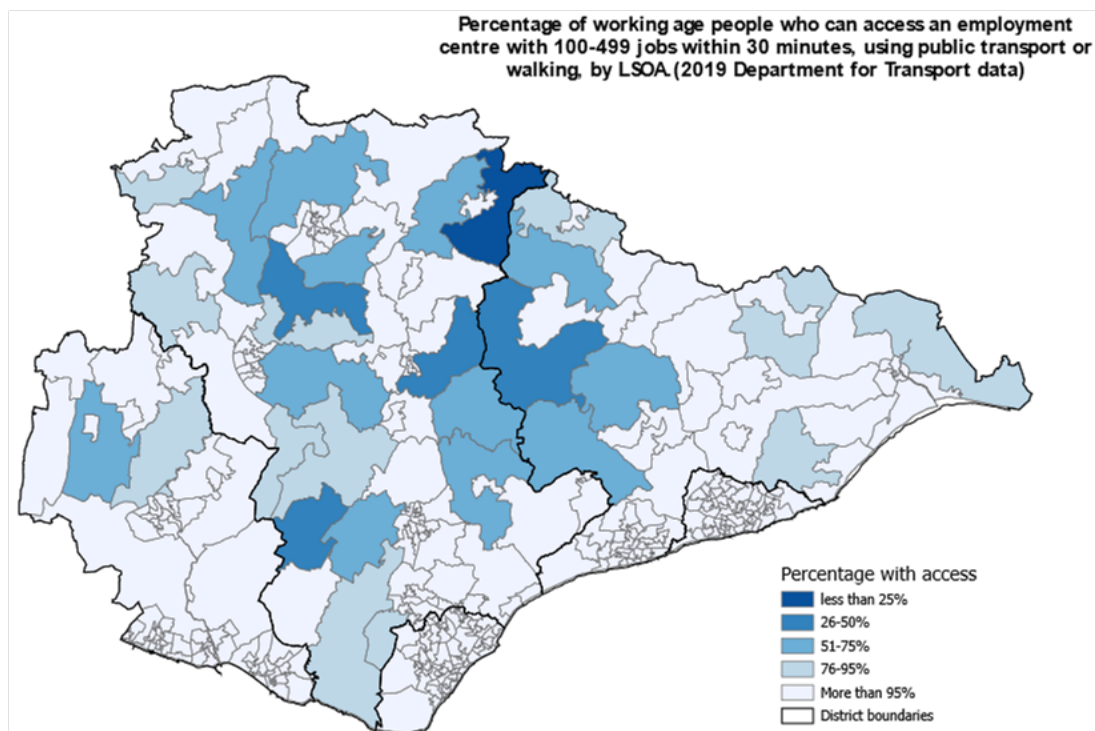
Source for all: Office for National Statistics Business Demography

Infrastructure

The latest Department for Transport data from 2019 shows there was good access to services by car across the county. However, accessing services by public transport or walking can be more challenging in rural areas.

State of the County 2024: Focus on East Sussex

Access to employment centres (100-499 jobs) within 30 minutes by public transport/walking.



Source: Department for Transport

This table details the projects which will improve the infrastructure in East Sussex in the coming years.

Key		
Local Growth Fund		Other Funds
Area	Project	Value
Countywide	Local Transport Improvements	£20.5m
Countywide	Developing EV infrastructure provision across the county	£4.4m

Key		
Local Growth Fund		Other Funds
Area	Project	Value
Countywide	Broadband - Superfast coverage (>30 Mbps) 99% Ultrafast coverage (>100Mbps) 68% Building Digital UK (BDUK) has awarded a contract for East & West Sussex, Brighton & Hove, to Cityfibre as part of their Project Gigabit programme. Details tbc.	£100m (please note this is for Sussex overall, not just East Sussex)
Countywide	East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan -Bus priority measures in Eastbourne, Newhaven and Peacehaven	£18.5m
Countywide	A259 Major Road Network South Coast Corridor Package	£28m
Countywide	Exceat Bridge Levelling Up Fund Round 1	£7.9m
Countywide	Potential A27 offline solution	N/A
Countywide	A22 Major Road Network Junction Improvement Package	£46.5m
Countywide	Centres of Digital Excellence across Sussex	£2.3m
Countywide	Greener Sussex land management & Decarbonisation Academies	£7.2m
Bexhill	North Bexhill Access Road	£18.6m
Bexhill	Bexhill Enterprise Park North	£1.9m
Bexhill	Bexhill Enterprise Park Development	£46.0m
Eastbourne	Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package (Terminus Road)	£11.3m
Eastbourne	Eastbourne and South Wealden walking and cycling package	£6.6m
Eastbourne	Hailsham, Polegate and Eastbourne Movement and Access Corridor	£2.1m

Key		
Local Growth Fund		Other Funds
Area	Project	Value
Eastbourne	Levelling Up Fund (including £4.7m 'Victoria Place' pedestrianisation project)	£19.9m
Eastbourne	Long Term Plan for Towns (over ten years)	£20m
Hastings	Bexhill and Hastings Movement and Access Package	£9.0m
Hastings	Potential HS1 rail extension (also to Bexhill and Eastbourne)	N/A
Hastings	Town Deal (includes the £10m Hastings Green Connections public realm project)	£24.3m
Hastings	Long Term Plan for Towns (over ten years)	£20m
Hastings	Levelling Up Partnership (LUP) (including £2.5m for Queensway Gateway Road infrastructure)	£20m
Lewes	North Street Quarter	N/A
Newhaven	Future High Streets	£5.0m
Newhaven	Town Deal	£19.3m
Newhaven	Levelling Up Fund	£12.7m
Rother	Levelling Up Fund	£19.2m
Rother	Long Term Plan for Towns (over ten years)	£20m
Rother	Levelling Up Partnership (LUP)	£20m
Uckfield	Bus station improvements	£0.7m

N/A = Not Allocated at present

Broadband

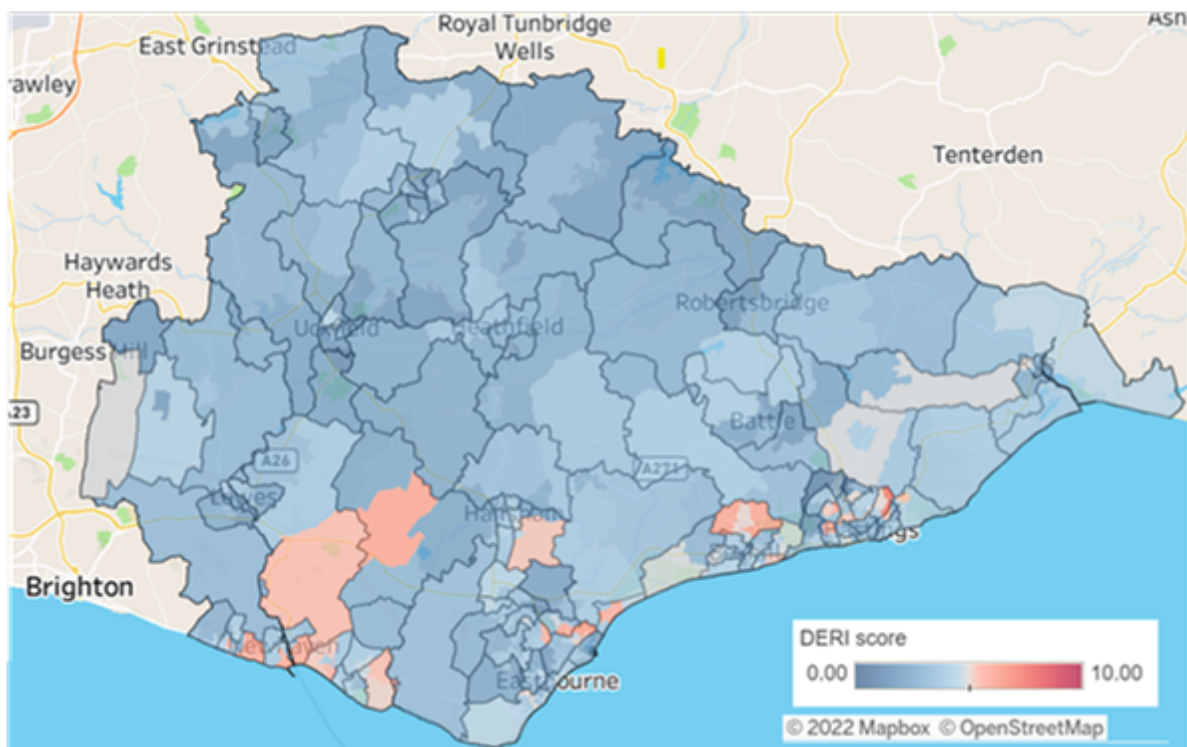
Over 99% of East Sussex premises had access to superfast broadband in 2023, with 68.8% having access to Gigabit capable broadband. 0.42% of properties have less than the Legal Universal Service Obligation (at least 10Mbps).

Digital Inclusion

As more businesses and services use digital channels to engage with residents those

people who are digitally excluded are likely to face increasing challenges. Access to broadband is one part of being able to access digital services. People also need to have the necessary skills and confidence to use digital services, as well as being able to afford the devices and data connections needed for these.

A digital exclusion risk index has been developed by the Greater Manchester Office of Data Analytics that shows where people at higher risk of digital exclusion live. This index is based on a range of data including data on population, relative deprivation and broadband coverage. Areas where people have a higher risk of digital exclusion have a higher score, for East Sussex the areas with the highest risk of digital exclusion scores are in the south of the county. It should be noted that the index includes the proportion of population aged over 65 as one of the risk factors due to national research indicating lower digital skill levels in this age group. We have a large population of over 65s in East Sussex, many of whom will have strong digital skills.



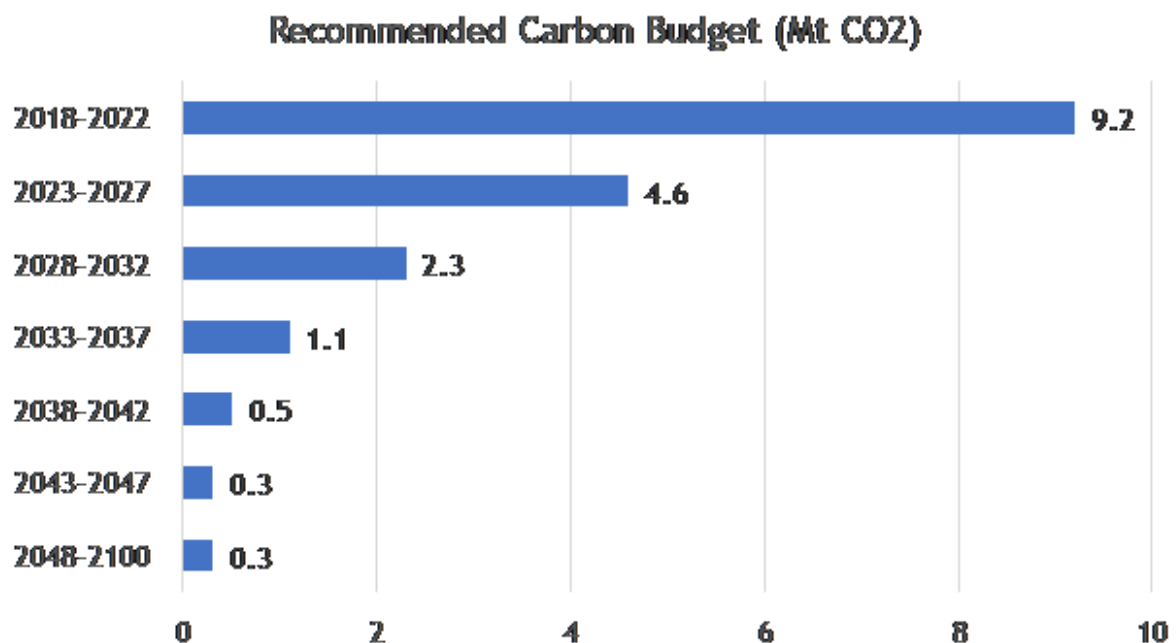
Source: Digital Exclusion Risk Index (Greater Manchester Office of Data Analytics)

Environment

The Cumulative CO_{2e} emissions budget

Emissions of the main greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide (CO₂), in East Sussex fell by 42% between 2005 and 2021, while the population grew by about 8%. This excludes emissions that occur outside the area due to demand for goods and services that are consumed in the county. This reduction is similar to the decrease seen nationally and driven by the same changes (e.g. the switch from coal to gas and renewables to generate electricity).

The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change has calculated the emissions reductions necessary for East Sussex (and other local authority areas) to make a fair contribution towards keeping the increase in global average temperature below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This requires cutting emissions from the county area by an average of about 13% per year, which roughly equates to halving total emissions every 5 years.

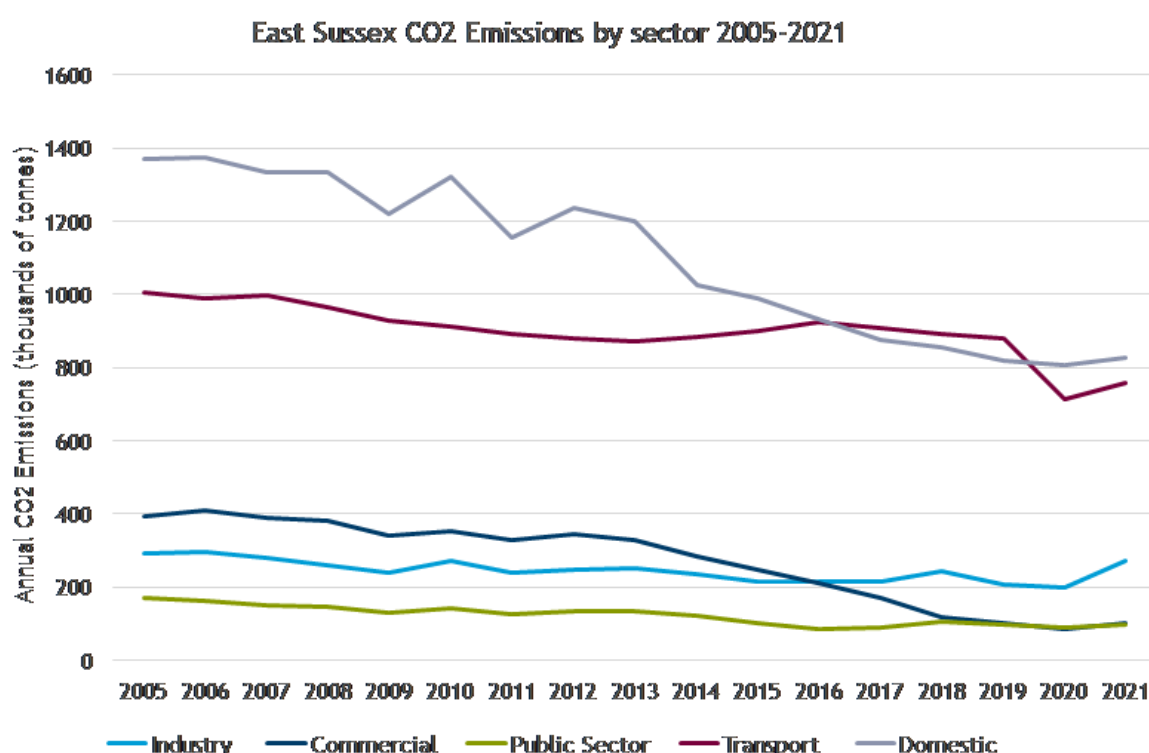


Source: Tyndall Centre for Climate Change, 2022.

Emissions from domestic properties and transport are the greatest contributors to

overall emissions across the county. Domestic emissions fell by 40% between 2005 and 2021. Transport emissions also fell, but at a slower pace. Emissions from all sectors, but especially transport, fell sharply in 2020 due to pandemic impacts, before rebounding in 2021. 2021 also saw a sudden increase in industrial emissions in the Rother district - this may be an error in the data, as we have not been able to match this with any recorded increase in industrial activity.

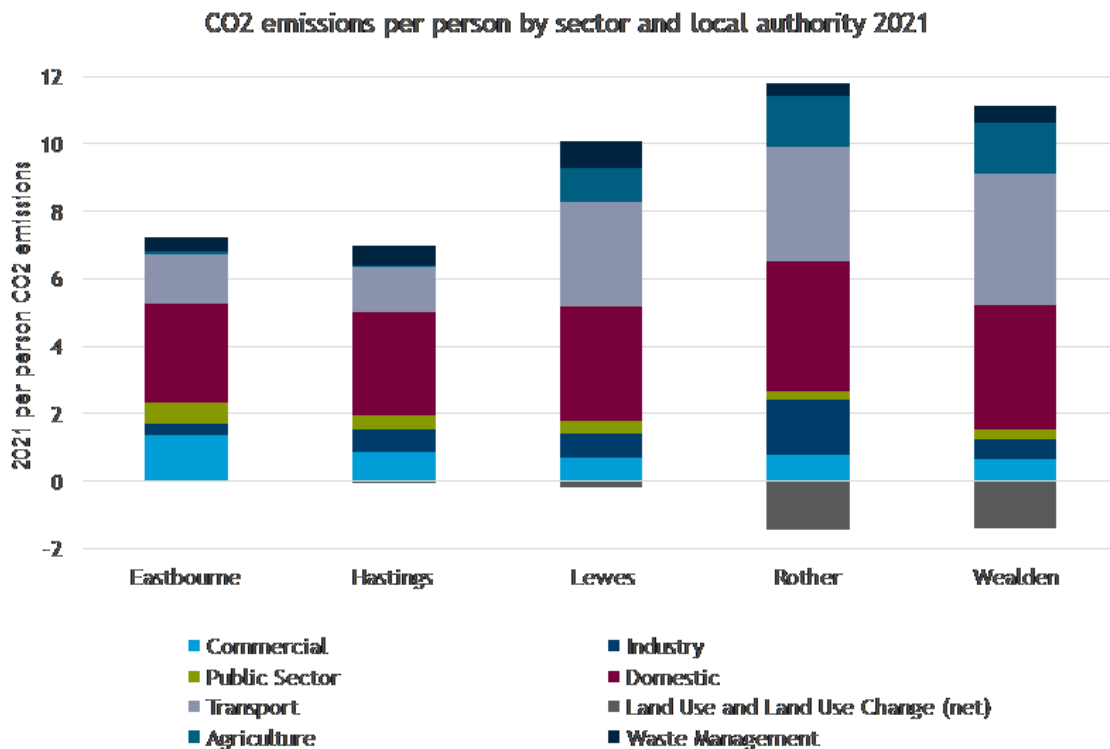
Land use (and land use changes) both absorb and emit carbon, however on an overall (net) basis carbon emissions from land use in East Sussex are negative. Carbon is absorbed by forests and grasslands, while carbon losses occur on existing cropland and when natural land (e.g. grassland) is converted to croplands or settlements. Lewes, Rother and Wealden all have significant (net) negative land use emissions, whilst land use emissions in the urban boroughs of Eastbourne and Hastings are negligible.



Source: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Domestic emissions make up a larger share of emissions in the county's two urban areas - Eastbourne and Hastings - than the three more rural areas, whilst transport emissions are lower. This is due to the smaller road networks in the urban areas,

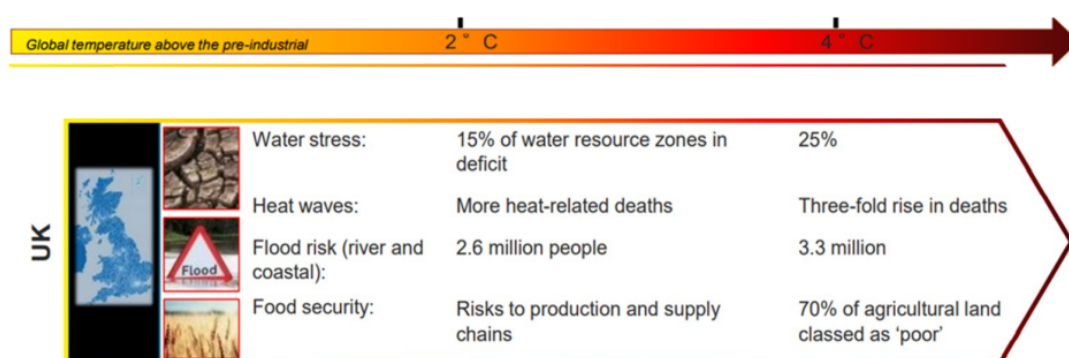
and smaller, higher density housing. Total per capita domestic emissions are higher in the rural areas as houses tend to be larger, and many properties use higher carbon forms of heating such as oil.



Source: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Climate adaptation

Even if global warming can be limited to 1.5°C, significant additional investment will be needed in measures to adapt to the effects of climate change that are already locked in due to past emissions of greenhouse gases.

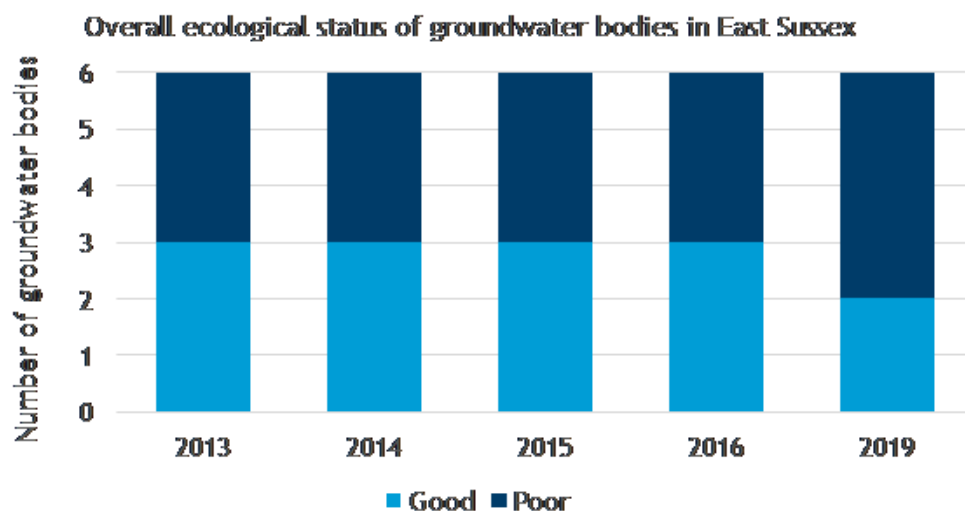


Source: Met Office

UK Met Office predictions of the effects of climate change in East Sussex include hotter and drier summers, milder and wetter winters, more droughts, more flooding, and more intense and frequent storms. This is predicted to lead to an increase in heat-related deaths particularly amongst the elderly, damage to essential infrastructure, increased cost of food, disruption to supply chains and service provision, greater coastal erosion, and impact on coastal habitats.

Water quality

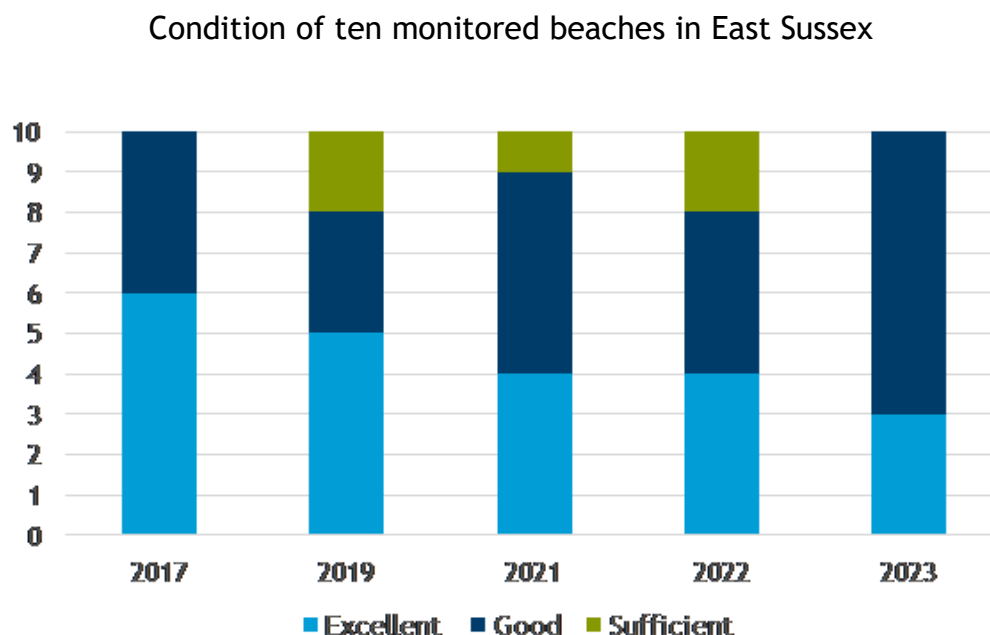
Water pollution is mostly caused by land management practices such as agricultural run-off, wastewater treatment plants, and urban and highway run-off. The most recent data available for groundwater bodies is for 2019. The quality of water bodies in East Sussex has deteriorated slightly in recent years, with the number of groundwater bodies rated as good reduced from three to two between 2016 and 2019. The quality of some ground waters, which provide about 70% of drinking water, have deteriorated due to rising nitrate levels, mostly due to historic farming practices.



Source: Environment Agency

The quality of bathing waters has deteriorated in recent years. Between 2017 and 2023, the number of monitored beaches rated 'excellent' fell from six to three,

although in 2023 no bathing waters were rated below ‘good’.



Source: Environment Agency

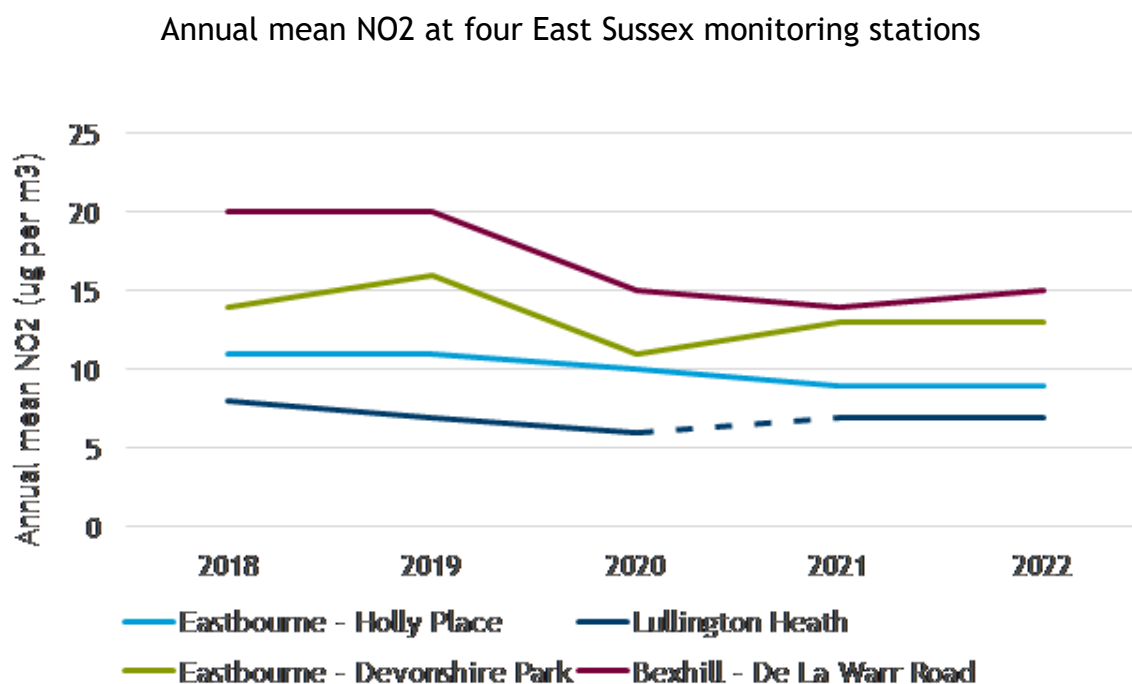
Air quality

Air quality has improved considerably across most of the UK over the last 30 years. However, up to 36,000 deaths per year in the UK are still attributable to exposure to outdoor air pollution (Public Health England, 2017). This makes air pollution the top environmental risk to human health in the UK, and the fourth greatest threat to public health after cancer, heart disease and obesity. The concentration of pollutants in the air is determined by the emission of air pollutants and factors such as building layout and weather conditions.

In East Sussex, the three main pollutants of concern for health are nitrogen dioxide, particulates and ozone. These are monitored by a small number of automatic monitoring stations in the county and the data are published on the Sussex Air website. The latest available data are from 2022.

Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)

The main sources of NO₂ are road vehicles and domestic combustion. In 2022 the levels of NO₂ monitored at all sites in East Sussex were compliant with the short and long term health-based national air quality strategy objectives. Annual mean NO₂ has trended downwards over the past 5 years, largely due to effective controls on newer road vehicles.



Note that no annual mean was available for Lullington Heath in 2021

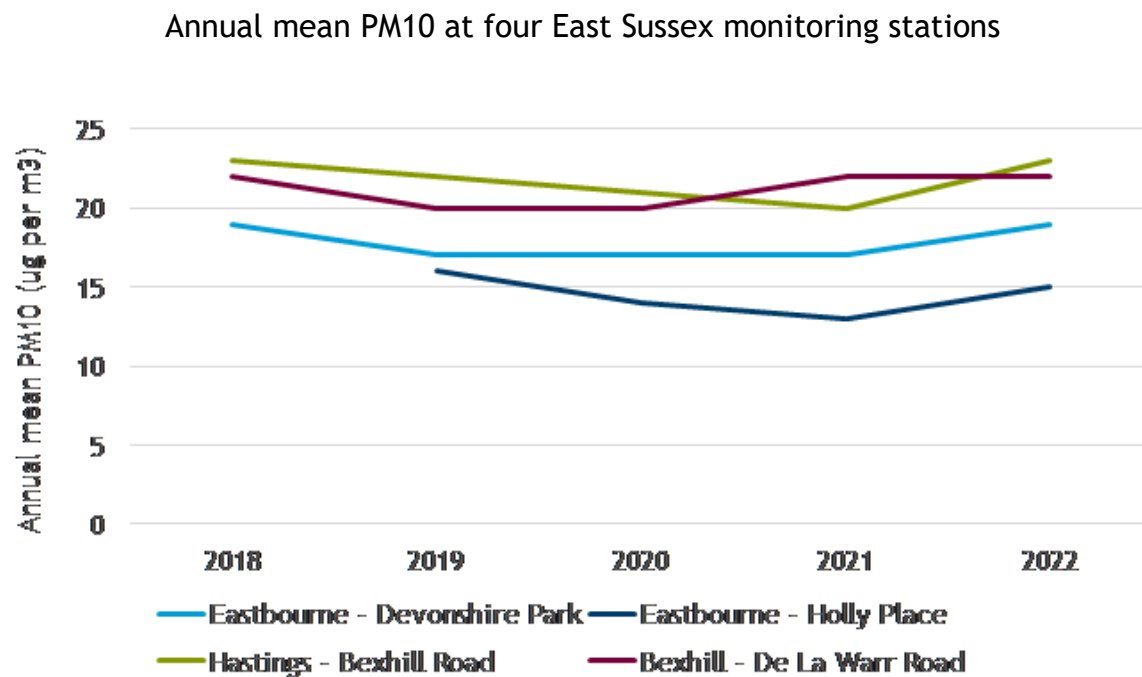
Source: ESCC Communities, Economy and Transport

Particulate matter

Particulate matter is everything in the air that is not a gas and so consists of a wide range of chemical compounds and materials. The main sources of particulates are road vehicles and solid fuel combustion, notably wood. Particulates are measured as either 'PM₁₀' or 'PM_{2.5}', which refers to the diameter of the particulates; the smaller they are the further they can penetrate into the lungs and, potentially, the blood stream. There are no safe levels of particulates.

Figure 6 shows that annual mean PM₁₀ fell at most sites between 2018 and 2021 but rose at 3 sites during 2022. Nevertheless, the levels monitored at all sites in 2022

complied with the health-based national air quality strategy objectives, whilst the PM_{2.5} levels complied with the health-based interim standards required to be met by 2028, as set out in the Environment Act of 2021.

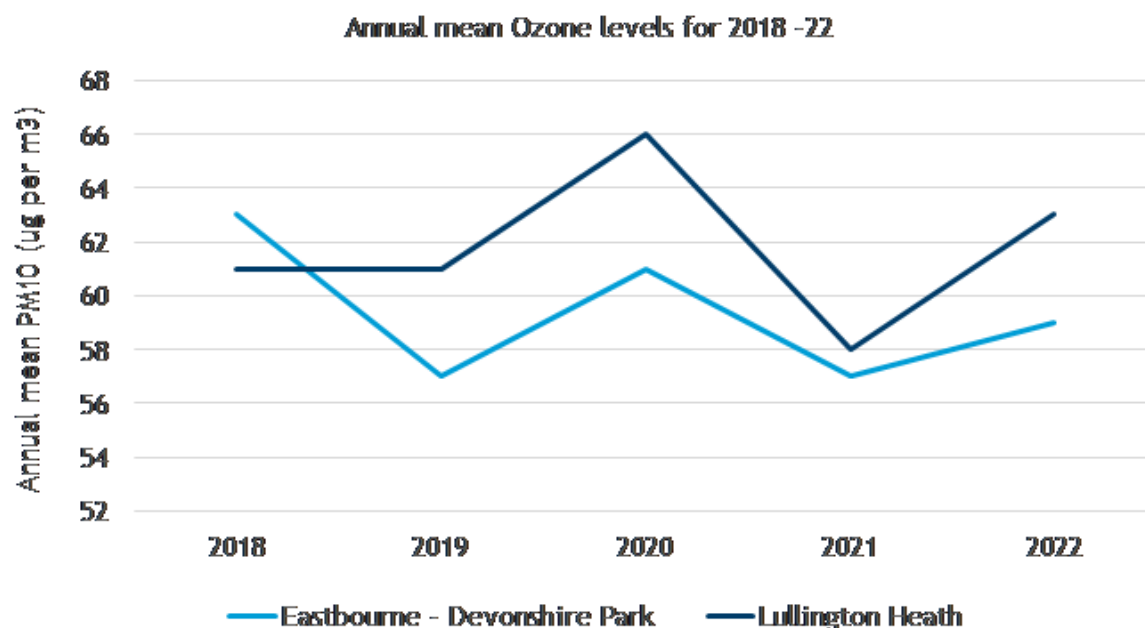


Source: ESCC Communities, Economy and Transport

Ozone (O₃)

Ozone is a secondary pollutant, created when other pollutant gases react in sunlight. It is a long-lived pollutant and tends to affect urban background and rural locations, rather than roadside sites.

Annual mean concentrations of O₃ levels have shown no clear trend between 2018 and 2022, albeit with significant year-on-year variation, largely due to the impact of the weather on O₃ formation.



Source: ESCC Communities, Economy and Transport

The government's Daily Air Quality Index divides air pollution levels into 'low', 'moderate', 'high' and 'very high', based on the potential impact on health. In 2022 there were no days when O₃ levels were measured as being either 'very high' or 'high', and one monitoring site measured 'moderate' levels on 7 days.

Ecology

East Sussex has a rich natural environment, with over two thirds of the county covered by one or more environmental designations. The table below shows how much of the county is covered by which type of designation.

Designated sites and reserves		Area (ha)
International	Ramsar	6,442
	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	7,193
	Special Protection Area (SPA)	5,546
National	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	87,980
	National Nature Reserve (NNR)	321
	National Park	24,365
	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	15,380
	Country Park	692
	Local Geological Site (LGS)	766

Designated sites and reserves		Area (ha)
Local	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	1,435
	Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	9,382
	Notable Road Verge	47
Reserve/ Property	Environmental Stewardship Agreement	20,121
	National Trust	1,841
	RSPB Reserve	284
	Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserve	1,118
	Woodland Trust	484

Source: Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre

Habitats

The key habitats in East Sussex are grassland, arable farmland and woodland.

Habitat	% of East Sussex
Water bodies	1.5%
Arable	22.7%
Grassland	40.0%
Heathland	0.9%
Intertidal	0.7%
Coastal	0.4%
Built up Areas and Gardens	9.1%
Woodland	19.9%
Other	4.8%

Ecology

Protected Areas

Over half of the county is designated for its landscape value, either as part of a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are 65 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), covering about 8% of the county, which recognises and protects their biological and or geological value. About half of these SSSIs are additionally designated as being internationally important for biodiversity, either as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the Habitats Directive, a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the Birds Directive, or a Ramsar site (an internally

important wetland site).

There are 26 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), four National Nature Reserves (NNRs) - considered to be the “jewel in the crown” of SSSIs, and 285 Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs). About a third of the county supports priority habitats, which are identified as being of principal importance for conservation.

About three quarters of the SSSIs are in favourable or favourable recovering condition and the rest have either been partially destroyed or are in unfavourable condition. About half of the LWSs are currently known to be in positive conservation management.

Assets at Risk

The 2019 Sussex Nature Partnership Natural Capital Investment Strategy identifies some priority habitats as being at high risk, because they:

- a) Are not adequately protected under existing mechanisms.
- b) Are fragile or vulnerable and/or already highly fragmented.
- c) May be of particular significance in a Sussex context.
- d) Are irreplaceable or not easily recreated (either on-site or elsewhere) if destroyed.

The priority habitats most at risk in Sussex are:

- Lowland heath - particularly significant in East Sussex, notably at Ashdown Forest, due to small amounts present in the south of England, the fragmentation of the habitat type (especially outside Ashdown Forest) and it provides a range of benefits, notably clean water.
- Mudflats and saltmarsh - these habitats provide a range of benefits yet are under increasing pressure from climate change, development, and construction of hard sea defences. The national picture is one of medium risk, but the East Sussex context (with high levels of coastal squeeze) increases the risk to these habitats and the benefits they provide. There are small amounts at Newhaven Tide Mills, Cuckmere Estuary and Rye Harbour.
- Vegetated shingle - a globally restricted and internationally important

habitat, for which East Sussex is a stronghold in the UK, mostly at Rye Harbour.

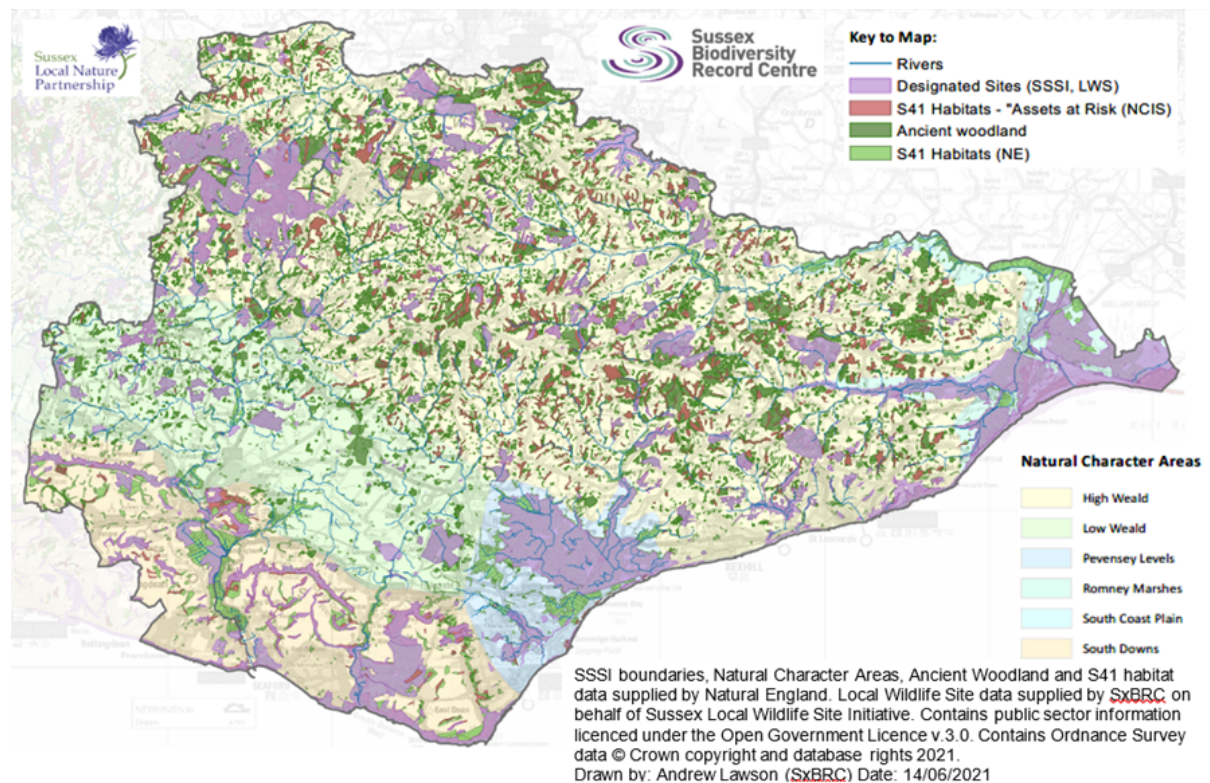
- Reedbed, fen and grazing marsh - small and highly fragmented areas remain in East Sussex, notably at Pevensey, yet they have the potential to provide a wide range of benefits, particularly flood risk mitigation in flood plains and provision of clean water.
- Floodplain woodlands - a fragmented habitat type which plays a very important role in floodplain function.
- Species rich grassland - highly fragmented and those areas outside formal designated areas have little/no protection from further loss. These areas are a priority for loss to development.

Marine Conservation Zones

There are two Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) off East Sussex, with two other offshore sites under consideration. Designated under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, MCZs protect areas that are important to conserve the diversity of national rare, threatened, and representative habitats and species. These are Beachy Head West, which stretches along the coastline from Brighton Marina to Beachy Head, with a gap at Newhaven, and Beachy Head East which contains two marine Sites of Nature Conservation Importance: the Royal Sovereign Shoals and the Horse of Willingdon Reef. This large inshore area runs to Hastings, out to just beyond six nautical miles from the coast at its furthest points.

Nature Recovery Network Mapping

The map below shows the fragmented state of the most important species rich habitats that are to be conserved under section 41 of the National Environment and Rural Communities Act.



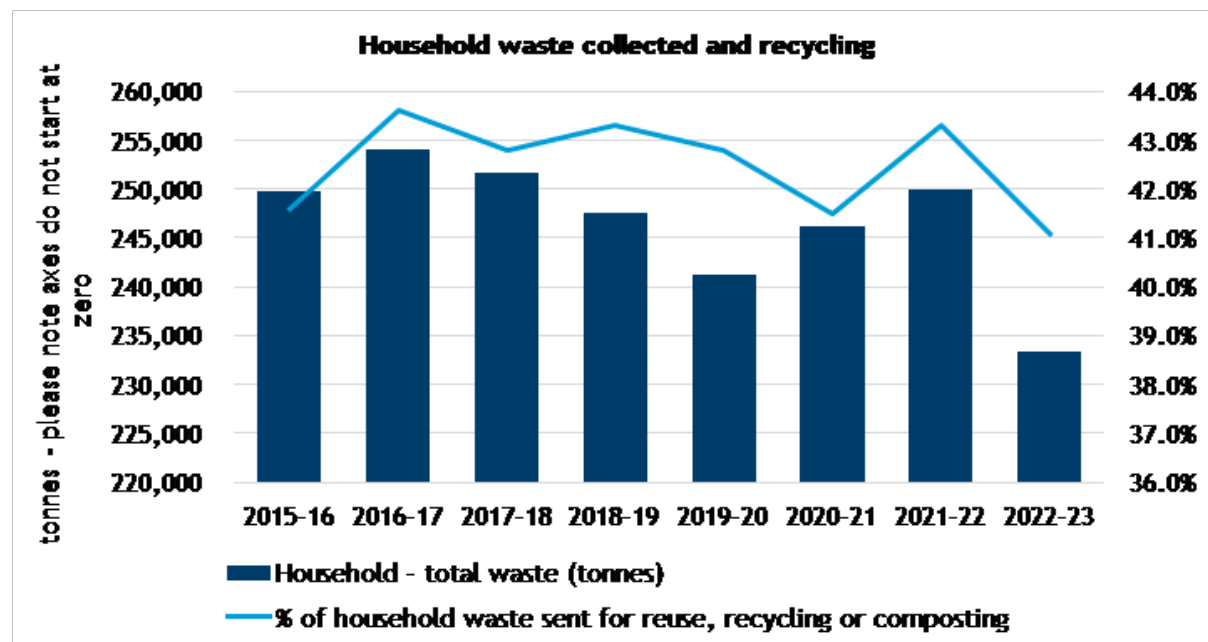
Local Nature Recovery Strategies

The Council has been appointed as the Responsible Authority to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove, under the Environment Act 2021. Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a mandatory new system of spatial strategies for nature. They are designed to work closely alongside other measures in the Act and will help support delivery of mandatory biodiversity net gain, provide a focus for a strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and will underpin a national Nature Recovery Network.

Waste

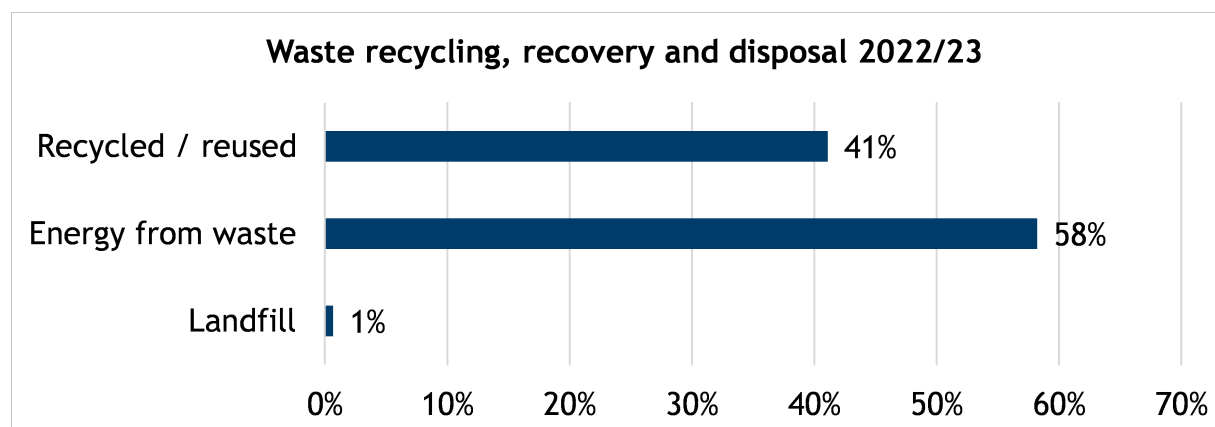
Household waste reduced significantly in 2022/23. This is partly because of increased costs of living resulting in reduced purchasing and reduced waste. Additionally, one of the driest summers in recent times occurred in 2022, leading to a significant drop in green waste.

Chart showing tonnes of household waste collected and percentage of household waste sent for recycling, composting or re-use between 2014-15 and 2021-22



Source: Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

In 2022/23 41% of our waste was reused, recycled or composted. The drop in green waste contributed to the reduction in the rate of waste reused, recycled or composted in 2022/23. 58% of our waste was sent for energy recovery. Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) supplies power for over 25,000 homes. East Sussex sent only 1% of collected waste to landfill in 2022/23. This was the joint fourth lowest of all county councils in the UK.



Source: Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Flooding

Flooding is a natural process that shapes our environment, but it can also pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of communities. Flooding can be caused by major rivers, the sea, groundwater and surface water. Overall flood risk is highest to the south of the county and on river flood plains. The highest risk of surface water flooding is in Eastbourne and Hastings.

Settlement	Residential Properties at Risk
Eastbourne	Greater than 1,000
Seaford	500 to 1,000
Newhaven	50 to 150
Peacehaven	150 to 500
Lewes	50 to 150
Hailsham	150 to 500
Bexhill	500 to 1,000
Battle	50 to 150
Hastings	Greater than 1,000
Rye	Fewer than 50
Heathfield	50 to 150
Crowborough	50 to 150
Uckfield	Fewer than 50
Forest Row	Fewer than 50

Note: A comparison of residential properties at risk from a 1 in 30 year surface water flood event (3% chance in any given year) between 2016-2026 Assessments of Local Flood Risk. Source: ESCC Flood Risk Strategy

Settlement	Non-Residential Properties at Risk
Eastbourne	Greater than 200
Seaford	25 to 50
Newhaven	Fewer than 25
Peacehaven	Fewer than 25
Lewes	Fewer than 25
Hailsham	25 to 50
Bexhill	25 to 50
Battle	Fewer than 25
Hastings	Greater than 200
Rye	Fewer than 25
Heathfield	Fewer than 25
Crowborough	Fewer than 25
Uckfield	Fewer than 25
Forest Row	Fewer than 25

Note: A comparison of non-residential properties at risk from a 1 in 30 year surface water flood event (3% chance in any given year) between 2016-2026 Assessments of Local Flood Risk. Source: ESCC Flood Risk Strategy.

Civil Society

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector and volunteering

We have a diverse range of VCSE organisations working at every level, neighbourhood, town/parish, and district/borough, there are over 3,000 not-for-profit groups and organisations providing activities and support to residents and communities that bring about positive change and improve people's lives.

Some of the organisations the Council funded or supported during 2023:



Source: East Sussex Adult Social Care and Health department

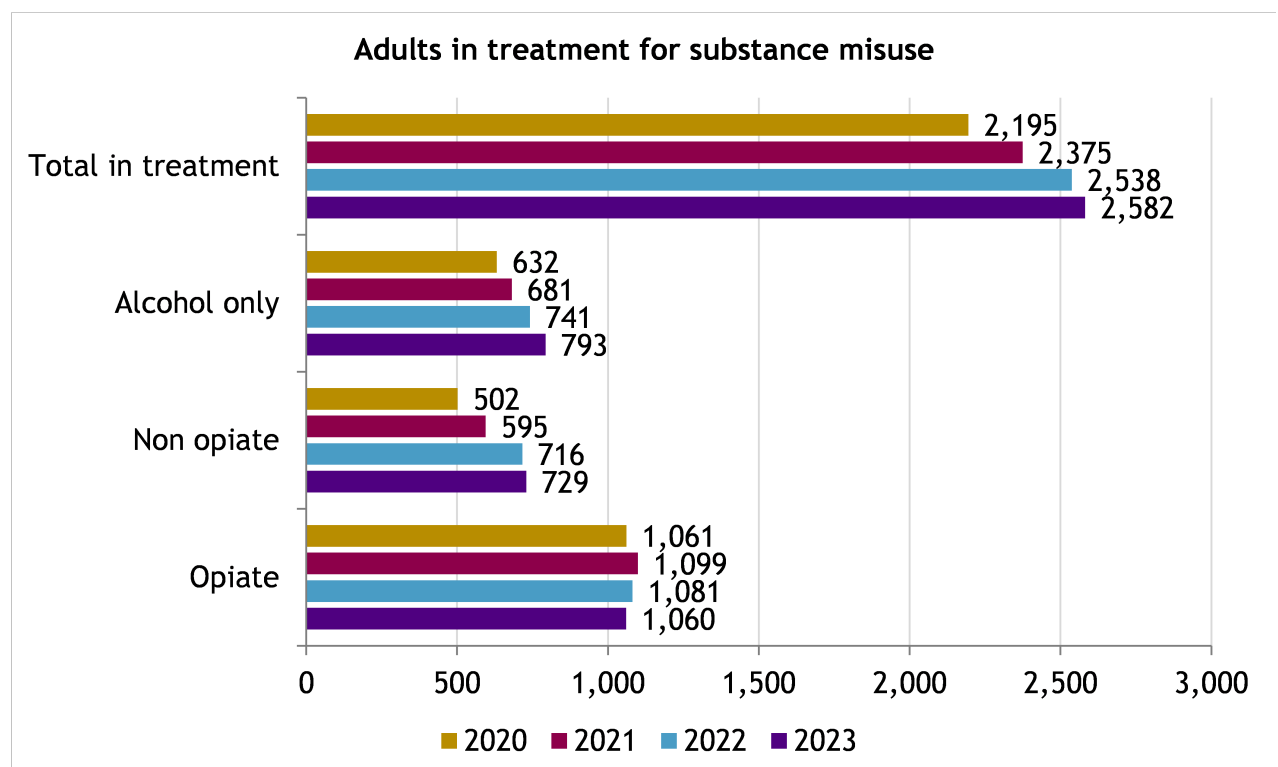
A quarter of the population volunteer at least once a month in East Sussex, giving

their time to local causes, groups, and communities that aim to make communities a better place where helping people themselves is part of everyday life. The sense of community that volunteering brings enables people to feel connected and that they are making a positive difference.

Community Safety

Drug and alcohol-related harm

The number of East Sussex adults in substance misuse treatment in 2023 increased by 1.7% to 2,582, compared to 2022. In England there was an increase of 6.9%. Those in treatment for non-opiate use increased by 1.8% between 2022 and 2023. This is a much smaller increase than seen in earlier years. Opiate users as a proportion of all those in treatment has decreased year-on-year since 2020, being 41% of those in treatment in East Sussex in 2023. Between 2022 and 2023 there was a decrease of 1.9% in East Sussex, compared to a slight decrease in England of 0.06%. The number of people in treatment for alcohol use in East Sussex has increased by 25% between 2020 and 2023, with a 7% increase between 2022 and 2023. Between 2020 and 2023 there was a 23% increase across England in this group.



Source: National Drug Treatment Monitoring System

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive appropriate support. Nationally in 2023, the NRM received 17,004 referrals of potential victims of modern slavery. This is similar to 2022 when there were 16,921 referrals; nevertheless 2023 still represents the highest annual number since the NRM began in 2009. Of all referrals nationally, 76% (12,903) were for males which is down from 78% (13,290) the previous year, and 24% (4,088) for females which is the highest on record. 44% (7,342) of referrals were for children, which is the highest on record, and 51% (8,662) were for adults, which is lower than the previous year. The age category of 6% (950) is unknown. The most common nationality referred was UK (25%), the second was Albanian (24%) and the third was Vietnamese (6%).

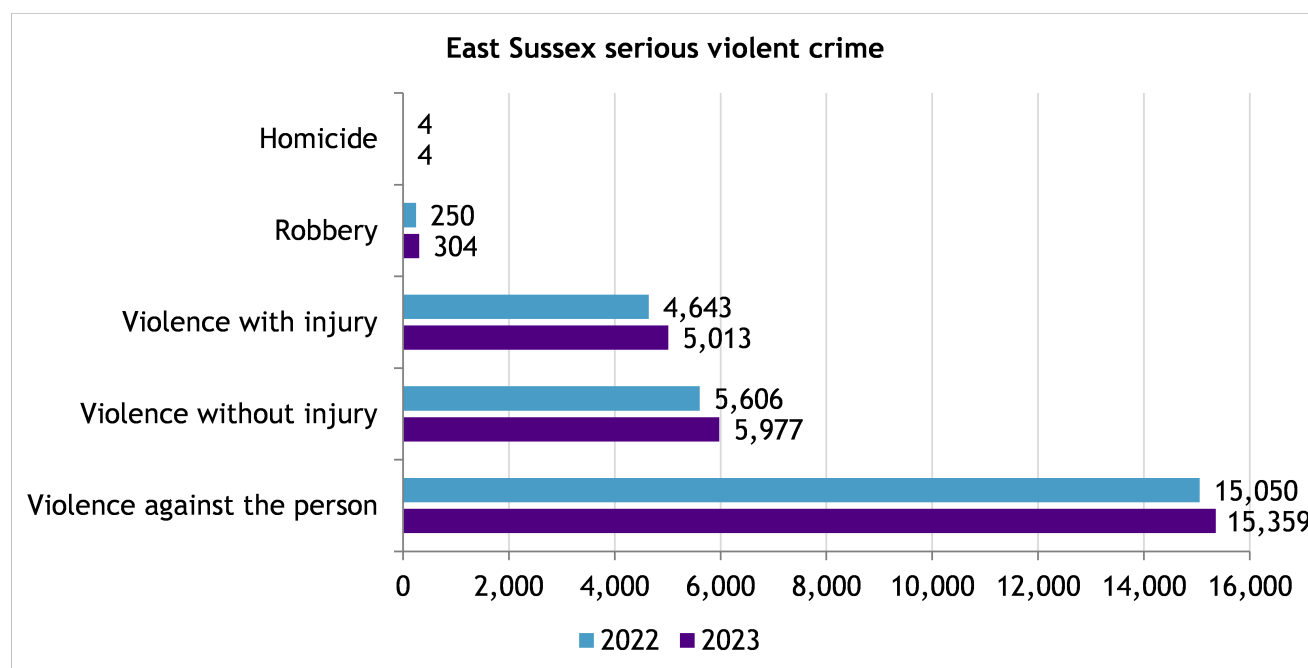
In East Sussex in 2023, 5 adults and 24 children who were potential victims of modern slavery and human trafficking were referred by the local authority through the NRM. This compares to 2 adults and 9 children in 2022. (Source: National Referral Mechanism statistics)

Sussex Police made 69 NRM referrals in East Sussex during 2023, this compares to 63 for 2022. (Source: Sussex Police)

Serious Violence

Serious violence is one of the areas that is under increasing national scrutiny. We have an active focus on this through our partnership working, however rates of serious violence in East Sussex are low.

Between 2022 to 2023 there was an increase in serious violent crime in East Sussex. The largest increase has been in robbery with a 22% increase. Violence with injury increased by 8%; violence without injury increased by 7% and violence against the person increased by 2%. The number of homicides has remained the same.



Source: CSP Report December 2023, Sussex Police

Child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation

Between April 2023 and March 2024, 68 East Sussex children were experiencing either criminal or sexual exploitation or both. This is an increase on the 56 children experiencing exploitation between April 2022 and March 2023.

Eighty-four percent of children experiencing exploitation were male and 75% were aged 15 or older. 38 children were removed from the Safeguarding Adolescents From Exploitation and Risk (SAFER) group during the year and the average time it took for a child to be removed from SAFER due to a lowering of their risk level was seven months.

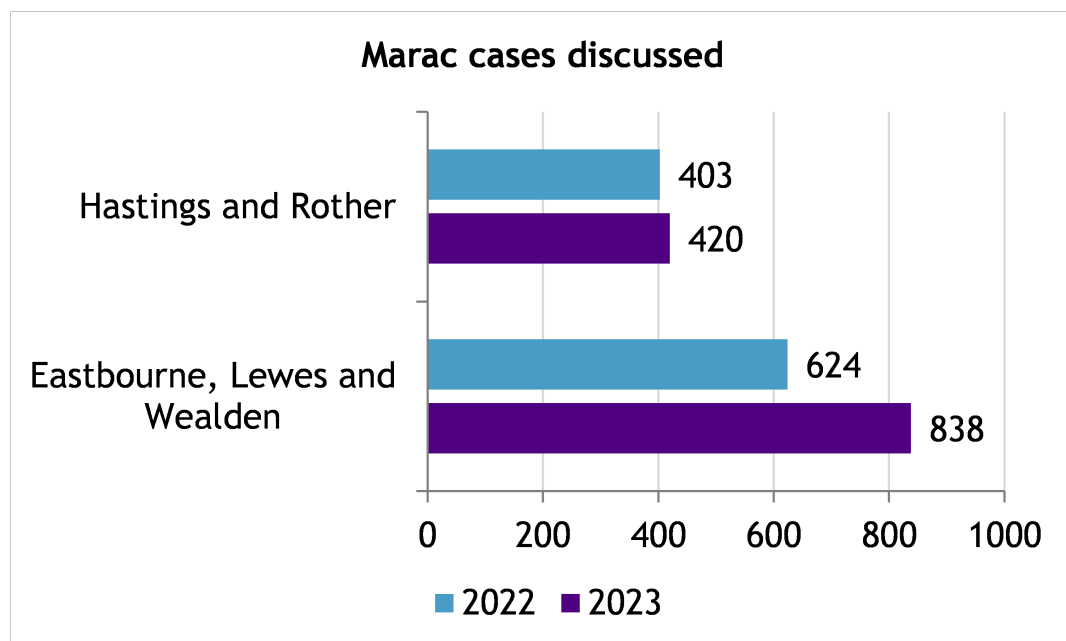
Domestic violence and abuse

Multi-Agency Risk Conferences (MARACs) are meetings that discuss the highest risk domestic abuse cases. In East Sussex during 2023 there was a 24% increase in the number of cases discussed at MARACs compared to the previous year.

The Eastbourne, Lewes & Wealden (ELW) MARAC saw a 37% increase in the number

of cases discussed between 2022 to 2023, whilst Hastings & Rother (HR) saw a 6% increase.

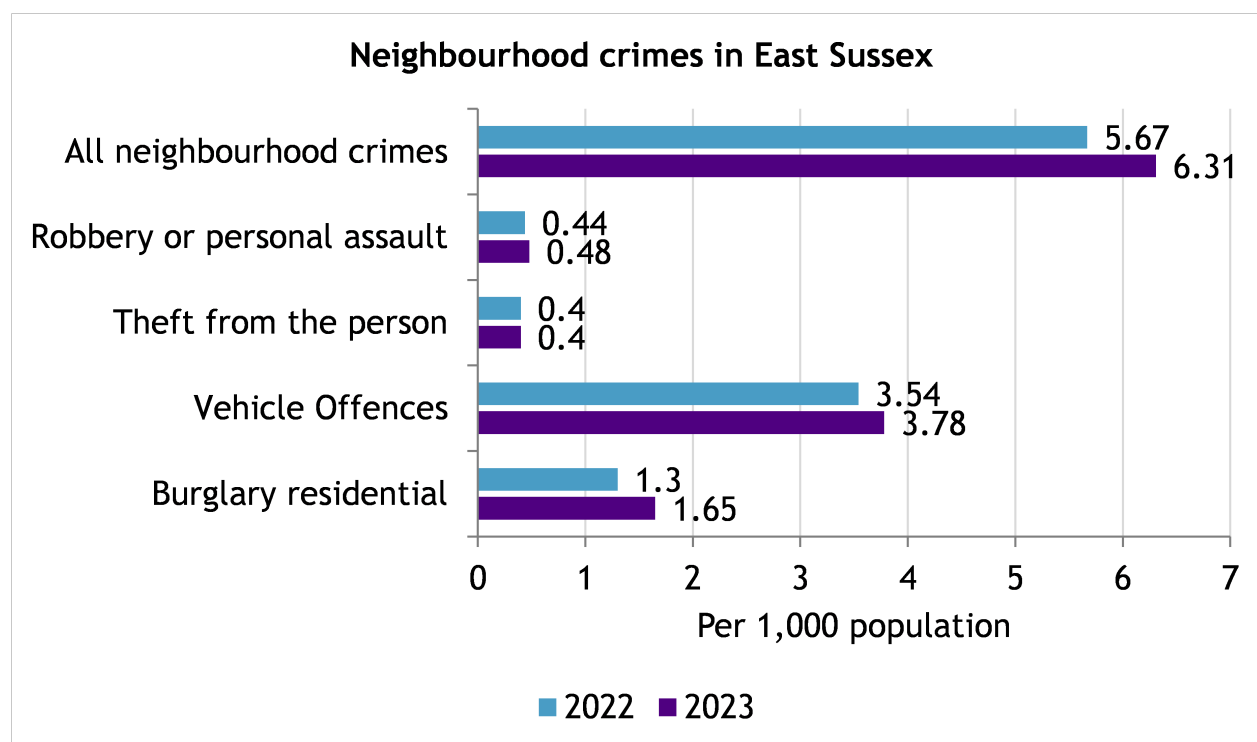
East Sussex has historically had a high number of referrals into MARAC and both ELW and HR MARACs remain over the recommended number of 40 cases per 10,000 population.



Source: ESCC Adult Social Care and Health Department

Neighbourhood Crime

Neighbourhood crime rates in East Sussex are lower than the national average across all categories. Neighbourhood crime includes residential burglary, vehicle offences, theft from the person and robbery of personal property. In total, there was an 11% increase in neighbourhood crime in East Sussex between 2022 to 2023. The biggest increase was in residential burglary with an increase of 28%; however, the actual figure remains low with 1.65 crimes per 1,000 population in 2023.



Source: ESCC Adult Social Care and Health Department

Road Safety

The rate of people being killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions in East Sussex has historically been higher than the average for England. For the three-year period 2017-2019 (the latest period not impacted by the national Covid-19 lockdowns) the average rate of people killed or seriously injured for East Sussex was 68.1 per 100,000 population compared to 43.2 in England.

Although East Sussex has had higher rates of people killed or seriously injured than the national average and many other areas, direct comparisons between rates are unreliable due to both methods of data collection and recording across police forces, and the differences in road networks and infrastructure.

The number of people killed or seriously injured in East Sussex has fluctuated in recent years. Please note the 2020 and 2021 figures were affected by COVID-19 restrictions/lockdowns. The figures also include crashes on the Strategic Road Network which is managed by National Highways.

Number of people killed or seriously injured in East Sussex

State of the County 2024: Focus on East Sussex

Year	Seriously injured	Fatalities	Total
2023	349	13	362
2022	379	20	399
2021	321	18	339
2020	279	17	296
2019	395	14	409
2018	334	21	355
2017	344	26	370

Source: Sussex Safer Roads Partnership

Data

We use a wide range of data to help us understand the context for our plans and the impact we are having through our work and in partnership. A selection of this data is listed below. Years are financial (April-March) or academic (September-August) unless otherwise stated.

Key: CY - calendar year (January-December), NA - data not available.

Measure	2021/22 Outturn	2022/23 Outturn	2022/23 England
Percentage of working age residents (16-64 year olds) with a level 3 or higher qualification (HNC, HND, degree etc.) (CY)	N/A	33.8% (Census 2021)	37.1% (Census 2021)
Percentage of working age residents (16-64 year olds) with no qualifications or qualified only to NVQ1 (CY)	N/A	10.6% (Census 2021)	12.4% (Census 2021)
Annual gross full-time earnings, median average (residence based)	£31,259 (2022)	£34,028 (2023)	£35,100 (2023)
Percentage of working age population (16-64 year olds) in employment	77.1% (2022)	73.1% (2023)	75.7% (2023)
People claiming unemployment benefits (JSA and Universal Credit) percentage of population 16-64 year olds at March	3.6% (2023)	3.5% (2024)	3.9% (2024)
New business registration rate per 10,000 people over 16 (CY)	52.2 (2021)	47.5 (2022)	64.6 (2022)
New houses built, total completed / total affordable	1,606 / 359 (2021/22)	1,702 / 714 (2022/23)	N/A
Average Attainment 8 score per pupil state funded secondary schools	46.5	43.6	46.4
Average Progress 8 score for state funded secondary schools	-0.11	-0.19	-0.03

Measure	2021/22 Outturn	2022/23 Outturn	2022/23 England
Percentage of pupils who achieved a 9-5 pass in English and maths GCSEs	46.3%	41.0%	45.3%
Average point score (APS) per entry for level A levels (age 16-18)	36.19	32.46	34.16
Attainment of A level students (age 16-18) average point score (APS) per entry, best 3	34.81	31.27	34.68
Attainment of A level students (age 16-18) % achieving grades AAB or better at A level, of which at least two are in facilitation subjects	12.3%	9.18%	15.8%
Rate per 10,000 (aged 0-17 population) of Looked After Children	61	62	71
Rate per 10,000 (aged 0-17 population) of children with a Child Protection Plan	50.1	64.8	43.2
Percentage of children who ceased to be looked after adopted during the year ending 31 March	8%	7%	9%
Proportion of people (65 and over) who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital	89.7%	91.2%	82.3%
Suicide rate per 100,000 of population, three-year average	12.1 (2019 - 2021)	11.6 (2020 - 2022)	10.3 (2020 - 2022)
Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in children aged 0-14 years, rate per 10,000 resident population	99.8 (2020/21)	107.6 (2021/22)	84.3 (2021/22)
Percentage of children aged 4-5 years with excess weight (overweight or obese) LA by postcode of child	19.8%	22.1%	21.3%
Percentage of children aged 10-11 years with excess weight (overweight or obese) LA by postcode of child	32.8%	32.6%	36.6%

Measure	2021/22 Outturn	2022/23 Outturn	2022/23 England
Percentage of adults (aged 18+) classified as overweight or obese	64.9%	62.7% (2021/22)	63.8% (2021/22)
Percentage of children aged 4-5 years who are underweight	0.7%	0.5%	1.2%
Percentage of children aged 10-11 years who are underweight	1.6%	1.3%	1.6%
Long-term support needs of younger adults (aged 18-64) met by admission to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population per year	10.8	13.9	14.6
Long-term support needs of older adults (aged 65 and over) met by admission to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population per year	494.2	488.2	560.8
Proportion of older people aged 65 and over who received reablement services following discharge from hospital	1.6%	1.4%	2.9%
The outcome of short-term services: sequel to service: proportion of people who received short-term services during the year, where no further request was made for ongoing support or support of a lower level	93.7%	94.7%	77.5%
Emergency hospital admissions due to falls in people aged 65 and over per 100,000	2,314 (2020/21)	2,523 (2021/22)	2,100 (2021/22)
Number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads (CY)	399 (CY 2022)	362 (CY 2023)	N/A

National and Local Policy Outlook 2024

1. Introduction and Contents

1.1. This appendix provides an overview of the key developments in the national and local context that will influence and inform our future service and financial planning through the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process for the 2025/26 financial year and beyond. It also provides an update on work to deliver the County Council's local priorities and summarises key strategic challenges for our services.

1.2. Recent developments in national policy and the Council's broader operating context have been significant and continue to evolve. With a general election imminent, there is uncertainty about the general direction of government policy beyond this time, including which current priorities and policies would be upheld by any new administration. There is potential for rapid policy shifts post-election which we would need to respond to, both in terms of immediate impacts and implications for future planning. The position on key national reforms in major service areas experiencing significant pressures, such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services, will also need to be clarified, although it is likely that progress in these areas will continue to be more limited than we would want in the short term.

1.3. Locally, significant work is taking place, as an organisation and with our partners, to respond to national developments, to progress our local priorities and to prepare for future challenges. Detail on this work is set out below.

1.4. This appendix has been written to be easily navigable to specific sections for future reference (using the below contents list), as well as providing a comprehensive single overview of developments. It includes information on:

Section 2 – Overall Context (pages 3-7)

- The national political context (pg 3)
- The national economic outlook (pg 3)
- Local Government finance outlook (pg 4)
- Productivity (pg 5)
- Levelling Up and devolution (pg 5)
- Updated inspection regime (pg 6)
- Oflog (pg 6)

Section 3 – Adult Social Care (ASC) and Public Health (pages 7-16)

- People at the Heart of Care and charging reform (pg 7)
- ADASS roadmap and Social Care Future vision (pg 8)
- Care Workforce Pathway and local workforce strategy and programme (pg 8)
- Care Data Matters: a roadmap for better data for adult social care (pg 9)
- Right Care, Right Person (pg 9)
- Adult Social Care Strategy: What Matters To You (pg 9)
- Prevention strategy (pg 10)
- ASC market – including market sustainability and net to gross payments (pg 10)
- Safeguarding Adults Board strategic plan 2024-27 (pg 11)
- Housing (pg 11)

- ASC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy (pg 12)
- Health and Social Care Integration – national and local, including Health and Wellbeing Board, Integrated Community Teams, and hospital discharge (pg 12-14)
- Public Health priorities (pg 14-16)

Section 4 – Children’s Services (pages 16-21)

- National reform to children’s social care (pg 16)
- Service demand (pg 17)
- Youth service developments (pg 18)
- Special educational needs and disability (pg 19)
- Schools policy (pg 19)
- Education attainment and attendance (pg 19)
- Local education priorities and strategic challenges (pg 20)
- Home to school transport (pg 20)

Section 5 – Migration (pages 20-22)

- National policy developments – including the Illegal Migration Act (pg 20)
- Local response (pg 21)
- Support for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (pg 22)

Section 6 – Communities (pages 22-26)

- Financial Inclusion Programme and Household Support Fund (pg 22)
- Working with the VCSE and community networks (pg 23)
- Community Safety developments – including drug and alcohol misuse, domestic abuse and violence against women and girls, serious violence, modern slavery (pg 23-25)
- Trading Standards (pg 25)
- Local resilience arrangements (pg 25)
- National planning reforms – including infrastructure funding arrangements (pg 25)

Section 7 – Highways and Transport (pages 26-30)

- Highways maintenance (pg 26)
- Refresh of the Local Transport Plan (pg 26)
- Bus Service Improvement Plan (pg 27)
- Active travel (pg 27)
- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (pg 28)
- Transport for the South East (pg 28)
- Road safety (pg 28)
- Strategic Road Network (A27/A21) (pg 29)
- Local highways programme – Major Road Network (pg 29)
- Rail services (pg 29)

Section 8 – Economy (pages 30-33)

- Transfer of Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions (pg 30)
- East Sussex Economic Strategy (pg 30)
- Economic growth funding – including UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up Partnerships and Long Term Plan for Towns (pg 31)
- Local work on, and national reforms to, skills provision (pg 32)
- Culture and tourism (pg 32)

Section 9 – Environment and Climate Change (pages 33-37)

- Climate change national policy context (pg 33)
- Local action on climate change (pg 34)
- Environment Act impacts – including Local Nature Recovery Strategy, biodiversity, waste and air quality (pg 34-36)
- Flood risk management (pg 36)
- Emissions trading scheme (pg 36)

Section 10 – Supporting Services (pages 36-39)

- Modernising Back Office Systems programme (pg 36)
- Workforce and pay challenges (pg 37)
- Property Asset Management (pg 38)
- Technology supporting productivity (pg 38)
- Procurement – including impact of the Procurement Act (pg 38)
- Local elections (pg 39)

2. Overall Context

2.1. The following section provides an overview of the overall economic, fiscal and policy context the County Council is operating and planning within.

National political context

2.2 There is significant policy uncertainty looking forward due to the general election to be held on 4 July 2024. The commitments already set out in political parties' manifestos make clear that the election holds potential for significant policy change affecting ESCC services and the county more broadly. Once the outcome of the election is known, we will analyse in more detail the implications of relevant policy positions for the Council. The King's Speech on 17 July 2024 will set out the post-election Government's initial legislative and policy priorities.

National economic outlook

2.3 Following weaker than expected Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the fourth quarter of 2023, the UK economy had experienced two successive quarters of falling output, meeting the definition of a technical recession. However, in the first quarter of 2024 the UK economy grew by 0.6% and came out of recession, although growth is still expected to remain weak. In April 2024 the International Monetary Fund downgraded its forecasts for UK GDP growth, now projecting growth of 0.5% in 2024 and 1.5% in 2025. Following an extended period of excessively high inflation, Consumer Price Index inflation has fallen more sharply than had been forecast by the OBR in November 2023. This is largely because of falling gas and electricity prices as a result of a drop in the energy price cap. In April 2024, Consumer Price Index inflation stood at 2.3%, the lowest level since September 2021, and the OBR forecasts that quarterly inflation should fall to the Bank of England target of 2% in the second quarter of 2024. In response, the Bank of England has maintained interest rates at 5.25% since August 2023, with cuts to the base rate considered likely in coming months.

2.4 Inflation falling faster than expected also led the OBR to improve its forecast for living standards, with real household disposable income per person set to recover to its pre-pandemic peak by 2025-26, two years earlier than its November 2023 forecast. However, this follows historic falls in living standards in 2022-23 which saw sharp increases in the cost of living being experienced by residents and businesses, and pressures still remain. In light of this, the Government announced in the Spring Budget the extension of the Household Support Fund for a further six months until September 2024.

2.5 Data on the East Sussex economy, cost of living and labour market are set out in Appendix 1 – Focus on East Sussex. Output of the East Sussex economy remains below the national average; Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour in East Sussex (a measure of the goods or services produced in an area per hour worked in that area) was 20.4% below the England level in 2021 (£30.97 per hour, against £38.91 per hour in England). The unemployment rate for March 2024 was 3.5% for East Sussex, lower than the national average of 3.9%, but above the regional average of 3.0%. The youth unemployment rate (those 18-24 claiming unemployment related benefits) was 6.1%, higher than the England rate of 5.2%, and above pre-pandemic levels. Further information on the national labour market picture and recruitment and retention challenges this presents for ESCC are set out at 10.6-10.13.

Local government finance

2.6 The outlook for local government funding remains unclear and very challenging. Funding that ESCC will receive from central Government between 2025/26 – 2027/28 is yet to be confirmed. The timing of the forthcoming general election, earlier than anticipated, means that there may be more time for any incoming Government to seek to understand and address Local Government funding issues. However, the likelihood of another one year financial settlement for 2025/26 remains high given the time needed to complete a full Spending Review post-election. Long awaited reform to the system of local government funding has been deferred beyond the election and both the timing and nature of any proposed reforms remain unclear, although it is likely that a post-election government would struggle to implement any significant funding reforms within the current medium term financial plan period.

2.7 In recent Budget Statements the Chancellor indicated that the Government's focus was on driving economic growth and reducing taxation, rather than increasing spending on public services. There has been no change in the overall planned increase in Government department spending limits of 1% in real terms. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates this would result in real-terms cuts in funding for unprotected budgets in the years ahead, which includes most of local government. Recent commitments by political parties to increase defence spending in response to increasing global conflict will place further pressure on the public purse.

2.8 At a local level, key risks for the Council continue to be growth in demand and complexity in children's and adults' social care and special educational needs and disability. The resulting increases in costs are largely outside of local control, particularly given market conditions in these sectors and the impact of Government-determined increases to the National Living Wage. Combined with increased costs across other services, and the uncertain impact of national reforms, we can expect to see ongoing significant and sustained pressures on services and budgets which will impact on our medium term financial plan and ability to meet needs.

2.9 The ongoing impact of cost of living pressures and Covid legacy will continue to play out both in demand for services and in the income we receive. 2023/24 saw the level of debt continue to rise, particularly for Adult Social Care contributions, and it is expected that this trend will continue in 2024/25. Ongoing impacts on the collection of business rates and council tax continue to be fully assessed, as do the impact of recent changes to district and borough Council Tax Reduction Schemes and the potential for increased income from their new ability to apply Council Tax to second homes.

2.10 For the Capital Programme, there remain challenges in the supply chain for materials and price pressures within existing contracts. Changes to the Infrastructure Levy have added a level of uncertainty to the value of future developer contributions, which remain an important

funding stream for the programme. The challenging revenue budget position for 2024/25 required the capital programme to be reviewed to minimise the borrowing costs of the overall programme within Treasury Management and the revenue budget. The review reduced and re-profiled programmes and schemes over the 10 year programme. Further review will be required in light of the significant financial gap over the medium term, as the level of investment in assets that support the objectives of the Council Plan must be considered in the context of its impact on the revenue budget and wider Council financial position.

2.11 A lack of sufficient Government funding to address pressures in social care, instead asking councils to use reserves to mitigate pressures, means that we are using significant reserves to balance the budget for 2024/25, which will constrain the Council's ability to use reserves to manage future financial risk. Furthermore, the Council has had to abandon its usual approach of maintaining reserves to help future proof Council services from unforeseen risks. While the Council's reserves have been applied within a robust reserve policy, the Council will need to instigate work to identify a range of actions that it will need to take to set a balanced budget for 2025/26, without the need to draw further on reserves.

Productivity

2.12 The Government has set a target of 0.5% annual productivity improvements in the public sector and committed £4.2bn of funding (primarily for the NHS) to a Public Sector Productivity Programme intended to start to deliver the next phase of reform of public services. Relevant government departments will develop detailed productivity plans over the coming months ahead of the next Spending Review.

2.13 As part of the final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25, additional funding of £500m nationally (£5.4m for ESCC) was provided to support the delivery of social care. This additional funding came with an expectation that local authorities would produce productivity plans for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) by July 2024. A Long Term Sustainability Panel, made up of sector representatives and technology and transformation experts, is to be established from summer 2024 to review common themes and evidence arising from the plans and to consider national policy implications, the role of Government in supporting change and the role of the sector itself, including how it can achieve further productivity gains.

Devolution and Levelling Up

2.14 The Levelling Up agenda, which aims to address disparities in economic prosperity and quality of health across the UK, has remained a focus for the Government. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 contains a number of key reforms, including a system of brownfield-first development; the introduction of joint Spatial Development Strategies; reduced 'top down' housing targets; streamlining the local plan process; a new Infrastructure Levy; and measures to deliver on plans for increased devolution in England.

2.15 Devolution has remained central to the Levelling Up agenda. The Government has maintained its commitment to agreeing a devolution deal with any area of the country that wants one by 2030. A number of further deals have been published by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which are at Level 2 and Level 3 of the Devolution Framework as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper. Level 3 involves adopting a directly elected mayor or leader, although in some areas this has been met with local resistance. In addition, the Government has continued to progress two 'trailblazer' deeper devolution deals with the combined authorities of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, intended to be a blueprint for deeper devolution across the rest of England.

2.16 ESCC will continue to monitor how the various devolution deals progress to better understand the opportunities and risks associated with them, and to review future government policy in this area following the general election.

Updated inspection regime

2.17 In 2023 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) began assessing local authority Adult Social Care departments on how they are discharging their duties under the Care Act 2014. The CQC plans to assess all authorities by 2026. We anticipate that our Adult Social Care services are likely to be assessed by April 2025. In preparation for this, the department has undertaken a peer review with the Local Government Association and will be responding to the findings from this review to clarify our strengths and areas for development. Our response, as well as preparations for CQC assurance, will be guided by our departmental priorities (outlined in the Adult Social Care and Public Health section below) and the four CQC assurance themes: working with people; providing support; ensuring safety within the system; and leadership.

2.18 Our Children's Services Department was inspected by Ofsted under the framework and evaluation schedule for Inspections of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), which focuses on children's social care services, in December 2023. Our services were judged to be 'good' overall and 'outstanding' for the experiences and progress of children in care. The post-inspection action plan, agreed in response to the areas for improvement identified, has been shared with Ofsted and actions will continue to be taken forward to further develop our services.

2.19 Ofsted and CQC's new joint framework for inspecting provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) took effect from January 2023. The new framework focuses on the effectiveness of a local area partnership's arrangements, and whether these are delivering improved outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND. It also includes an evaluation of commissioning and oversight arrangements for children and young people in alternative provision, something the previous framework did not do. We await an Ofsted local area SEND inspection under this framework in due course. HM Inspectorate of Probation recently undertook an inspection of our youth justice services and we await the report and recommendations which will inform future service development.

Oflog

2.20 The [Office for Local Government](#) (Oflog), established in July 2023 to provide authoritative and accessible data and analysis about local government performance, continues to develop. Oflog is currently part of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), although the Government committed in the Levelling Up White Paper that Oflog would ultimately be independent.

2.21 Oflog has published and consulted on its draft Corporate Plan 2024-2027 which outlines its purpose to:

- Inform - increasing understanding about data on the performance of local authorities;
- Warn - helping to identify authorities at risk of serious failure who have not already raised the alarm themselves; and
- Support - helping local authorities with organisational improvement.

2.22 Oflog will publish its final Corporate Plan later this year. Its business plan for 2024-2025 sets out key activities and objectives for the next year, including to publish more metrics on its local authority performance data explorer, develop the desk-based component of its new early

warning system, start conducting Early Warning Conversations with local authorities who may be at risk of failure, and establish where it can best add value in providing support to councils.

3. Adult Social Care and Public Health

3.1 Whilst major reforms to Adult Social Care (ASC) charging have been postponed until 2025, other national reforms have progressed which impact on how social care is delivered locally. Teams across the Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) Department are continuing to respond to a range of national and local developments, set out in more detail in this section. These include working with health partners to progress local health and social care integration and implementing initiatives to facilitate hospital discharge. Work to deliver local priorities and respond to strategic challenges, including market sustainability, workforce, supporting the resilience of local communities and addressing threats to health is also covered here.

People at the Heart of Care

3.2 The Government's [Next steps to put People at the Heart of Care](#), published in 2023 as part of the [People at the Heart of Care: Adult Social Care Reform White Paper](#), sets out the latest key milestones for the national development of ASC. This includes:

- Funding local authorities to increase care capacity and the workforce, including volunteers;
- Introducing a new Care Certificate qualification as a baseline for care workers;
- Implementation of the digital skills passport for carers' training;
- New systems to share patient care data across settings;
- Improvement of national data collection and availability to increase personalisation in care;
- Using evidence on technologies that can improve safety and quality of care; and
- Assessment of all local authorities by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (see 2.17 above).

3.3 The ASCH Department has a number of work programmes that will support us to implement these national reforms including our workforce programme, work to maintain a sustainable care market, and work to optimise use of data and technology. As part of preparations for CQC assessment, and in response to our Local Government Association peer review, the following set of priorities for ASCH have been agreed for 2024/25, which align to our Adult Social Care Strategy: 'What Matters to You' and the Council's four priority outcomes:

- Prevention
- Waiting times
- Safeguarding
- Quality
- Value for money

Charging reforms

3.4 The major national reforms to adult social care charging (originally reported at State of the County 2022) have been postponed until 2025, and there remains some uncertainty about when or whether they will be rolled out. If implemented, the reforms pose a significant risk to ESCC in terms of affordability, in the absence of assurance that Government funding will increase to meet the associated costs. They would also pose considerable risks operationally, as the reforms would increase demand on ASCH assessment teams, which already face significant demands on their services. ASCH undertook some initial preparation for delivery of charging reforms, such as identifying where increases in workforce capacity would be needed to manage risks of increased demand on operational services. ASCH remains ready to further those preparations, as and when Government expectations about the timing and implementation of charging reform become clear.

ADASS roadmap and Social Care Future vision

3.5 The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) has published a [roadmap to reforming care and support in England](#) which sets out recommendations for improving and reforming adult social care over the short, medium, and long term future. Its 'agenda for action' for local authorities sets out proposed changes, including a shift towards co-producing plans, improving assessments, developing digital tools, investing in community support, and improving work in care and support.

3.6 ADASS recognises that funding remains a significant barrier to the implementation of its vision and recommend that funding is used to stabilise and transform the sector. The report suggests other barriers can be tackled immediately, including setting attitudes at a leadership level, encouraging positive risk taking, and considering clients as people and not patients. ASCH will be using the roadmap to inform our departmental plans.

3.7 The ADASS roadmap also recommends that a shared vision for social care is achieved and the Social Care Future vision is adopted. We have adopted this as our vision where we want everyone in East Sussex to "live in the place we call home, with the people and things we love, in communities where we look out for each other, doing the things that matter to us" and has joined the national Social Care Future Community of Support.

3.8 Achieving this vision will be supported by work aligned to both our priorities for ASCH for 2024/25 and the six residents' priorities in our Adult Social Care Strategy: 'What Matters To You'. The learning from Social Care Future community will also help us deliver specific commitments in our local strategy.

National Care Workforce Pathway

3.9 The Government, through the [National Care Workforce Pathway](#), has outlined plans to improve the career prospects of the domestic care workforce through training, qualifications, and a clearer care career path. Included within the pathway are suggested learning opportunities to help the workforce develop knowledge and skills within a role or specific area of practice. As further parts of the pathway are launched, additional learning opportunities will provide the ASCH Workforce Board with an opportunity to build on existing priorities aimed at both recruitment and retention, ensuring our workforce is trained and responsive to the needs of East Sussex residents.

Local Workforce Strategy and Programme

3.10 Locally, the ASCH Workforce Programme is entering its third year. Recruitment continues to be a challenge nationally and locally and is the focus for one of the six projects within the programme. Our priorities for recruitment include finding new ways to appeal to diverse candidates, promoting opportunities through local colleges and careers fairs, and streamlining our application process. We will build on the recruitment of a new cohort of social workers and support others to undertake social work apprenticeships.

3.11 Other aspects of the ASCH Workforce Programme include the Wellbeing Project which is working with Brighton University to improve the musculoskeletal health and wellbeing of ASCH staff and reduce musculoskeletal related absence; the Social Justice in the Workforce project which has launched the Equality Allies network to enable discussion about inclusion and help colleagues improve practice and services; the Leadership and Management Project which has rewritten the ASCH supervision policy and will signpost supervisors to tools and resources to support effective supervision with staff; the Strategic Workforce Planning project which has provided ASCH with an improved understanding of variations in retention rates across ASCH;

and the Retention Project which is piloting new exit interview processes. A consultation with staff aged 55 and over will help shape the support we provide to help them remain working for longer.

3.12 These projects will improve how we use resources by adapting our support to staff through change of practice, rather than using additional funds.

Care Data Matters: a roadmap for better data for adult social care

3.13 [Care Data Matters: a roadmap for better data for adult social care](#), published in 2023, sets out the Government's plan for developing data collection and sharing across adult social care. This will be done by improving data collection across regions, increasing digitisation and data sharing to improve joined up working, and working in partnership to understand current gaps and data needs.

3.14 Locally, ASCH is working to develop new ways of reporting and baselining our performance in line with revised definitions of measures in the national Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework. Once national data is released in October 2024, we will benchmark these measures locally to understand our comparative performance.

3.15 The Council must start using new sources of data under the Client Level Data collection. ASCH has developed in house reporting for Client Level Data and will ensure our national measures align to new methodologies as well as the new dataset. Work will continue to improve data quality and develop further analysis and understanding of it.

Right Care, Right Person

3.16 [Right Care, Right Person](#) is a national partnership agreement between the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), NHS England, and the Police. It aims to reduce police callouts where another body is better placed to respond, such as those for mental health crises, welfare checks, and to people who do not attend medical appointments. Right Care, Right Person began a phased roll out in East Sussex from April 2024.

3.17 Right Care, Right Person could increase demand for Council services, including those within ASCH Operations, and safeguarding referrals. An ASCH action plan has been agreed to mitigate these risks including: continuing to engage with Sussex Police and partners to influence implementation; reviewing policies and procedures and establishing monitoring arrangements to measure the impact on ASCH; and informing independent sector providers of any developments.

Adult Social Care Strategy: What Matters To You

3.18 Following the launch of our [Adult Social Care Strategy: 'What Matters to You'](#), ASCH has developed an action plan with partners for 2024/25. The action plan addresses the 15 'We will' statements in the strategy as well as our commitment to deliver the six residents' priorities that emerged from engagement. The detailed action plan will inform key local policy and practice; consisting of 64 tasks led by 16 teams across ASCH. Monitoring of the strategy will take place quarterly and include actions to address findings from the strategy's Equality Impact Assessment. Twice yearly progress reports on the action plan will be prepared and disseminated widely. The plan is iterative and will be updated to inform future steps required to deliver the strategy beyond March 2025. To better understand the outcomes of our activity, we will be developing an evaluation framework to demonstrate the impact of the strategy across each priority area.

Prevention strategy

3.19 ASCH will develop a Prevention Strategy to focus specifically on work to help people be more proactive about their health and wellbeing and to improve or maintain their quality of life and independence. We will map existing activity that prevents, reduces, and delays the need for care and support to identify priorities to enhance our preventative activity. The Prevention Strategy will aim to strengthen asset-based approaches, integration with health and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, a systematic focus on prevention, evidence of impact, and innovation. Consequently, the strategy will help the Council and partners meet the needs and aspirations of a changing and aging population. The strategy, and activities that will result, will be co-produced with a range of stakeholders, including statutory partners, the VCSE, residents, and businesses.

ASC market

Market sustainability

3.20 The sustainability of the care market continues to be a significant issue nationally and locally. The Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) is intended to support local authorities to make tangible improvements to adult social care services, to build capacity and improve market sustainability. £5m of additional funding will be allocated to providers from the MSIF, meaning a total of £11m will be allocated in East Sussex to support sustainability of the adult social care market during 2024/25.

3.21 National and international economic conditions continue to increase the cost of providing services. Workforce capacity, and the ability to sustain capacity with overseas workers, is also a key factor for market sustainability. Government changes to the Skilled Worker Visa will restrict entry through skilled worker routes and restrict workers bringing dependents to the UK which may pose further workforce challenges; we will continue to review the impact of this change and care worker visa approvals more generally. The ASCH Market Support Team continues to work closely with local providers and the Care Quality Commission to support and strengthen the independent care and support market. The ASCH Supply Management Team will run the Market Oversight Panel, with support from across the department and NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board Clinical Quality Nurses, to ensure oversight of market quality, risks, and impacts on the wider market. The Supply Management Team will also co-ordinate and deliver support to providers in response to market pressures.

3.22 ASCH has updated our [Market Position Statement](#) which sets out our latest assessment on market supply and demand, our commissioning intentions, and the support available to providers. The statement is published on our website and will be updated regularly to help new, existing, and prospective providers understand the market context for East Sussex.

Net to Gross payments for care

3.23 ASCH currently pays residential and nursing home providers net of their client contribution towards the cost of care. We are exploring moving to paying gross, which would align our approach with neighbouring local authorities. It is anticipated that this change of policy would support providers, as the Council would take on the invoicing of clients and the risk of non-payment. This would create better sustainability for the market, as providers will not face the burden of securing payments for client contribution. It would also help ASCH to make placements with providers going forward, who may have been deterred from accepting ASCH clients and collecting client contributions on our behalf. However, it would increase budgetary risk to the Council, as we would hold client invoices and any resulting non-payment.

Improvements to our debt recovery process would be implemented to mitigate against this and to improve residents' understanding on how to pay for care and support.

Safeguarding Adults Board strategic plan 2024-27

3.24 The East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) has developed a refreshed Strategic Plan which sets out how the Board will seek to prevent abuse and neglect and how it will help and protect adults with care and support needs from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The updated Plan will be considered for agreement by the SAB in July.

3.25 The following strategic themes have been identified for 2024-2027:

- Leadership and partnership working
- Safeguarding policies and procedures
- Performance, quality and audit
- Prevention and engagement
- Organisational learning and workforce development

3.26 The SAB priorities proposed for 2024-2027 are:

- Self-neglect - Improve and develop multi agency working and practice
- Prevention and early intervention - Ensure unpaid carers have an understanding and awareness of adult safeguarding and what support they and the person they are care for can access
- Safeguarding and homelessness - Promote positive practice with professionals working at the interface of multiple exclusion homelessness and adult safeguarding

3.27 A key area of identified learning in many Sussex commissioned Safeguarding Adult Reviews is the need for more effective partnership working in order to protect the adult. Multi-agency working will be promoted and embedded within these priority areas of work over the next three years.

Housing

3.28 East Sussex is facing a shortage of affordable housing, and developments for all tenures are failing to keep pace with local housing needs. Housing is one of the key '[Building Blocks of Health](#)' (identified wider detriments to health) and where it is missing, there are complex and profound impacts on the whole system. Rising demand for homelessness services, particularly temporary accommodation, is placing significant financial and capacity pressures on local housing authorities and public sector services.

3.29 Partnership arrangements within the local housing sector in East Sussex have been refreshed and now comprise a multi-agency strategic group of the five local housing authorities (district and borough councils); housing providers; Public Health; the NHS; Adult Social Care; Children's Services; the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector; Probation; and representatives of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Homes England. The partnership will be developing a medium and longer term vision for the sector in East Sussex, including lobbying Government and ensuring housing specialisms are represented at local, regional and national partnerships and forums.

3.30 A Partnership Housing Strategy is being developed and is due to be adopted in autumn 2024. The strategy will provide a framework for cross-sector collaboration, supporting partners to make the best use of capacity, expertise, and resources within the sector. Emerging themes include supporting sustainable delivery of housing and accommodation, making the best use of

existing housing stock, reducing reliance on temporary accommodation, de-carbonisation of the housing stock, and healthy homes and communities. Whilst the strategy is being developed, the partnership will work on additional investment in homelessness prevention, development of a local retrofit strategy and preparing for new social housing reforms. The partnership will work with the Strategic Property Asset Collaboration in East Sussex (SPACES) Programme to identify public sector assets which could be redeveloped to provide future accommodation, as well as funding opportunities to enable this. The partnership will also work with the NHS to improve hospital discharge and develop Integrated Community Teams.

3.31 The creation of a new Multiple and Compound Needs Board is providing oversight of a range of programmes which support housing needs, as well as preparing for the closure of grant funded activity which ceases in March 2025 and may lead to increased pressure on services. Grant funded activity includes the East Sussex Rough Sleeping Initiative and the pan-Sussex Changing Futures programme.

3.32 An evaluation of the Homelessness Prevention Programme, which supports people into employment and signposts to health and wellbeing support, will be evaluated to inform an investment to save approach beyond the current funding to December 2025.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy

3.33 ASCH's updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy: *Inclusive by Design* sets out a framework for the actions we will take and the values we will be guided by. In 2024 we will be using the Local Government Association Diverse by Design self-assessment tool to help us track our strategy action plan and use metrics to evaluate the impact of those actions. By doing so, we will create indicators to track progress in improving equality, diversity and inclusion.

Health and Social Care Integration

National Health and Social Care Integration

3.34 Under the Health and Care Act 2022, 42 Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) in England have come into being. Nationally all ICSs will be working to build on their initial Joint Forward Plans (in Sussex this is known as the Shared Delivery Plan); set out the steps they will take to address the most significant causes of illness and disease and premature death; and improve the co-ordination of services to reflect the growing numbers of people with two or more long term conditions. This includes steps to:

- Expand evidenced-based approaches to population health;
- Join up care closer to home, including through integrated neighbourhood teams and other place-based arrangements;
- Integrate and streamline Urgent and Emergency Care pathways; and
- Drive improvements in productivity and operational effectiveness.

3.35 The Government is planning to publish a national Major Conditions Strategy which ICSs will be asked to take account of. The best model of delivery for each ICS will consider:

- Integrated neighbourhood teams to improve timely access to primary care and community services to deliver proactive care and avoid exacerbations of ill health and improve the quality of care for older people;
- Further development of place-based partnerships to deliver Joint Forward Plans through Health and Wellbeing Boards and working with wider partners; and
- Changes to commissioning, planning, and provider collaboratives.

Local Health and Social Care Integration

3.36 The Council plays a key role in the statutory arrangements for the Sussex ICS, with representation on the Integrated Care Board and the joint Integrated Care Partnership, which is known as the Sussex Health and Care Assembly (the Sussex Assembly). The Sussex Assembly is a statutory joint committee between ESCC, West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council and NHS Sussex.

3.37 The five year Sussex Integrated Care Strategy '*Improving Lives Together*' sets out our shared ambition for a healthier future for everyone in Sussex and three overarching strategic priorities:

- Developing a joined-up approach to neighbourhood delivery through the Integrated Community Teams (ICTs)
- Growing and supporting our health and care workforce
- Improving the use of digital technology

3.38 A supporting Shared Delivery Plan was agreed in June 2023, and both the Strategy and the Shared Delivery Plan build on our understanding of population health needs in East Sussex, outlined in the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Strategy '*Healthy Lives, Healthy People* (2022-2027)'. The Shared Delivery Plan will undergo a refresh and include delivery plans that reflect the Health and Wellbeing Board priorities of children and young people, mental health, integrated community teams, and improving health outcomes.

East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board and Partnership

3.39 We will be strengthening the way the Council strategically aligns partnership working around the Health and Wellbeing Board and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment within the Sussex ICS. This will be informed by the feedback from our recent Local Government Association Peer Reviews, in particular our role to facilitate strategic leadership to achieve best value out of collective resources. Expected changes within NHS Sussex system architecture will also be considered, such as new NHS provider collaboratives. Proposals will be developed for the Health and Wellbeing Board to phase in during 2024/25 and will be based on driving improvement through joint commissioning, integrated care and the development of integrated community teams.

Integrated Community Teams

3.40 A strategic social care and health integration priority is the development of integrated community teams that will be made up of professionals working together as a 'team of teams' across health, social care, housing, VCSE partners and local communities. A core offer will be agreed for all integrated community teams in Sussex to proactively care for the most complex needs and vulnerable people. It was agreed that our integrated community teams' footprints will align with borough and district boundaries, and [data and insight packs](#) will be used to inform and address health and care needs and inequalities in local communities.

3.41 Establishing integrated community teams will build on progress we have made in working with communities in East Sussex over recent years. Hastings will be our community 'frontrunner' area for developing the Integrated Community Team model, with frontline teams and services, and similar engagement will take place across Eastbourne, Lewes, Rother and Wealden in the first half of 2024/25. As part of this engagement, each area will identify specific challenges to test the new approach.

3.42 The approach will continue to be tested and refined over the time frame of the Improving Lives Together strategy and Shared Delivery Plan. The aim is that by 2028, integrated community teams will be fully established in East Sussex.

Hospital discharge funding and initiatives

3.43 Health and social care services have implemented Discharge to Assess (D2A)/Home First pathways to safely speed up discharges from hospital to assess people in their own homes or temporary bed. The Council and ICS partners will continue to participate in the national discharge frontrunner programme to collaborate and support improvements to avoid hospital admissions expedite discharges. East Sussex was allocated c£5m as part of the national Government Discharge Fund Grant for 2024/25. This fund will support ASCH to build additional adult social care and community based reablement capacity to reduce hospital discharge delays.

3.44 Locally, ASCH commissions D2A beds for East Sussex and will work with approved home care providers, use block hours, and work with the Joint Community Reablement Team to ensure timely discharges. ASCH will also continue to jointly commission the British Red Cross Assisted Discharge and Home from Hospital schemes.

3.45 At the request of NHS partners, ASCH's dedicated Hospital Discharge Team is returning to undertaking assessments in acute hospital settings and in the community. With additional support from discharge funding, ASCH has increased the number of assessment staff based in hospitals, including weekend discharge support through the Joint Community Reablement In-Reach Team at Conquest Hospital.

Public Health priorities

Reducing health inequalities

3.46 As a local authority, ESCC can influence many of the identified [Building Blocks of Health](#) which contribute to preventing death and ill health in East Sussex, and are often key drivers of health inequalities. These include access to services, education, work, social networks, tobacco and alcohol use, unhealthy food, and exercise. The Building Blocks of Health is a toolkit which aims to increase understanding of the role that wider determinants play in our health, as well as support to address them. Public Health will aim to maximise the positive impact we have on health inequalities through the promotion of a 'health-in-all-policies' approach across services delivered by the Council.

Smoking legislation

3.47 The [Tobacco and Vapes Bill](#), presented before the House of Commons in March 2024, proposed raising the age of sale for all tobacco products one year every year from 2027 onwards. This would mean that children who turn fifteen this year (2024) or younger would never be able to purchase cigarettes. Disposable vapes would be banned and illegal vape sales to children would attract a £100 fixed penalty fine for shops in England and Wales. Vape flavours would be restricted and new conditions for display would reduce the appeal of vapes to young people.

3.48 The legislation was not enacted prior to the dissolution of parliament for the general election and its future is now unclear. At an East Sussex level we will continue to work to reach our key smoking populations, offering individuals innovative support and interventions to stop smoking using smoking cessation responsive to their needs. Public Health will continue to work

with Trading Standards to disrupt the supply of illegal tobacco and underage vape sales and will work with local businesses during any period of transition should the legislation progress.

Women's Health Strategy for England

3.49 While women in the UK on average live longer than men, women spend a significantly greater proportion of their lives in ill health and disability, and historically the health and care system has been designed without women's voices or needs adequately represented. Public Health is continuing to work closely with NHS Sussex on development of the local response to the '[Women's Health Strategy for England](#)' strategy, including insight work with underrepresented groups and better understanding of data. We will also review the services we commission to improve outcomes for women.

New opportunities for NIHR funding

3.50 The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) is funding innovative research collaborations between local government and the academic sector to focus on improving wider determinants or drivers of health. In partnership with the University of Brighton, we have established a Research Collaborative Hub to attract research investment and interest, positioning the local authority in a competitively advantageous position. Academics, NIHR funded staff, and Public Health team members will work together on a variety of research projects with the aim of achieving publishable findings that will positively influence council policy. The hub will provide research training for council and wider public health staff to improve the potential to apply for, and secure, research funding from the NIHR and other organisations.

Commitment to becoming a Creative Health County

3.51 Creative Health refers to the broad range of opportunities that the arts, creativity, heritage, and culture contribute directly or indirectly to improving the population's health. Based on evidence showing benefits to population health, Public Health has embraced creativity as a health determinant and has developed an action plan informed by the county's first position paper on Creative Health. The Action Plan focuses on take up of creative health by both individuals and the community, with support from across the system. This includes work linked to population level health improvement; mental and physical health and wellbeing; social prescribing; early intervention; participation and youth voice; economic development; employment education; and training.

Suicide Prevention

3.52 Public Health will continue to work with colleagues across Sussex to implement the recently published Sussex Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2024-27. This includes plans to increase the involvement and collaboration of people with lived experience, identifying prevention activity, co-ordination and provision of training, improving the support provided to those bereaved and affected by suicide and self-harm prevention in children and young people. In East Sussex a multi-agency group oversees our East Sussex Strategy and Action plan, which aims to address key risk factors for suicide. We use the same approach to address drug-related deaths and self-harm in East Sussex. We are also developing local innovative projects aimed at addressing key risk factors for suicide.

3.53 This year we will pilot a new Beachy Head Ambassador scheme with volunteers promoting the area and its attractions, as well as providing an extra pair of eyes for those who may be vulnerable and in need of help. We will also complete an ecological assessment to ascertain the potential to use land management techniques (such as planting and grazing) to influence behaviour at the cliff edge.

Climate Change and Health

3.54 People with poorer health, and/or are otherwise disadvantaged by age, economic income, and housing for example, suffer the greatest consequences from climate change. We are commissioning a Health Impact Assessment to identify health impacts from climate change, how and where they impact the county and to support the climate change, health and social care agenda. The assessment will review the health impacts of policies, projects, practice, and decision-making, in relation to vulnerable people and health inequalities, and align to place based approaches within the Integrated Care System.

4. Children's Services

4.1 This section outlines ongoing reforms in children's social care following publication by Government of a number of strategies in response to independent reports on the urgent issues within the system. The implementation of reforms set out in the national SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan in 2023 is also progressing along with wider developments in the education system.

4.2 This section also summaries priority focus areas for Children's Services locally, including developing family support and improving placement sufficiency for the children we care for. In addition, there is information on demand led service pressures; work with schools to improve post-pandemic educational recovery and school attendance; and increases in demand for home to school transport.

National reforms to children's social care

4.3 In early 2023, the Government published an implementation strategy and consultation on reforming children's social care in England. The [Stable Homes Built on Love](#) strategy is based on, and formed by, the Government's response to three independent reports published in 2022. The strategy sets out reforms across six pillars which are intended to be implemented in two phases. In the first phase, currently underway, the Government is investing £200m in addressing urgent issues and laying the foundations for whole system reform. In phase two, the Government will focus on embedding reform everywhere.

4.4 Families First pathfinders, part of new a Family Help model, were piloted in three local authorities in 2023, with a further nine local authorities running pilots from April 2024. These pathfinders are testing new approaches to delivering Family Help, including removing the distinction between targeted early help and children in need and providing intensive multi-disciplinary support. There is also change to front line child protection practice, including some child protection functions being led by a group of multi-agency staff. Early learning from these pathfinders is being shared with all local authorities and is informing our planning.

4.5 Alongside the ambitious reforms taking place as set out in Stable Homes, Built on Love, from April 2024, the Department for Education (DfE) is bringing together the spectrum of Family Help reforms, including ownership of the Supporting Families programme. The move to the DfE should mean a more joined up, cross-government approach to family policy.

4.6 As part of the reforms, a National Kinship Care strategy: [Championing Kinship Care](#) has been published which commits £20m in 2024/25 to improve the lives of children in kinship care. This includes a £16m pilot giving a financial allowance to special guardian kinship carers; caring for children previously looked after by the local authority; guidance for employers on how kinship carers can be supported at work; and an expansion in the role of Virtual School heads to promote the education of children in kinship care.

4.7 ESCC Children's Services has a strong track record promoting family networks and supporting kinship care through our Connected Practice approach and family group conferencing. Many of the recommendations in the strategy are already being delivered and we will work to take forward the wider recommendations in 2024.

4.8 There are further elements of national reform which we will be taking forward locally with our partners:

- [The Social Care National Framework](#) brings together the purpose, principles, enablers, and outcomes that children's social care should achieve so children, young people and families can thrive. The framework sets out a vision that sees local authorities and all partners, particularly health, police and education, working together to achieve the reforms in Stable Homes Built on Love.
- The national multi-agency statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) has been updated and sets out a framework for how local safeguarding partners (the local authority, Integrated Care Board, and police) should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. The new partnership arrangements have been agreed by the Pan-Sussex lead strategic partners and the delegated safeguarding partners and will be implemented from September 2024.
- The [Children's Social Care: Data and Digital Strategy](#) sets out the DfE's long term plan to transform data in children's social care. It provides information on the foundations needed to improve information sharing and the evaluation and improvements to data services. The DfE is also working on a Children's Social Care dashboard which will bring data together in one place to understand progress towards the outcomes of the National Framework.

4.9 In response to Stable Homes Built on Love, the DfE has rolled out Early Adopters for the Early Career Framework for social workers. After a competitive application process, ESCC was chosen to be part of this programme which will explore how local authorities deliver their:

- assessed and supported year in employment programme, which gives newly qualified social workers extra support during their first year of employment;
- second year programmes; and
- Professional Practice Development Programme to train experienced practitioners and managers to support early career social workers to develop their emotional wellbeing and practice behaviours.

Service Demand

4.10 Children's Services, both nationally and locally, continue to see a sustained high level of demand and complexity in the needs of children and their families. The continued increase in demand is impacted by children's, young people's and parents' mental health and emotional wellbeing (with issues relating to neurodiversity increasingly a factor); cost of living challenges; an increase in the number of families in temporary accommodation; and domestic abuse and substance misuse.

4.11 Over the past two years, ESCC has experienced a 23% increase in the number of social care assessments being undertaken with children and families, and a 28% increase in children subject to child protection planning. We have also seen a 3% increase in the number of looked after children (not including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children). This demand has undoubtedly put pressure on services, and we will need to ensure we have sufficient capacity to meet our statutory duties. We are addressing these increased demands through a number of preventative approaches.

4.12 Our 11 Family Hubs, opened in 2023/24, are a vital part of our Early Help offer to families, providing early support and advice from midwives, health visitors, early communication support workers, early years practitioners and more. East Sussex is one of 15 authorities awarded trailblazer status, with a focus on parent/infant relationships and perinatal mental health. We have been selected for the national evaluation of Family Hubs Trailblazers with particular interest in our triage offer for perinatal mental health and parent infant relationship support. The pilot and funding cease in March 2025 and we will focus on making this key preventative service sustainable.

4.13 In January 2024, our Connected Families Service launched a new multi-disciplinary team, Connected Families Intervention Practitioners. The team draws upon the evidence based family safeguarding approach and is made up of specialist practitioners who deliver support and interventions to parents/carers experiencing domestic abuse, problematic mental health and/or problematic drug and alcohol use. Supported parents/carers have children on Child in Need or Child Protection plans. The aim is to provide dedicated help to parents/carers, enabling more children to live with their families to support their wellbeing and life chances. This is a major development for 2024-25 as we seek to contribute positive, sustainable change in the lives of the children and families we work with. It is also aligned with the national vision of multi-disciplinary, whole family working set out in Stable Homes Built on Love.

4.14 Throughout 2023, Children's Services worked with IMPOWER consultancy on improved forecasting and shaping of placement sufficiency for the children we care for. Ambitious targets are in place to achieve reduced spend, but only by meeting children's needs more appropriately. In 2024/25 we will take forward and embed:

- The Valuing Care approach to enhance our ability to secure the right care for the right child for the right length of time;
- An enhanced in house foster carer offer and increased capacity in commissioning to achieve effective market management and shaping of sufficiency; and
- The reunification framework to support children to return home where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

4.15 As part of the South East Regional Fostering Recruitment and Retention programme, foster carers are supported locally on their journey from initial enquiry, to application, through a centrally run front door. A regional recruitment campaign is being launched to boost the number of initial enquiries through Recruitment Support Hubs. We will embed new ways of working through the South East Regional Recruitment Hub whilst maintaining a focus on local need, targeted recruitment activity and maintaining our retention offer. We will be delivering the evidence based Mockingbird model of support to a group of foster carers which aims to build strong and supportive relationships among groups of foster carers and children in an area.

Youth Service Developments

4.16 We have been successful in securing more than £7m in funding through the Government's Youth Investment Fund to significantly improve youth centres in Heathfield and Peacehaven over the next year.

4.17 ESCC has also secured funding through the Home Office Youth Endowment Fund to test how multi-agency partnerships can keep young people safe from violence and criminal exploitation. The Youth Justice Service will be leading this work over the next 18 months and is implementing a family support model, delivered by a multi-disciplinary team who will work with the local community and tailor support to local need. This is part of piloting approaches from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and will be independently evaluated. Subject to

positive findings from the initial evaluations, it is intended that these multi-agency teams will be funded and evaluated for a further two to three years.

4.18 We have secured resources from NHS Health Inequalities to support positive activities for children and young people in a number of Primary Care Network areas. Using a social prescribing approach, the activities will benefit children who have left care, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and Ukrainian children.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

4.19 The [SEND and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Improvement Plan](#), published in March 2023, sets out the Government's planned national reforms to the SEND and AP system. At the centre of the plan is an ambition to improve inclusive practice in mainstream schools so that more children and young people with SEND can be supported in their local mainstream school, without the need for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The development of new guidance for all schools is not expected to be complete until 2025. The Government introduced the SEND and AP Change Programme Partnership in September 2023 which will inform the guidance and test some of the proposed changes to the system for supporting children and young people with SEND. East Sussex is part of the Change Programme Partnership in the south east, along with West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and Portsmouth.

4.20 In line with the national picture, East Sussex continues to see significant increases in demand for statutory assessments and specialist provision for children and young people with SEND. We will continue to work proactively, analysing data to project future demand, and working with schools and trusts to develop inclusive practices and more specialist provision where appropriate. May 2024 marked the midway point of our [2022-2025 East Sussex SEND Strategy](#) which sets the strategic direction for SEND in East Sussex. The strategy represents a joint approach to provision and commissioning across education, health, and care, focused on meeting the needs of children, young people, and families.

Schools policy

4.21 The Department for Education (DfE) has remained committed to the aspiration that all schools become part of Multi Academy Trusts. The Council continues to work with the Joint Primary and Secondary Board to shape a strong and cohesive school landscape across all phases. We play a critical role in facilitating strong local partnerships between schools, including through the development of Multi Academy Trusts.

4.22 In 2022, the DfE confirmed its intention to pass legislation which will see local authorities maintain a register of children of compulsory school age who are not enrolled at specified categories of schools. In October 2023, the DfE published a revised version of this plan for consultation, recommending that local authorities should operate the scheme as voluntary. The consultation closed in January 2024 and we await further information.

Educational attainment and attendance

4.23 East Sussex has been identified by the Government as an Education Investment Area, and Hastings as a Priority Investment Area. As an Education Investment Area, Multi Academy Trusts that are interested in expanding or setting up in East Sussex are prioritised for development funding from the DfE. As a Priority Investment Area, Hastings schools are receiving funding up to August 2025 to improve educational outcomes.

4.24 The pandemic had a significant adverse impact on school attendance, both nationally and locally. The proportion of children persistently absent (missing more than 10% of sessions)

has doubled. In May 2022, the Government published attendance guidance to clarify responsibilities for local authorities, schools, parents, and carers. This outlines the expectation that all councils should strengthen their oversight of attendance through regular individual dialogue with all schools. Councils should also provide whole family early help support, free of charge, to schools and families with children whose attendance is less than 50%. This guidance will become statutory in August 2024.

4.25 Locally, there will be a continued focus on working with schools to improve engagement with families who may need extra support with attendance. Supported by an additional annual investment of £1.5m to deliver the expectations set by the Government in its new guidance, a new Level 2 Early Help Key Work service has been in place from September 2023 to work with children and young people and their families where attendance is below 50%.

Local education priorities and strategic challenges

4.26 East Sussex has high levels of suspension and exclusion, and these are rising further in line with national trends. School leaders are experiencing increased levels and complexity of need, and the demand for support services remains high. The Council will continue to work with schools to develop effective strategies and joined up approaches to meeting children and young people's needs, to increase engagement in learning, and reduce exclusions.

4.27 Education reduces risks to children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. A key area of our school improvement strategy includes opportunities for schools and settings to develop communities which promote good mental health and wellbeing. Mental Health Support Teams, funded by the NHS and managed by the Council, will continue to be integrated into schools in East Sussex. Currently, 75 schools are supported by Mental Health Support Teams; this number is due to increase by approximately 20 schools by September 2024.

4.28 We have expanded the offer of support and training for all schools across the county as part of a whole school approach to mental health and emotional wellbeing. There are three Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Advisers who work across three localities, offering support with mapping provision, delivering training and sharing best practice. Support for parents and carers in relation to mental health and emotional wellbeing is also provided.

Home to school transport

4.29 Recent rises in fuel costs and driver shortages have led to exceptional increases to the cost of contracts providing taxis for pupils requiring home to school transport. The majority of spend for home to school transport relates to children with special educational needs and disability. The number of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is forecast to rise in East Sussex by 24.2% over the next three years, having increased by 25.7% in the last three years. Increased complexity of needs post-pandemic and geographical spread, both reducing the possibility of taxi sharing, are also driving cost increases. Current market conditions are also leading to fewer providers bidding for routes and increased contract prices.

5. Migration

5.1 Significant national developments on legislation in relation to immigration, asylum and refugee resettlement, as well as increased demand for support, have led to additional pressures locally. This section outlines key national developments as well as our local response.

National policy developments

5.2 The Government has developed new policy and legislation in relation to immigration, asylum and refugee resettlement in efforts to reduce pressures on current systems and

services. National policy developments include: a ‘full dispersal’ asylum system whereby local authorities are expected to be asylum dispersal areas; streamlining the asylum process; new large asylum accommodation sites to reduce use of contingency hotels; funding and policy measures to support the resettlement and accommodation of Afghans and Ukrainians; the [Illegal Migration Act 2023](#) to change law on people arriving outside prescribed routes claiming asylum in the UK; and an ‘asylum partnership arrangement’ with Rwanda to resettle people who would claim UK asylum. A new Cap on Safe and Legal Routes, based on consultation with local authorities, is due to be set in summer 2024, and to be in operation in 2025.

5.3 The Government also announced changes to visa routes from Ukraine earlier in 2024. This included closing the Ukraine Family Scheme; reducing the Homes for Ukraine visa from three years to 18 months for new applicants; and creating a new Ukraine Permission Extension scheme. The Ukraine Permission Extension scheme will allow Ukrainians in the UK to apply for a further 18 month stay after initial visas expire. Continued funding for new arrivals and host ‘thank you’ payments for the initial visa period under Homes for Ukraine has been confirmed.

5.4 The Council and partners will continue to shape local implementation of national policies and schemes and help arrivals in the county access safe accommodation, services and support.

Local response

Asylum Dispersal

5.5 By early 2023 hotels in East Sussex used for ‘contingency’ accommodation for people seeking asylum were closed as part of Government plans to phase out this accommodation. The Council meets partners regularly to review legacy issues and support those affected. Some of those previously accommodated in contingency hotels received refugee status prior to hotel closures and therefore may require ongoing local support, including with housing, employment, benefits and other support services. We expect some people who moved to other asylum sites will return to East Sussex on receiving refugee status if they have established links to the area.

5.6 The Home Office is exploring the use of large sites, including the Northeye site in Bexhill, to reduce the use of hotels. Welfare and service capacity concerns for specific sites continue to be discussed with partners and the Home Office to inform planning and decision making. Regular Northeye Multi-Agency Forums continue and, whilst a final Home Office decision on its use is pending, the Council will continue to engage to plan next steps and ensure our local context is understood.

5.7 Implementation of the Government’s new dispersal plans will require Home Office procurement of suitable accommodation, and progress with this has been gradual in East Sussex. Local authorities will actively highlight the risks to local services and infrastructure of additional asylum accommodation in the south east. Housing authority areas will be allocated target dispersal numbers and local housing authorities will be funded per dispersal bed.

5.8 The streamlined asylum process seeks to accelerate processing all asylum claims to reduce and clear the backlog. For successful claims, people will become eligible for housing and other support which may temporarily increase pressure on services.

Refugee Resettlement

5.9 The Government has established two resettlement schemes for Afghan citizens and provides a standard integration funding package to councils which support resettlement through these schemes. In East Sussex, this is led by district and borough councils. Eligible Afghan

families may be temporarily accommodated before accessing long term accommodation. The Council and our partners will continue to ensure people temporarily accommodated locally receive support and that statutory duties are met.

Visa schemes

5.10 Government visa schemes enable people from certain states to apply for visas, enter the UK, and access services, some benefits, and rights to work. Locally, we are seeing some people on work visas, who are not entitled to most benefits, struggling to maintain their independence, leading to financial problems and the need for voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) support. The Council will continue to engage with the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration and partners to secure funding, ensure access to support, and enable the integration of people living in East Sussex.

5.11 The Homes for Ukraine programme and partnership will continue to support the arrival, settlement, integration and independence of Ukrainians in East Sussex. The Council and partners will assess the impact of 2024 changes to visa routes for Ukrainians to ensure people receive the support they need.

Support for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

5.12 The Council remains committed to the [National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children](#). Children are well supported by a specialist team of practitioners who are experienced and skilled in understanding their needs, and the impact of their earlier life experiences. Whilst the National Transfer Scheme ensures funding for under 18s, there are significant budget pressures associated with those who become care leavers who often, due to complexities relating to their immigration status, require support until they reach the age of 25.

Future support

5.13 With developing national policy and legislation, as well as expected increased numbers of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in UK due to climate change and international conflicts, the Council anticipates needing to provide significant support to refugees and asylum seekers over the long term. This will require the continued development of local resources, knowledge, new and existing partnerships, and a strategic local and regional approach.

6. Communities

6.1 The following section outlines the Council's ongoing partnerships and work with local communities and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to connect people and places, build and develop a thriving VCSE sector and meet community needs, including keeping communities safe.

Financial Inclusion

6.2 The multi-agency Financial Inclusion Steering Group aims to enable all partners to better understand, develop and respond to the financial pressures that residents are experiencing. Our Financial Inclusion Programme priorities continue to include providing central information on finance support; working with partners to deliver the East Sussex money guiders training programme; promoting the Low Income Families Tracker to identify those most in need of support; commissioning and delivering relevant targeted services; and using research and insight to ensure efficient use of collective resources and targeting of support.

Household Support Fund

6.3 The Financial Inclusion Programme manages the Department for Work and Pensions' Household Support Fund in East Sussex. The Council and delivery partners ensure the funding

received from Government reaches vulnerable households through a number of initiatives, including food vouchers for 2-19 year olds eligible for free school meals over school holidays; targeted campaigns; and work with departments and partners to deliver funding and information. The national extension of the Household Support Fund will continue to provide this financial support to low income households in need until September 2024.

Working with the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector

6.4 Our Third Sector Support programmes (Volunteering, VCSE Infrastructure, Patient and Resident Voice) connect people and places, build and develop a thriving VCSE sector, and promote a preventative approach to meeting community needs. The Council invests in the VCSE Alliance and will continue to work with it and Partnership Plus on programmes including: Tackling Loneliness Stewardship; VCSE Commissioning Excellence; Community Networks Support; and Multi-Agency Financial Inclusion. The Council invests in two major strands of activity linked to volunteering: encouraging and nurturing volunteering via Generic VCSE Infrastructure Services; and a platform to support/promote organisations that engage volunteers and to help people view local volunteering opportunities.

Community Network Support Programme

6.5 The Council will continue to work with partners on the Community Network Support Programme to develop the 66 networks across the county and determine factors and measures that comprise successful community networks. The programme will support networks with governance, operations, resourcing, communication, and partnership working. The programme will signpost to existing support and co-develop and test new support with partners.

Community Safety

Drug and Alcohol Misuse

6.6 The Government's 10 year combatting drugs strategy [From Harm to Hope](#) will continue to shape the local response to drug and alcohol misuse. The strategy has three main aims: to break drug supply chains; to deliver a world class treatment and recovery system; and to achieve a generational shift in the demand for drugs.

6.7 Locally, this work is overseen by the Harm to Hope Board and the different strands of work are addressed by specialist sub-groups. The work will contribute towards increasing the number of people in structured treatment, a reduction in drug-related deaths, and an increase in people leaving prison and transferring to community treatment. It will take a systemic, multi-agency approach, drawing on local partners including health and Sussex Police. Due to additional ring-fenced funding ending in March 2025, some services may be decommissioned and work to re-model treatment and recovery services will be the focus for the year ahead.

Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls

6.8 The pan-Sussex Domestic Abuse Partnership Board will lead on conducting the full needs assessment and strategy for 2024 to identify local gaps and priorities for commissioning domestic abuse safe accommodation support. The results of the 2024 Needs Assessment will inform Council planning, policy, commissioning and budgets. The new burdens funding granted for 2021-2025 will continue to support council programmes and projects for victims/survivors.

6.9 The [Victims and Prisoners Act](#), passed before parliament was dissolved for the general election, will put specialist domestic and sexual abuse advocates on a statutory footing and will require commissioning authorities to collaborate in the commissioning of victim services. This

will support the Council's existing joint commissioning of specialist victim services with the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner's Office and NHS Sussex.

6.10 The Home Office is due to launch a public consultation on the Domestic Homicide Review statutory guidance in 2024. Expected changes include updated guidance for cases of suicide, which may impact Council commissioning, and coordinating domestic homicide reviews, which may have planning and resource implications for the Council and partners.

6.11 The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office is conducting a year long Domestic Homicide Oversight Mechanism pilot, with East Sussex as a pilot site to inform national roll out. The pilot will aim to understand ways to bring greater oversight from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office to the implementation of domestic homicide review recommendations.

6.12 The Council has reinstated our White Ribbon accreditation, following a successful application in 2024. As part of this accreditation we will deliver an ambitious action plan by February 2027 to demonstrate our commitment to ending violence against women and girls.

Serious Violence

6.13 Councils play a key role in tackling serious violence, and the Safer Communities Partnership evidence based needs assessment and Serious Violence Strategy 2023 will continue to focus on four key areas: early intervention and approaches; support for young people and vulnerable adults at risk of exploitation; supporting exploiters and high harm offenders to change their behaviour; and work with communities in areas most at risk.

6.14 Home Office funding for interventions to tackle serious violence is due to end in March 2025. This raises concerns about the sustainability of funded interventions in Children's Services, such as work to divert young people away from knife crime, and child exploitation interventions including keywork, groupwork, and support to parent mentors. The Government has announced £75m for Violence Reduction Partnerships, however this is subject to the Spending Review to take place after the general election.

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

6.15 The Council will continue to play a key role in tackling modern slavery including identifying, referring and supporting victims; with community safety services and disruption activities; and by ensuring supply chains are free from modern slavery. There will be new recommendations arising from the [Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act](#) which could have implications for the Council around the need to ensure transparency in supply chains. Organisations in council supply chains and commissioned organisations are legally required to publish a slavery and human trafficking statement on how they will address Modern Slavery. We will be assessing compliance with legislation through the Local Government Association Modern Slavery 'maturity matrix'.

Preventing Violent Extremism

6.16 The threat to the UK from terrorism remains substantial (meaning an attack is likely). The Home Office has refreshed the [Prevent Duty toolkit](#) to support local authorities in meeting the Prevent Duty. The benchmarks within the toolkit will form part of an annual assurance process on the local delivery of Prevent. It is anticipated the Council will successfully meet all benchmarks in the 2024 annual assessment.

6.17 The Council will convene the Prevent Group to implement the recommendations in the [Independent Review of Prevent's report and government response](#). The Safer Communities

team will work alongside the Estates Team to ensure alignment with the [Protect Duty](#) which introduces new security requirements for certain public locations and venues to ensure preparedness for, and protection from, terrorist attacks.

Home Office Review of Community Safety Partnerships

6.18 The Home Office reviewed the role of Community Safety Partnerships and antisocial behaviour powers in 2023. Two changes arising from the review may impact the Council: the lowering of the age of a Community Protection notice and extending Drug Testing on Arrest powers to beyond the custody suite.

Trading Standards

6.19 Two new pieces of national legislation include additional statutory duties for Trading Standards. The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024, passed immediately before parliament was dissolved for the general election, will regulate areas such as online marketplaces and deal with issues such as fake reviews and will give Trading Standards, along with the Competitions and Markets Authority, powers to investigate, intervene and enforce.

6.20 The Tobacco and Vape Bill 2024, intended to ensure anyone who turns 15 or younger in 2024 will never legally be sold tobacco products, was not enacted prior to the election and it is unclear whether or how it will now be progressed. The Bill includes powers for Trading Standards to enforce the legislation as well as regulating the flavours and contents of vaping products and the packaging and product presentation of vaping products.

Local resilience arrangements

6.21 The UK Government Resilience Framework, launched in December 2022, set out the ambition to significantly strengthen the UK's strategic approach to resilience. This has already resulted in a number of national changes, such as the creation of a new UK Resilience Forum and a new Resilience Directorate in the Cabinet Office. Further guidance is awaited on the role of Local Resilience Forums, supporting vulnerable groups and the development of a social-economic resilience index to inform decision making. The Emergency Planning team will continue to monitor updates in this area to ensure our ongoing preparedness and amend plans in light of any new guidance or government requirements.

National planning reforms

6.22 A number of changes and reforms to the planning system were set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, although the majority require the introduction of secondary legislation, or changes to existing national planning policy. Some of these have already been made and consultations have taken place or are expected on various changes to the planning system including further extensions to permitted development rights and revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework, particularly those that relate to planning for housing.

6.23 The vast majority of the recent and emerging planning changes have some impact upon the County Council, both within our county planning authority role and through our statutory consultee and infrastructure provider role. There has been a particular emphasis from Government on seeing up to date Local Plans in place. This is of particular relevance to East Sussex, with the vast majority of the local planning authorities in the county not having such plans and therefore being susceptible to speculative and unplanned development proposals. Over the course of the coming two to three years the County Council will need to support these planning authorities in the production of their Local Plans, especially through our statutory roles (highways, flood risk and infrastructure planning and provision). It will also be important for the County Council, in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority and Brighton &

Hove City Council, to make timely progress on a full review of the Waste and Minerals Plan, which is due to commence in summer 2024.

6.24 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act also proposed reforms to the approach to development funded infrastructure and the introduction of the Infrastructure Levy. An initial consultation on the potential approach to the Infrastructure Levy was undertaken in spring 2023. Whilst the County Council welcomed the principle behind some aspects of the levy, we expressed a number of concerns, not least that it is unlikely to raise enough resources to properly fund both affordable housing and infrastructure provision. There are also concerns around the influence that county councils will have on spending decisions and the complexity of the system, which will require significant resources, skills and time to set up and implement. Further consultations are expected on the proposed Infrastructure Levy and it has been envisaged that implementation would be phased in over a 10 year period through a 'test and learn' approach. It will be important for the County Council to continue to assess and respond to such consultations, as well as working closely with the local planning authorities to ensure that there is the best possible chance of funding local infrastructure needs.

7. Highways and Transport

7.1. This section sets out a range of national and local developments impacting on transport planning and infrastructure in the county, encompassing highways maintenance, road safety, the update to the Local Transport Plan and associated strategies, and planned improvements to local public transport.

Highways Maintenance

7.2. Balfour Beatty Living Places' contract for highways and infrastructure services in East Sussex has been in place for one year and has delivered on a number of road and footway maintenance and improvement schemes. This has included works above and beyond our usual programmes using additional funding provided by Cabinet. ESCC continues to face significant challenges in efficiently maintaining the network and addressing the increased deterioration of road and footway surfaces across the county. Work to improve the network will continue in 2024/25 and is scheduled to include:

- The replacement of 427 signs, focused on missing or damaged signs, and to include further work to clean signs and clear vegetation or other obstructions where necessary.
- 53 larger drainage schemes, after focusing on the delivery of quick and simple drainage schemes using additional funding in 2023/24.
- Using the remaining budget for the refresh of road markings to renew the lining along the A22 Hailsham bypass and around 600 further sites across the county.

7.3. ESCC continues to invest more in highway maintenance than the grant we receive from Government. Funding from the Department for Transport accounts for only £60m out of a total £120m investment in highway capital maintenance over the last four years. Even with the authority continuing to invest in this asset, we will never be able to address the total backlog of issues on our network without more long-term funding.

Local Transport Plan

7.4. The [East Sussex Local Transport Plan](#) (LTP) sets out our strategy and policies for how we plan to invest in improving transport and maintaining the roads in the county to meet transport needs. With considerable recent changes in national, regional and local policy related to the environment, health and economy, including the declaration of a climate emergency, the LTP covering the period 2024 to 2050 (LTP4) will influence how we plan and deliver transport in East Sussex in the future. We have embraced a vision-led approach in the review of the plan to

factor in the uncertainties of the future and to prioritise the needs of business, people and the places that they wish to live and work in.

7.5. Public and stakeholder consultation on the [draft LTP4](#) was undertaken between November 2023 and February 2024. The outcomes of the consultation are being analysed, including recommending any changes to the draft strategy. Formal approval of the updated plan will be sought in autumn 2024. The Rail Strategy and Freight Strategy, both supporting LTP4, will also be developed during 2024.

7.6. The LTP4 and associated documents will act as a strategic platform for prioritising and determining future investment in transport infrastructure in the county within the resources available. Opportunities to successfully secure external funding (usually via competitive bidding rounds) may impact on our ability to deliver on the strategy in the future.

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

7.7. ESCC received £41.4m in BSIP funding from the Department for Transport (DfT), of which £22m was capital and £19m was revenue. £20m of the capital funding was allocated to deliver bus priority measures which are to be delivered by October 2025. £13m of the revenue funding was allocated to bus service improvements, including Digital Demand Responsive Transport services, which are funded to April 2026. £5m of the revenue funding was allocated to reducing fares, which will provide reduced fares in East Sussex until April 2025.

7.8. Our updated BSIP, due to be submitted to the DfT in July 2024, covers progress to date and future bus service improvements that we would wish to deliver as part of the BSIP. There has been no confirmation of further BSIP funding beyond 2024/25. The DfT has indicated a BSIP may be required in 2025 and that funding may be allocated based on that submission. There has been no information provided on the scale or timescales of that funding.

7.9. Delivery of the East Sussex BSIP has supported local bus passenger growth with the county having the third highest growth in passenger numbers in England in 2022/23 compared to pre-pandemic levels. Additional bus service users have helped reverse the decline in bus use in the county and enabled bus operators to sustain more commercial services. However, ever increasing operational costs to run bus services mean that, without further external funding, there may be significant challenges beyond 2025/26 in sustaining the current level of bus service provision in the county.

Active travel

7.10. Our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), adopted in September 2020, sets out proposed local cycling and walking networks and measures for the key coastal towns and the market towns within the county. It provides a basis for seeking funding for walking, wheeling (wheelchairs and mobility scooters) and cycling infrastructure projects and is being used to inform the review of borough and district councils' Local Plans. The LCWIP will be refreshed in 2024 as a supporting document to LTP4.

7.11. At a national level, Active Travel England (ATE), sponsored by DfT, supports walking, wheeling and cycling. ESCC's local authority self-assessed active travel grade has been confirmed by ATE as Level 1, which has secured funding to deliver town centre based walking schemes and the development of pipeline schemes for future capital funding bids. These pipeline schemes include school streets schemes and an area based cycle scheme which have involved collaborative and co-design activities with communities and learning opportunities.

7.12. In the next year we are hoping to build on our current ATE level 1 assessment to unlock further external funding from ATE and support the delivery of the vision and objectives set out within our LTP. Without significant external funding investment towards these programmes we will not be able to deliver our ambitious plans for active travel infrastructure in the county.

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

7.13. The [National Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy](#) was published in 2022, although last year the Government announced the push back of its proposal to end the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 to 2035. The Council is committed to developing a strategy to support the growing needs of Electric Vehicles (EV) users within East Sussex. To reflect the national strategy at a local level, a draft EV Charging Strategy has been developed as a supporting document to our draft LTP4, subject to public and stakeholder consultation during 2024.

7.14. The ability to charge at or close to home is a major concern to many EV users and is a main priority within both the national and local EV charging strategies. In November 2023, we secured £4.4m under tranche 1 of the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund which will help the Council to scale up the delivery of local on-street chargepoints. This will enable more residents, especially those without off-street parking, to switch to EVs. The funding will also be used to provide chargepoints on the County Hall campus.

7.15. Separate grant funding has also been made available to local residents with no off-street parking to introduce EV chargepoints on their properties. This has implications for the Council in relation to licencing the installation of cable gully channels in the footway, as well as the liability and maintenance of these channels, alongside how this affects the commercial viability of potential on-street chargepoints delivered using the LEVI funding.

7.16. Procurement for a chargepoint operator will be undertaken during 2024 with an expectation that the initial roll out of on-street chargepoints will commence in late 2024/25. Following the initial investment and installation of chargepoints across the county, public take up will determine the future direction of this work. There is the potential that a proportion of the income generated can be used to support Council services.

Transport for the South East (TfSE)

7.17. TfSE's Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) was submitted to Government in March 2023. DfT has said that due consideration will be given to the plan when advising ministers on future policy and investment decisions. A SIP Delivery Action Plan has been established which requires the input of a number of different partners working together. The Action Plan is updated annually with progress of schemes and supported by an online interactive map-based tool.

7.18. TfSE is currently refreshing its Transport Strategy to take account of the impact of recent events including the pandemic, the UK leaving the European Union and recent changes in government policy. Technical work to refresh the strategy is underway with the strategy due to be submitted to Government in October 2025, following public consultation in early 2025.

Road Safety

7.19. A Speed Management Programme will review all A and B roads across the county during 2024/25 to ensure that the existing speed limits are the most appropriate for the road conditions and ensure that they are effective. Sections of road identified through this programme will have reduced speed limits extended or introduced, and measures to ensure compliance with existing limits where necessary.

7.20. We are continuing to implement innovative behaviour change focused projects which aim to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured (KSI) on the county's road network. A new behaviour change trial, in partnership with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), was launched in February 2024 and will continue into 2024/25. The trial targets young drivers and uses existing DVSA communication channels to engage with them in the six months after they pass their test. Communications are designed to address a range of behaviours which influence driving, reinforce the legitimacy of speed limits and the costs of driving unsafely. The trial is intended to reduce the overall rate of speeding offences, which evidence indicates is a suitable proxy for reducing the future risk of being involved in a KSI collision. The impact of the trial will be assessed in 2025.

Strategic Road Network (A27/A21)

7.21. The Government's second Roads Investment Strategy (RIS2), covering the period 2020-2025, identified that further work will be undertaken on developing proposals for the A27 between Lewes and Polegate as a potential pipeline scheme for construction between 2025 and 2030. A study outlining potential options for the A27 was submitted to DfT by National Highways (NH) for consideration alongside other RIS3 pipeline scheme studies.

7.22. NH's Strategic Road Network Initial Report and South Coast Central Initial Report, published in May 2023, indicated that the A27 between Lewes and Polegate will slip to become a RIS4 (2030 to 2035) pipeline project. This follows on from the announcement made in March 2023 by the Secretary of State for Transport that the development and potential delivery of the majority of RIS3 pipeline schemes across the country would slip due to a combination of factors having an impact on the Government's capital roads investment programme. We will continue to engage with NH and DfT to make the case for investment in a more comprehensive solution for the A27 between Lewes and Polegate, as well as improvements to the A21.

Local Highways Programme – Major Road Network

7.23. The Major Road Network (MRN) sits between the Strategic Road Network, which is the responsibility of NH, and the local road network, which is the responsibility of local authorities, and includes the busiest and most economically important local authority A roads. The MRN intends to provide more long-term certainty of funding, with a portion of the National Roads Fund being dedicated to the MRN. A number of roads in East Sussex are part of the MRN, and various outline business cases developed and submitted to the DfT for funding. Ongoing delays in decisions mean that we may have to review the schemes to fit the funding being sought in order to meet inflationary pressures on construction costs.

7.24. The development and delivery of these packages of MRN funded schemes are required to meet infrastructure needs that will come forward through district and borough Local Plans, as well as supporting the objectives of LTP4, the new Economic Prosperity Strategy, and BSIP.

Rail services

7.25. The Draft Rail Reform Bill was put before Parliament for pre-legislative scrutiny in February 2024. The Bill sets out a number of reforms from the Government's Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail including the creation of a new public body, Great British Railways. Together these changes would have a significant impact on rail passengers and businesses in the county. It is important that we continue to be involved in future processes associated with the delivery of the Plan for Rail and engage with Great British Railways to ensure these changes benefit our residents, those visiting East Sussex, and businesses operating in and out of the county.

7.26. Following the Kent and East Sussex Rail Connectivity study, in May 2021 a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) which set out the strategic case for four options (two in East Sussex) to potentially improve rail connectivity to the Kent and East Sussex coast was submitted to Government. A formal response has yet to be received, however the scheme has been included in the Kent, Medway and East Sussex package of interventions in the TfSE SIP and the LTP4 Implementation Plan. In the meantime, local MPs and the local authorities in East Sussex and Kent have been working collaboratively to explore opportunities to lever in private sector finance or investment to fund the delivery of the rail schemes identified.

8. Economy

8.1 The following sections outline recent developments in Government policy and investment programmes that will affect the support we provide, with partners, to drive sustainable local economic growth in future. There will be challenges and limitations in the scope and scale of the delivery of some of this support in future, arising from reduced availability of growth funding for the county, as detailed in the sections below.

Transfer of Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Functions

8.2 In August 2023, Government confirmed its decision to discontinue LEP funding from April 2024. In light of this, South East LEP (SELEP), which covered East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock, took the decision to close operations, with LEP functions and responsibilities transitioning to upper tier local authorities in each of those areas from April 2024.

8.3 Since April 2024 ESCC has taken on relevant local SELEP responsibilities, including:

- Business representation – Team East Sussex (TES) will continue to operate in an advisory capacity, as the business-led strategic economic growth board for the county, providing the voice of business in steering the economic growth agenda.
- Strategic economic planning – The new East Sussex Economic Prosperity Strategy, jointly developed by the Council and TES, will be used to make the case for future access to Government programmes.
- The delivery of Government programmes – The Council is now the ‘accountable body’ responsible for current and future funding programmes and the Growth Hub.

8.4 A local Assurance Framework is being drafted to reflect these new responsibilities and the agreed LEP transition plan will be enacted through 2024/25.

East Sussex Economic Strategy

8.5 The transfer of LEP functions has placed even greater importance on the production of a new economic growth strategy for the county. The new strategy, titled East Sussex Prosperity, will be published imminently, as a strategy for the long term running to 2050, beyond current planning, economic and political cycles.

8.6 The strategy will seek to secure sustainable economic growth, setting out how, over the next generation, East Sussex can secure better opportunities and living standards for people who live in the county, and how businesses can flourish and grow sustainably. Although an attractive place to live, the county faces some significant economic challenges which have been persistent over time including low productivity, high costs relative to earnings, and sharp economic disparities within the county. The strategy seeks to address these challenges in the context of an economy which is likely to change radically in coming decades, as the county adapts to climate change and the transition to net zero, an ageing population, changing working patterns, and the consequences of ever more sophisticated digitalisation.

8.7 The transfer of strategic economic planning to the Council from SELEP is a welcome development. The strategic economic planning function is well placed to respond to any further evolution of government policy following the general election and to secure any new funding streams. Government has indicated that an annual review of the strategy may be required.

8.8 The Economic Development Team provides secretariat support to TES and will now include the transfer of the business representation function from SELEP. A new national assurance framework is awaited from Government, which could potentially require an open and regular recruitment process to further improve business membership of TES. There is also an expectation from TES that its sub-groups will play a greater role in delivering work to support it and the economic strategy. All five sub-groups are supported by ESCC.

Economic growth funding

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

8.9 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) focuses on three main investment themes: Communities and Place, Supporting Local Business, and People and Skills. It is managed by district and borough councils. A total allocation of £5.2m (across the five district and borough areas) has been made to East Sussex for the period April 2022 – March 2025. ESCC is working with district and borough partners to deliver pan-East Sussex business support programmes and skills interventions.

8.10 Future UKSPF monies or replacement programme (if any) will require decisions to be made before April 2025 when the current funding period comes to an end. This will likely require ESCC support in the preparation of new programme requirements such as investment and business plans, and the subsequent management and delivery of any projects.

Levelling Up Partnerships

8.11 In March 2023 Hastings and Rother were allocated £20m capital funding each from the Levelling Up Partnerships (LUPs) programme to deliver a tailored approach to place based regeneration, to be spent by March 2025. ESCC has worked with the two district and borough councils, Government and partners on various proposals, which has secured £7m of funding on five projects including Queensway Gateway Road, Hollington youth facility and Family Hub, other family and youth support services, and a combined skills capital fund for both areas.

8.12 The County Council has several teams involved in managing and delivering each of these projects which are timebound. The above assets will be owned by the Council (except for skills capital items) and will be managed within existing departmental resources.

Long Term Plan for Towns

8.13 The Long Term Plans for Towns was announced in October 2023, with both Hastings and Bexhill allocated £20m each, and Eastbourne also receiving a £20m allocation in March 2024. The grant funding is to be awarded as an endowment fund to be spent over a 10-year period, with 75% capital funding and 25% revenue funding. The priority investment themes to support the regeneration of the towns include community safety, high streets, heritage and regeneration, and transport and connectivity.

8.14 Each area is establishing a local board to agree the town's 10 year vision, and the priorities and spend which will form the long term town investment plan to be submitted by 1 August 2024. ESCC is directly involved in the strategic development of each town's investment plans and potentially identifying projects to address the investment themes for the initial first

three years allocation and throughout the 10 year lifetime of the programme. As a result, this programme will require ESCC officer support to be drawn in over a long period of time. Whilst this has the potential to bring in some external funding which would deliver on the Council's core priorities, this is not likely to replace existing budgeted activity.

Skills

8.15 National policy changes and reforms will continue to be considered and overseen by the Skills East Sussex (SES) Board, as well as local needs. The move towards Net Zero and the increase in automation and artificial intelligence (AI) remains a strong focus, as each has the potential to have significant implications. Skills East Sussex is identifying actions to address new skills needs and changes to employment that will be caused by these advances.

8.16 The Council's Employability and Skills Team run a number of programmes, some of which are time bound and subject to funding. The team will need to respond to substantial changes in policy and funding reforms in these areas, doing so in partnership across the Council and with external partners. Current programmes include:

- ongoing delivery via the acclaimed East Sussex Careers Hub and the ESTAR team (adult employability)
- Multiply numeracy programme (ends March 2025)
- 'Steps to Success' Effective Transitions pilot (ends March 2026)
- Moving on Up employability programme (ends March 2025),
- Support into Work for Ukrainians and refugee groups (ends October 2025)
- Homeless Prevention Employment project (ends March 2026)
- Levelling Up Partnership funding secured to deliver skills capital improvements in Hastings and Rother.

8.17 ESCC will continue to deliver Transform to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with advice on apprenticeships and skills training and help them to access government incentives and unspent levy funds to pay for apprenticeship training. Changes in government policy mean that in 2024/25, ESCC will be able to allocate up to 50% of its apprenticeship levy to local SMEs if not used by the Council for its internal apprenticeship programmes.

8.18 Changes in the post-16 education offer will continue to be implemented in 2024/25, with T-Levels (which require work experience placements) replacing taught vocational qualifications. The impact of these changes will be monitored to see whether they improve the quality and range of learning available to young people and adults, or if the work experience requirements reduce the volume of vocational provision in the county. Changes to Adult Education are being introduced this year, with greater emphasis placed on the programme as a vehicle for supporting adults towards employment and less opportunity for leisure-based learning.

8.19 Universal Support, a new Department for Work and Pensions programme, will resource employability programmes for unemployed people from specific cohorts, including care leavers, homeless adults, people with disabilities, those at risk of unemployment and refugees (including Ukrainians). The fund will be awarded to upper tier councils, subject to bidding processes, from November 2024 for three year programmes to support people into work and to retain employment.

Culture and tourism

8.20 ESCC, West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) have secured Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) accreditation for Sussex as part of a

national restructure of destination management led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and delivered by Visit England. This new framework will support the sector to become more accessible, sustainable and financially resilient, and act as the conduit for national training, sector toolkits and shared marketing collateral between Visit England and all Sussex destination marketing and management organisations. This will require ESCC, WSCC and BHCC to support a LVEP Board and a coordinating LVEP officer post, which will be hosted by BHCC as the LVEP accountable body. Whilst no future grant opportunities from Visit England have been confirmed, eligibility for any future funding will be dependent on the existence of the LVEP, which will be required to be the lead applicant for any future funding.

8.21 ESCC and WSCC have come together to develop Experience Sussex, a destination management organisation which will seek to achieve a £2.5bn increase in the value of the visitor economy over the next 30 years. ESCC is committed to an initial two years of investment to support this collaboration. Going forward, the Experience Sussex model will look to offset some budget requirement through commercial investment, earned income and collaboration with other stakeholders.

9. Environment and Climate Change

9.1 The following paragraphs detail the range of recent national commitments, strategies and legislation that impact the Council's work to deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation, protection and enhancement of the local natural environment, waste management and flood risk management. It is important to note that net zero is increasingly integrated into wider policy and whilst the policy context below outlines the main recent developments, it is not an exhaustive list of every new policy that touches on climate change. Much national guidance or detail on plans for delivery is still awaited, including clear expectations on how central and local government will interact in the delivery of net zero.

Climate change – national policy context

9.2 In 2021 the Government published its [Net Zero Strategy 'Build Back Greener'](#). This did not include any statutory responsibility for local authorities to reduce carbon emissions but did indicate that local authorities are widely considered to have a key role in decarbonising services such as local transport, waste disposal, public buildings and other local services. More broadly, local authorities are seen to have a key role to play in creating change amongst residents and businesses via their investment and procurement decisions, planning and placemaking responsibilities, and by direct engagement with residents.

9.3 In 2022 the Government-commissioned [Independent Review of Net Zero, 'Mission Zero'](#), again identified the key role of local government and recommended several policy changes, including simplifying the fragmented funding landscape for local net zero projects. Government responded to the review in the 2023 [Net Zero Growth Plan](#). The plan made few hard commitments for local government but did promise to pilot a devolved approach to building retrofit as part of devolution deals and explore simplification of the net zero funding landscape.

9.4 In September 2023, the Prime Minister announced a 'new approach to net zero', which delayed or removed several net zero commitments. This included delaying the proposed bans on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans, and the installation of new oil and gas boilers and new coal heating for off-gas-grid homes to 2035.

9.5 Every five years, the Government produces an assessment of the risks and opportunities from climate change and how it plans to adapt. The current report, the [National](#)

[Adaptation Programme 3](#), explains the Government's plans to adapt to climate change during 2023 to 2028, including how it will:

- Adapt infrastructure (for example, our electricity networks and railways).
- Protect buildings and their surroundings (for example, from hotter temperatures).
- Mitigate international impacts on the UK (for example, on imported food supplies)

Local action on climate change

9.6 ESCC declared a climate emergency in 2019. The Council set a target of achieving carbon neutrality from its own activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050. This is in line with the updated national target agreed in 2019. ESCC has committed to cutting its corporate carbon emissions by an average of 13% per year and set aside an additional £9.9m to help meet this reduction target for the period up to March 2025. Actions to implement the Council's own climate change commitments are set out in the [Climate Emergency Plan](#), covering the period 2023 – 2025. A plan for the period 2025 – 2030 is in development.

9.7 The cost for the Council to get to net zero for building and transport emissions (scope 1 and 2) could be approximately £200m between now and 2050, largely due to the investment needed for decarbonising heat in buildings, including schools. ESCC has secured over £1.9m of external funding to contribute to covering these costs, but there remains a very large gap between the resources available and the resources required to get to net zero.

9.8 Even if global warming can be limited to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, significant additional investment is likely to be needed in measures to adapt to the effects of climate change that are already locked in. ESCC's Climate Emergency Plan makes the following commitments to ensure that the council can continue to operate effectively as the climate changes, which we are currently in the process of implementing:

- Assessing the council's vulnerability to climate change
- Producing a climate risk register
- Developing a climate adaptation/resilience strategy and programme
- Embedding climate adaptation into business as usual decision making and risk management.

9.9 The Council continues to progress work with partners on climate mitigation and adaptation across the county through the [Climate Emergency Road Map](#) overseen by the East Sussex Environment Board. The road map summarises many areas of work that the Council leads, or collaborates with partners on, to mitigate and adapt to climate change. A range of existing thematic partnerships will also continue to address climate change in East Sussex, including partnerships covering housing, waste, skills and local planning.

Environment Act

9.10 The Environment Act 2021 placed a number of new duties and responsibilities on ESCC, the implications of which are covered below. These may also provide new opportunities to protect and enhance local ecology.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

9.11 Under the Act, ESCC is the Responsible Authority for producing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove. LNRSs are a means to identify and agree, at the local level, the priorities and actions needed to drive nature recovery and the wider environmental benefits that will arise from a healthy natural environment. They are intended to direct future effort and funding for nature recovery and must be developed in line

with secondary legislation and statutory guidance. Additional burden monies have been provided by Government for two years to help pay for the cost of developing the LNRS. It is currently unclear how implementation costs for the three to 10 year reviews of the LNRS that ESCC is expected to carry out will be covered.

9.12 ESCC is working closely with West Sussex County Council to share expertise and resources and to reduce the impact on shared stakeholders. Together, we are carrying out extensive stakeholder engagement, to be followed by a public consultation at the end of 2024, with publication of the final LNRS in summer 2025. Delivery of the LNRS will lie with a range of stakeholders, including ESCC.

Biodiversity

9.13 The Environment Act requires new developments to deliver a minimum of a 10% gain in biodiversity, known as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This became mandatory for major developments in January 2024 and for all others (with a few exemptions) in April 2024. Once published, the LNRS is expected to guide the delivery of BNG to the best strategic locations for nature recovery. All off-site BNG and any 'significant on-site' (to be locally defined) BNG must be maintained and monitored for at least 30 years following development, secured through planning conditions and/or legal agreements.

9.14 The Government has provided additional burden monies to help assess and monitor the implementation of BNG. Early indications suggest that this is unlikely to be sufficient to cover all costs. In preparation for BNG, ESCC has been actively upskilling relevant local planning authority officers and teams, primarily through the Sussex Nature Partnership, which is hosted by ESCC, and through service level agreements with the district and borough councils for the provision of ecological advice for planning.

9.15 The requirement for habitat sites to be created to cater for BNG offers the opportunity for planning authorities, including ESCC, to use their own land holdings to offset their own developments, and potentially to sell BNG 'credits' to other developers looking to purchase off-site BNG. Given the relatively small amount of land ESCC owns, opportunities are likely to be limited, and it should be recognised that habitat banks require an initial investment to establish.

9.16 The Environment Act also strengthens the existing Biodiversity Duty and requires all public authorities to consider what action they can take to further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and to report on progress against that duty. ESCC published its [Biodiversity Duty first considerations report](#) in December 2023 in line with statutory guidance. The first report on progress and delivery, which will include reporting on the delivery of BNG, must be published no later than three years after that date, with subsequent reports published every five years. No additional burdens funding is expected to support this duty.

Waste provisions

9.17 The Environment Act introduces several changes to how waste services operate. Changes will include the introduction of extended producer responsibility for packaging in 2024, the provision of weekly food waste collections in 2026, and the introduction of a deposit return scheme in 2027. These changes will impact the Council's waste contracts, will require changes to facilities and will alter the amount of waste and recycling that we manage.

Air quality

9.18 The Environment Act significantly strengthened the duties on upper tier authorities with respect to air quality. It requires all tiers of government (and neighbouring authorities) to co-

operate in the development of action plans where Air Quality Management Areas have been declared. Statutory guidance states that if a borough or district council intends to prepare an Air Quality Action Plan, ESCC must propose specific measures it will take to help secure the achievement and maintenance of air quality standards and objectives in the relevant area, including target dates. Currently, there are two air quality management areas in East Sussex, one covering a part of Lewes town and one covering part of Newhaven. These were both declared prior to the Environment Act 2021 and the Air Quality Action Plans produced by Lewes District Council were developed with input from ESCC.

Flood risk management

9.19 Government has been seeking to implement legislation that would see local flood authorities (such as ESCC) take on responsibility for the approval, adoption and maintenance of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) constructed as part of new developments. This would have significant implications for the Council's Flood Risk Management Team, as currently our role is restricted to commenting on proposed drainage schemes at the design stage. Consultation on secondary legislation, new burdens assessments, and matters such as transitional arrangements was expected in 2023, but did not take place. Until further details emerge resource and budget implications for the Council cannot be established.

UK Emissions Trading Scheme

9.20 In July 2023 the Government proposed expanding the UK Emissions Trading Scheme to include the energy from waste sector from 2028 onwards to help the UK achieve its net zero target. The energy from waste sector is responsible for about 1% of UK carbon emissions. Inclusion of Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility in the UK Emissions Trading Scheme will have significant financial and operational impacts from 2028 onwards. All facilities will need to decarbonise or pay for allowances. Consultation is expected on this proposal, to which the Council will respond, aiming to influence the national policy direction.

10. Supporting Services

10.1 The below section provides updates on key local and national developments for ESCC's supporting services. Local priorities are to deliver the implementation phase of the Modernising Back Office Systems programme; respond to workforce and pay challenges; continue delivery of the Council's Property Asset Management Plan including office space rationalisation; exploration of productivity enhancements potentially afforded by artificial intelligence; and adaptation to new procurement regulations. Preparations will also be made for the County Council election in May 2025.

Modernising Back Office Systems Programme

10.2 The Modernising Back Office Systems (MBOS) programme was established to replace the Council's core finance and human resources (HR) systems. The current system, SAP, will no longer be supported by the supplier beyond 2027, so a replacement system is necessary. Replacing a system originally implemented over 15 years ago provides opportunities to take advantage of new technology which is better able to support an agile and flexible workforce and provide easily accessible data and insight to support management decision making.

10.3 Following an extensive and robust procurement process, Oracle Fusion was selected as the new software platform, and Infosys as the implementation partner. The replacement system offers the opportunity to deliver benefits including a better user experience, undertaking transactional activity (freeing staff up to focus on more complex and value-added advice), and better availability of data and management reporting.

10.4 The programme is in its implementation period which requires process changes to be made across the Council as ways of working are updated, including by introducing new functionality such as self-service for tasks such as submitting timesheets and requisitions.

10.5 Following the deferral of the programme go-live date from November 2023, an independent assessment of the programme has recently been undertaken and work is in progress to set out a revised delivery approach, timings and associated resource requirement. A phased approach to implementation is now being taken with some changes in organisational ways of working, supported by considerable staff and wider engagement.

Workforce challenges

10.6 The Council continues to face significant recruitment and retention challenges as a result of the current national labour market conditions and cost of living pressures. Locally, there are particular challenges in front line social care roles (qualified and unqualified) and some of our technical and professional roles such as legal services and engineering. The position is exacerbated in our more rural locations with recruitment in these areas being especially difficult. There is evidence to show that this tight labour market is putting pressure on pay levels.

10.7 In order to respond to these pressures and attract staff to work for the Council, plans include building on our 'We Choose East Sussex' recruitment brand to create additional engaging and informative content on the jobs pages of our website. Alongside this, we will attend local recruitment fairs to showcase the range of job opportunities at the Council and to connect with those who are looking for work. An important element of this will be to set out clearly the benefits of working for the Council and how we are an 'employer of choice'.

10.8 As well as seeking to attract experienced individuals, we are also utilising approaches such as apprenticeships, traineeships and intern arrangements as a way of bringing new talent into the Council. We are currently in the process of developing a 'work experience' package, the intention being to provide opportunities to support individuals to become work ready as well as encouraging individuals to consider the Council as the place to start their career.

10.9 Recent changes to the Apprenticeship Levy will enable us to transfer up to 50% of our levy to non-levy paying employers. We will build on the work undertaken to date through the Transform project to support small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in priority sectors to access our levy funding, supporting the skills development of our local population.

10.10 Retention of our workforce is also a key aim. We are committed to supporting our staff with continuous professional development and creating an environment where staff are encouraged to learn and grow. In line with this, our updated People Strategy covering the three year period 2024 to 2027 has recently launched and, alongside this, a second cohort of our innovative 'Ladder to Leadership' programme has commenced. We continue to develop our extensive wellbeing offer to support our staff to remain healthy and well, both in and out of work.

Pay challenges

10.11 The introduction of the National Living Wage (NLW) created pressures as a result of its close proximity to the bottom end of the local government pay scales. Given the national employers' principle that local government should not be a minimum wage employer, maintaining headroom between the lowest rate of pay and the NLW has been a key objective of the recent national pay awards. The current top-end forecast of the NLW will have a significant impact on the lower end of the local East Sussex Single Status pay scales, in particular the first two grades. These grades currently cover a range of posts, the majority of which are in schools.

10.12 To address the NLW pressures, recent national pay awards have removed pay points at the bottom end of the pay structure. Whilst this has addressed the immediate NLW pressures, a continuation of this approach in future pay awards will likely result in the need for the local Single Status pay scales to be remodelled.

Property asset management

10.13 The Council's Asset Management Plan 2020-2025 includes an action plan to ensure operational assets are used efficiently, and a programmed approach to asset disposal has been established. There is continued focus on ensuring our assets are optimally utilised and continue to reduce their carbon and physical footprint. In 2024/25 this will include the office space in Eastbourne reducing from two office hubs to one, and office space in Hastings being reduced further. The use of County Hall is also being reviewed, reflecting its decreased utilisation post-Covid, and options for future use are currently being considered. There are also increased opportunities for reducing the wider estate, reflecting revised service models and rationalising use where possible.

10.14 The Council has an ambitious disposal of assets programme to secure capital receipts that will support the capital programme. The Community Asset Policy will be updated during 2024/25 which will allow a small number of assets with low monetary value to be available for potential disposals by community groups, voluntary sector and parish councils.

Technology supporting productivity

10.15 Developments in process automation and artificial intelligence (AI) present opportunities for the Council to support organisational capacity and resilience. IT & Digital will work with departments to support the identification and readiness of processes for automation and the enhancement of service delivery using AI capabilities. A Data Protection and Information Security Policy, supported by practical guidance, is being developed to support the responsible use of Generative AI technologies, such as ChatGPT, as departments explore specific uses.

10.16 Investment of resources will be required to provide skilled support and establish the technology infrastructure and prerequisite data architecture. AI fundamentally draws from datasets to learn, harvest and present information. If the right data does not exist, or is not of sufficient quality, it may not be possible to use AI for the intended purpose or there could be harmful consequences of doing so. A corporate Data and Insight Plan is being developed to set out activity required to help address this.

Procurement

10.17 The Procurement Act 2023 will come into force in October 2024. The legislation will have a significant impact on procurement teams over the next two years and beyond, and work is underway to understand how existing processes, systems, people, and planned procurement activity will be impacted. All staff in the procurement service will require a minimum of 10 hours of Cabinet Office issued training and many will need to complete three days 'deep-dive' training. In addition, there will be internal training requirements relating to local systems and processes, with relevant commissioners across the Council also needing to understand the impact of the Act and attend briefings as necessary. The resource implications of the planning, training and implementation will have a significant impact on the available capacity of the procurement team. This is in addition to Provider Selection Regime changes that came into effect in January 2024.

10.18 A revised National Procurement Policy Statement is due to be released in autumn 2024. This will align with the new regulations and continue to support our approach to social value and sustainable procurement.

Local Elections

10.19 The next County Council election is scheduled to take place in May 2025. Work will take place over the coming year to provide information to prospective candidates about the Council's work and the role of a county councillor through our 'Be a councillor' campaign. A comprehensive induction programme will be prepared for newly elected councillors to support them in taking up their roles. We will work closely with district and borough councils, who administer the election on behalf of the County Council, on the statutory election process.

Our priority and delivery outcomes

Appendix 3

The Council has four overarching priority outcomes: driving sustainable economic growth; keeping vulnerable people safe; helping people help themselves; and making best use of resources now and for the future. Making best use of resources now and for the future is the gateway priority through which any activity and accompanying resources must pass. For each priority outcome there are specific delivery outcomes.

Proposed amendments to the delivery outcomes are shown in red bold text below.

Driving sustainable economic growth - delivery outcomes

- East Sussex businesses are supported to succeed and grow sustainably
- The county is an attractive place to live, work and do business
- Individuals, communities and businesses thrive in East Sussex with the environmental, and social infrastructure to meet their needs
- The workforce has and maintains the skills needed for good quality employment to meet the needs of the current and future East Sussex economy
- The value of our role as both a significant employer and a buyer of local goods and services is maximised
- All children progress well from early years through school and into post-16 education, training and employment

Keeping vulnerable people safe - delivery outcomes

- All vulnerable people in East Sussex are known to relevant local agencies and ~~services~~ **are support is** delivered together to meet their needs
- People feel safe at home and well supported by their networks
- Children grow up supported by enduring, loving relationships
- People feel safe with ~~services~~ **support provided**
- We work with the wider health and care system to support people to achieve the best outcomes possible

Helping people help themselves - delivery outcomes

- Commissioners and providers from all sectors put people first when providing services and information to help them meet their needs
- The most vulnerable get the support they need to maintain their independence and this is provided at or as close to home as possible
- Through working well with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, individuals, families and communities are supported to thrive
- **We work to reduce health inequalities and maximise opportunities for our residents to live healthier lives**

Making best use of resources now and for the future - delivery outcomes

- To help tackle Climate Change East Sussex County Council activities are carbon neutral as soon as possible and in any event by 2050
- We work as One Council
- We work in strong and sustained partnership with the public, voluntary community, social enterprise and private sectors to ensure that our collective resources and influence are used to deliver maximum benefits
- Ensuring we achieve value for money in the services we commission and provide
- Maximising the funding available through bidding for funding and lobbying for the best deal for East Sussex
- We are an employer of choice and support our staff to achieve and develop, ensuring we have the workforce we need to deliver services both now and in the future

Appendix 4 – State of the County 2024 Capital Programme Update

1 Background

- 1.1 Through the Reconciling Policy Performance and Resources (RPPR) process the Capital Strategy and programme are reviewed annually to ensure that they support the Council's responsibilities and departmental service strategies. To manage investment to a sustainable level, the Capital Strategy focuses on the delivery of targeted basic need for the council to continue to deliver services as efficiently as possible, rather than rationing through prioritisation. Basic need for the purpose of strategic capital planning is provided below: -
- Place: ensuring we can deliver services by planning for future need.
 - Asset Condition: maintaining our assets to an agreed level.
 - ICT Strategy: ensure that our ICT is fit for purpose for delivering modern council services in a digital era and protecting data.
 - Climate Change: supporting the Council's aim of reaching carbon neutrality from our activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050 in an appropriate and cost-efficient way.
- 1.2 At Full Council in February 2024 the target led basic need capital strategy of 20 years, supported by a 10-year planned capital programme was approved. The capital programme 2023/24 to 2033/34 reported as part of the Budget in February 2024 had a total programme expenditure of £768.1m and a borrowing requirement of £383.3m. Table 1 below provides details of the approved capital programme and funding.

Table 1 – Capital Programme (Budget 2024) (£m)	Previous Year 2023/24	MTFP Period			2027/28 to 2033/34	Total
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27		
Gross Expenditure	80.139	96.690	98.128	67.216	495.749	837.922
Specific Funding	(10.822)	(30.472)	(23.276)	(2.609)	(2.612)	(69.791)
Net Expenditure	69.317	66.218	74.852	64.607	493.137	768.131
Formula Grants	(32.502)	(23.916)	(26.223)	(26.023)	(191.066)	(299.730)
Capital Receipts	(0.817)	(7.061)	(9.753)	-	-	(17.631)
Reserves and Revenue Set Aside	(18.979)	(3.098)	(6.709)	(8.507)	(11.598)	(48.891)
Developer Contributions Target	-	-	-	-	(18.588)	(18.588)
<i>Slippage Risk Factor</i>	-	(19.143)	(22.079)	-	41.222	0.000
Programme Borrowing	17.019	13.000	10.088	30.077	313.107	383.291

- 1.3 The financial outlook for local authorities is increasingly challenging, with uncertain funding allocations, inflationary pressure on contracts and wages, increasing service demands and the impact of national reforms leaving much uncertainty about the Council's future financial position. Capital investment decisions have a direct impact on the council's revenue budget, particularly relating to borrowing costs, and are therefore to be considered in the context of their impact on the MTFP. The Council will therefore continue to consider changes to the Capital Programme outside normal Capital Strategy updates that present a more realistic and affordable programme that reduces pressure on the MTFP position.

2 Capital Programme

- 2.1 Table 2 below summarises the gross movements since budget setting in February 2024, reflecting the 2023/24 outturn position, other updates made in accordance with approved governance and variation process, and proposed updates to be made in accordance with Capital Strategy principles. A detailed programme has been included at **Annex A**.

Table 2 - Capital Programme (gross) movements (£m)	Ref	Previous Year 2023/24	MTFP Period			2027/28 to 2033/34	Total
			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27		
Gross Expenditure Feb 2024		80.139	96.690	98.128	67.216	495.749	837.922
Approved Variations	A	5.741	11.595	10.775	1.333	4.958	34.402
Grove Park Project Update	B	-	(3.950)	3.000	(1.610)	1.001	(1.559)
Other Programme Updates	C	-	0.256	0.347	0.347	2.649	3.599
2023/24 Slippage / Reprofiles	D	(8.561)	3.714	4.400	0.674	(0.227)	0.000
2023/24 Over/Underspend		0.172	-	-	-	-	0.172
Revised Gross Expenditure		77.491	108.305	116.650	67.960	504.130	874.536
Slippage Risk Factor	E	-	(24.281)	(27.069)	(7.861)	59.211	0.000
Gross Expenditure (after slippage risk factor)		77.491	84.024	89.581	60.099	563.341	874.536

A Approved Variations

There is a gross increase to the programme of £34.4m relating to fully funded schemes having a net nil impact on the capital programme due to the identification of specific funding in accordance with the Capital Strategy, as summarised in Table 3 below:

Table 3 – Approved Variations since February 2024	Gross Variation (£m)
Climate Emergency works (reserves funding switch to revenue)	(0.535)
Climate Emergency works (specific grant funding)	0.859
Flood Management and SuDs in Schools (specific grant funding)	0.440
Real Time Passenger Information (revenue set aside)	0.218
Area Wide Traffic Management Scheme – School Streets (revenue set aside)	0.119
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (specific grant funding)	4.541
Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections (specific grant funding)	9.689
The Keep Solar PV (partner contributions)	0.070
Schools Delegated Capital (specific grant and schools contributions)	0.653
Growing Places Fund Loan Scheme (earmarked loan repayments)	4.958
IT & Digital Strategy Implementation – Oracle Implementation (reserves set aside)	13.390
Total Net Nil Approved Variations	34.402

B Grove Park Project Update

The Grove Park Project Board, with support from external consultancy partners, have undertaken an Options Appraisal of SEN school place provision at Grove Park, due to various construction and budgetary risks associated to the original proposal of additional nursery, secondary and sixth form places on the site. The Board have agreed to proceed with a project that delivers required secondary places and considers options for the provision of nursery places, which is considered to be the best option in managing risks and being affordable within the approved budget envelope. This update therefore presents a revised budget requirement based on the agreed option.

C Other Programme Updates

Other updates made in accordance with Capital Strategy principles relate to:

- Following government announcements of the 2024/25 grant allocation, the Schools Capital Building Improvements programme has been increased in line with anticipated grant value, being a cash limited programme that represent the value of formula grants received.
- The 10-year school basic need capital strategy has been reviewed and updated considering the need for temporary place provision over the MTFP period, resulting in a reduced requirement of £0.3m.

D 2023/24 Capital Programme Outturn

Total 2023/24 capital expenditure was £77.5m against an approved budget of £85.9m, resulting in a variation to budget of £8.4m. This variation is made up of £8.6m net slippage and £0.2m net overspend on the planned programme.

E Capital Slippage Risk Factor

The Capital Programme continues to experience significant levels of budget slippage compared to original budgets (£19m slippage in 2023/24 compared to original budget) which can undermine the planning process, particularly in terms of treasury management modelling and the impact of borrowing on the revenue budget over the medium term. A corporate capital risk factor has therefore been introduced from 2024/25 to reflect likely slippage based on a risk assessment of historic levels of actual expenditure and slippage at a project/programme level and has been updated following the 2023/24 outturn position.

3 Capital Programme Funding Update

- 3.1 Table 4 below provides movements in the council's borrowing requirement to reflect the 2023/24 outturn position, government funding announcements and other updates, reducing the council's borrowing requirement from £383.3m to £374.8m, of which £43.6m is expected over the period to 2026/27.
- 3.2 Current Treasury Management modelling for the direct costs of borrowing estimates that for every £10m of additional borrowing, there would be an associated revenue cost of approximately £750,000 per year over the full life of the asset (based on a 30 year asset life), although the profile of costs will vary dependent on a number of variables such as timing, internal cash balances and interest rates. As highlighted at budget setting in February 2024 the current planned programme borrowing requirement will need Treasury Management budget increases outside the current MTFP period.

Table 4 - Capital Programme Borrowing (£m)	Ref	Previous Year 2023/24	MTFP Period			2027/28 to 2033/34	Total
			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27		
Borrowing February 2024		17.019	13.000	10.088	30.077	313.107	383.291
Formula Grants Update	F	(6.033)	(1.436)	(0.500)	(0.500)	-	(8.469)
Capital Receipts Update	G	-	2.259	5.803	(8.870)	-	(0.808)
Revenue Contribution to Capital	H	1.827	-	-	-	-	1.827
Other Programme Changes	I	(0.261)	(3.740)	2.840	(1.670)	1.005	(1.826)
2023/24 Slippage / Reprofiles	J	(3.857)	2.038	2.843	(0.076)	(0.948)	0.000
2023/24 Over/Underspend		0.736	-	-	-	-	0.736
Slippage Risk Factor	E	-	(5.138)	(4.990)	(7.862)	17.990	0.000
Revised Borrowing		9.431	6.983	16.084	11.099	331.154	374.751

F Formula Grants Update

The capital programme is supported by £312.1m of non-specific formula grant, which represents 36% of the total gross programme funding. Formula grant assumptions reflect best estimates but noting that there continues to be risk in relation to these grants as values for future years are still yet to be announced. Formula Grant values have been updated to reflect the following announcements:

- **High Needs Provision:** Notification of additional High Needs Provision capital grants in 2023/24 and 2024/25 of £6.7m which will be allocated to the existing basic need programme. Assumptions for further years allocations over the MTFP period have been updated to minimum levels, as funding beyond 2025 is contingent on the outcomes of future Spending Reviews and additional capital funding beyond this period is not guaranteed.
- **Childcare Expansion Grant:** The DfE announced Childcare Expansion capital grant to support the expansion of current or new childcare places. Of the £0.823m council allocation, £0.659m has been allocated to fund existing programme expenditure, and it is intended to use the remaining £0.164m to support wraparound provision not currently included in the capital programme.
- **Traffic Signal Obsolescence and Green Light Fund:** New funding from the DfT announced in March 2024 totalling £0.613m to upgrade traffic signal systems and equipment.

G Capital Receipts Update

Review and refinement of Property Services schedule of capital receipts is undertaken on a regular basis with estimates based on Property Officers' professional judgement on a site by site basis. This is supported by the work undertaken recently and successfully getting a number of surplus properties to the point of sale. Following a recent review, it is suggested that anticipated capital receipts can be increased by £0.8m for capital planning purposes over the MTFP period.

H Revenue Contribution to Capital

Due to slippage within the capital programme, and to support the council's wider financial position in the year, it was agreed that two transfers for Capital Expenditure from Revenue Account (CERA) were not utilised to fund the capital programme during 2023/24, and were instead maintained within revenue to support the council's overspend position.

I Other Programme Changes

A number of other capital programme updates made in accordance with Capital Strategy principles have impacted the capital borrowing requirement, such as the review of the Grove Park Project Update, profile of capital reserves contributions and identification of developer contributions to fund basic need requirements.

J 2023/24 Capital Programme Outturn

Net variations within the 2023/24 capital programme have resulted in reprofile of borrowing requirements, and a minor increase to fund net overspends reported as part of the council's monitoring process.

- 3.3 The revised capital programme, taking into consideration the updates presented throughout this report, would reduce the level of borrowing to £43.6m in the period to 2026/27, which represents a reduction of £26.6m since the position reported in February 2024. It is estimated that this will have a favourable MTFP impact of £0.8m for cost of borrowing which will be incorporated into the MTFP revenue planning process.

4 Programme Update and Review / RPPR Next Steps

- 4.1 Work will now be progressed as part of the RPPR process to extend the programme by a further year to maintain a 10-year planning horizon and ensure continued links into, and support of, the Council's other strategies.

- 4.2 The draft capital programme after updates identified in this report would require capital programme borrowing of £43.6m up to 2026/27, the revenue cost of which would have a significant impact on the MTFP which is already in a large deficit position. It has therefore been agreed by CMT that a further review of the capital programme will be conducted as part of this year's RPPR cycle, to consider the implications of removing core council funded programmes / projects from the capital programme that increases the council's borrowing need.
- 4.3 The Capital Strategy will also be reviewed to ensure it continues to drive investment ambition in line with the Council's priorities and to continue to include equality impact assessments (EQIAs) as part of the capital RPPR process, whilst also providing for appropriate capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management within the context of sustainable, long-term delivery of services.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 This report provides an update on current approved capital programme as part of the annual RPPR cycle. Work will now be progressed as part of the RPPR process to extend the programme by a further year to maintain the 10-year planning horizon, link into and support the Council's other strategies, as well as a review of the programme to reduce the revenue impact of borrowing.

Annex A – Funding Summary and Detailed Capital Programme

Capital Programme Summary	Previous Year 2023/24	MTFP Period			2027/28 to 2033/34	Total
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27		
Gross Expenditure	77.491	108.305	116.650	67.960	504.130	874.536
Specific Funding	(9.028)	(33.835)	(35.338)	(4.692)	(2.612)	(85.505)
Net Expenditure	68.463	74.470	81.312	63.268	501.518	789.031
<i>Slippage Risk Factor</i>	-	(24.281)	(27.069)	(7.862)	59.212	0.000
Formula Grants	(38.736)	(25.558)	(27.130)	(26.930)	(193.715)	(312.069)
Capital Receipts	(0.817)	(4.802)	(3.950)	(8.870)	-	(18.439)
Reserves and Revenue Set Aside	(19.479)	(12.846)	(7.079)	(8.507)	(17.277)	(65.188)
Developer Contributions Target	-	-	-	-	(18.584)	(18.584)
Programme Borrowing	9.431	6.983	16.084	11.099	331.154	374.751

Detailed Capital Programme (Gross Expenditure)	Previous Year 2023/24	MTFP Period			2027/28 to 2033/34	Total
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27		
Adult Social Care						
Adults House Adaptations	0.013	0.050	0.050	0.050	-	0.163
Learning Disability Support Living Scheme	1.012	3.700	1.256	0.081	-	6.049
Greenacres	-	0.070	0.070	-	-	0.140
Adult Social Care Total	1.025	3.820	1.376	0.131	0.000	6.352
Business Services						
SALIX Contract	0.056	0.350	-	-	-	0.406
Lansdowne Secure Unit	0.026	0.039	-	-	-	0.065
Youth Investment Fund	0.621	7.003	-	-	-	7.624
Disability Children’s Home	0.742	0.024	-	-	-	0.766
Westfield Land	0.036	0.017	-	-	-	0.053
Special Educational Needs Provision	1.029	0.525	0.685	0.300	1.000	3.539
Special Educational Needs Provision Grove Park	0.172	1.300	11.000	3.390	1.430	17.292
Schools Basic Need Provision	2.093	0.353	0.400	0.512	60.609	63.967
Capital Building Improvement (Schools)	4.419	5.781	4.589	4.389	30.723	49.901
Capital Building Improvement (Corporate)	3.748	4.401	4.000	4.000	28.000	44.149
IT&Digital Strategy Implementation	3.372	6.399	6.409	4.075	54.351	74.606
IT & Digital Strategy Implementation – Oracle Implementation	7.088	9.634	-	-	-	16.722
IT&D – Utilising Automation	-	0.024	-	-	-	0.024
Business Services Total	23.465	246.850	27.083	16.666	176.113	279.114

Children's Services						
Childrens House Adaptations	0.078	0.050	0.050	0.050	-	0.228
Schools Delegated Capital	1.803	1.150	1.150	1.150	-	5.253
Children's Services Essential System Developments	-	0.736	0.885	0.958	0.774	3.353
Children's Services Total	1.881	1.936	2.085	2.158	0.774	8.834
Communities, Economy and Transport						
Broadband	(0.269)	0.065	5.721	-	-	5.517
Bexhill and Hastings Link Road	0.566	-	-	-	-	0.566
Bexhill and Hastings Link Road Complementary Measures	0.048	0.141	-	-	-	0.189
Economic Intervention Fund – Grants	0.072	-	0.300	0.300	1.186	1.858
Economic Intervention Fund – Loans	0.053	-	0.300	0.300	1.097	1.750
Stalled Sites	0.013	-	0.050	0.050	0.157	0.270
Upgrading Empty Commercial Properties	-	-	-	0.007	-	0.007
Growing Places Fund Loan Scheme	-	-	-	-	4.958	4.958
Community Match Fund	0.029	0.379	0.066	-	-	0.474
Community Road Safety Interventions	0.175	0.547	-	-	-	0.722
Newhaven Port Access Road	(0.036)	0.135	0.030	0.665	-	0.794
Real Time Passenger Information	0.132	0.180	0.131	-	-	0.443
Passenger Services Software	0.021	0.005	-	-	-	0.026
Bus Service Improvement Plan - Bus Prioritisation	0.187	6.933	11.380	-	-	18.500
Bus Service Improvement Plan - Passenger Transport	2.174	1.251	-	-	-	3.425
Lewes Bus Station Replacement	0.004	-	-	-	-	0.004
Queensway Depot Development	(0.016)	0.120	2.900	1.500	-	4.504
The Keep	-	0.172	0.040	0.085	0.780	1.077
Other Integrated Transport Schemes	1.638	3.557	6.087	9.087	41.528	61.897
A22 Corridor Package	0.207	-	-	-	-	0.207
Exceat Bridge Replacement	0.632	5.340	0.880	-	-	6.852
Emergency Active Travel Fund Tranche 2	(0.003)	-	-	-	-	(0.003)
Schools Streets	0.169	0.150	-	-	-	0.319
Eastbourne Liveable Town Centre	0.058	0.216	-	-	-	0.274
Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections	0.359	0.706	8.624	-	-	9.689
Libraries Basic Need	0.442	0.773	0.550	0.467	1.347	3.579
Highways Structural Maintenance	33.877	23.704	22.246	22.819	237.539	340.185
Bridge Assessment and Strengthening	1.955	7.945	2.901	2.901	14.025	29.727
Street Lighting Replacement Programme	2.150	3.835	3.988	3.429	8.395	21.797

Street Lighting SALIX Scheme	0.220	-	-	-	-	0.220
Rights of Way Programme	0.534	0.588	0.643	0.662	5.486	7.913
Gypsy and Traveller Site Refurbishment	-	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.490	0.700
Visibly Better Roads	0.789	0.504	-	-	-	1.293
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	-	0.400	2.298	1.843	-	4.541
Flood & Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme	1.135	0.758	0.989	0.683	-	3.565
Flood Management and SuDS in Schools	0.202	0.218	-	-	-	0.420
Climate Emergency Works	2.843	4.336	4.206	4.137	10.255	25.777
Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2a	0.521	1.779	1.746	-	-	4.046
Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2b	0.078	0.022	5.050	-	-	5.150
Eastbourne / South Wealden Walking & Cycling Package	0.089	0.990	1.328	-	-	2.407
Hailsham / Polegate / Eastbourne Movement & Access Corridor	0.260	0.134	-	-	-	0.394
Hastings / Bexhill Movement and Access Package	(0.125)	0.746	3.582	-	-	4.203
Communities, Economy and Transport Total	51.183	66.699	86.106	49.005	327.243	580.236
Capital Programme Total	77.491	108.305	116.650	67.960	504.130	874.536

East Sussex County Council – Productivity Plan

June 2024

Context

An overview of the East Sussex context can be found in our [Focus on East Sussex report](#). Key features include a significantly older than average population, a relatively weak local economy, below average earnings and areas of significant deprivation, with three of the five district and borough areas designated nationally as in need of levelling up.

East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) priorities for the county are set out in our [Council Plan](#), together with the key activities and targets. Each of our priority outcomes, and their supporting delivery outcomes, has been informed by a robust evidence base, including comparative information with other local authorities and areas.

The Council Plan, [revenue budget](#) (c£1bn gross and £550m net) and [capital programme](#) (c£838m across 10 years) are fully integrated through our [integrated business planning](#) process, Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR), which helps us ensure we are as productive as possible.

Recent external assessments of the Council have provided independent assurance that the organisation is effective, well managed and offers value for money. These include:

- Local Government Association [Corporate Peer Challenge 2023](#)
- Local Government Association Adult Social Care Peer Challenge 2024
- Ofsted [Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services 2023](#)
- Grant Thornton's External Auditor [Value for Money Assessment 2022/23](#)

More information about how the Council operates is in the [position statement for our 2023 Corporate Peer Challenge](#).

1. Developing our services to make best use of resources

Our previous work

ESCC has a strong focus on continuous improvement, using benchmarking groups to assess our comparative performance in relation to other councils, and to share learning on successful delivery models or interventions which can be adopted locally.

Using this approach, and a focus on commissioning strategically to achieve specific outcomes, we have implemented a range of significant service development and improvement programmes in recent years, for example:

- Health and social care integration
- Children's services Early Help Strategy
- Strategic commissioning approach to library services
- Highways – asset management approach

Despite significant work to make best use of reduced resources, the scale of the gap between the cost of providing services and the funding available meant that ESCC has had to identify £140m of savings since 2010. We have taken innovative approaches to delivering savings which align to our priority outcomes, including a focus on efficiency in the back office to prioritise funding for frontline services. We have managed staff reductions to avoid compulsory redundancies as far as possible.

In 2018 we developed our Core Offer which defined the basic but decent level of services residents should expect and helped explain what we would need to step back from in order to live within our means and what we would continue to provide.

Future plans

We face a projected financial deficit of c£84m by 2027/28, £55m in 2025/26 alone – see [State of the County 2024](#) for more detail. This means that the Council is having to take a range of actions to

bridge the financial gap including additional measures to contain and reduce day to day spend wherever possible, maximising income and identifying further savings. This includes reviewing the remaining non-statutory, preventative services we continue to provide as part of our Core Offer. Any further reductions we are forced to make are very likely to generate higher need later on – a less productive use of resources.

The Council continues to focus on evidence-based continuous improvement across all services. Planned improvements are included in our [Council Plan](#). We review progress against the measures in our Council Plan as part of our [quarterly Council Monitoring process](#). Examples of planned work include:

- Implementation of family safeguarding and Valuing Care approaches in Children's Services
- Implementation of our [Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) Strategy](#).
- Taking forward our [Adult Social Care Strategy](#)
- Delivering our Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy
- Maximising value from our new highways contract
- Replacement of our back office IT system
- Continuing to reduce our office footprint

2. Taking advantage of technology and making better use of data

How we use technology and data

Our Strategic Digital Framework sets out how we will use technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our business processes. We have:

- implemented an automation platform which is helping to automate a range of administrative processes across multiple teams;
- piloted a chatbot for [Blue Badges](#);
- continually reviewed our IT systems and upgraded these where possible to take advantage of advances in technology. However, there is a significant cost involved in replacing older systems, requiring cost/benefit judgements;
- routinely used data quality audits and put in place data quality improvement plans to address any issues;
- published a range of data and reports, research and [key information about the county](#) online to support our and partner organisations' planning;
- shared data with partner organisations and used anonymised data to help plan services;
- taken part in benchmarking exercises to understand how well we are performing;
- adopted the data standards approved by the Data Standards Authority for new systems;
- maintained a set of clear and robust information governance processes to make sure data is kept safe and shared and used appropriately.

Our next steps

Over the next year we will develop pilots to test how we can use artificial intelligence (AI) safely and securely to deliver improvements and efficiencies. Alongside this we will continue to roll out our robotic process automation programme across the Council.

We will adopt and implement a new Data and Insight Plan which sets out actions for how we will collect, maintain and use our data to generate better insights into our services and the needs of our communities.

3. How we avoid wasteful spend

Our processes

We have established processes in place to ensure spend is directed to essential service delivery, including:

- a culture of strong financial management and awareness resulting from embedding the RPPR process throughout our delivery of services;
- a robust framework of financial management and controls to support effective budget monitoring;
- a business case process in relation to any significant investments in service development requiring capital funding or ongoing increases to revenue budgets; and
- the [Constitution](#), along with our [Annual Governance Statement](#), which provide assurance regarding the Council's governance framework and how it provides accountability regarding spend.

In addition to reductions in support services made as part of the Council's wider savings programmes, operating efficiencies have been achieved in the following areas:

- The [Orbis partnership](#) (with Surrey County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council) which involves shared teams supporting areas such as IT and procurement.
- Our Workstyles programme which allows some staff to work more flexibly where this will not affect the service that residents receive, helping reduce the spend on offices.

Our [People Strategy](#) informs our approach to attracting, retaining and developing staff. Managers are working in a very challenging context and we support them to deliver their responsibilities including the management of resources and demand. We have in place a strong approach to supporting our staff to maximise their performance through regular supervision, appraisal, coaching and development. We use consultants in line with our staffing policies where we need expert support for short periods of time where this would be cheaper than to directly employ staff. Our agency spend on qualified social worker roles in Children's Services is low compared to other authorities. Spend in these areas is overseen by the Corporate Management Team.

We have legal duties to ensure that we consider the equalities implications of the decisions we take and this also helps ensure resources are deployed fairly and effectively. We have the necessary staff to provide specialist advice on service planning and commissioning decisions so that we can meet these legal duties and business needs, including the Public Sector Equality Duty and Best Value requirements.

Further steps

Ongoing measures to ensure we consistently make best use of resources are well embedded in the council's processes and culture as described above, following many years of operating with constrained funding and capacity. In the face of the acute financial pressures currently facing the Council and the substantial budget gap, we have:

- undertaken a further review of day to day spend;
- instituted vacancy controls; and
- engaged staff in identifying any further ways to save money, however small.

Despite all these measures the Council will still need to make further service reductions which will impact on our ability to maintain our Core Offer to residents. The processes involved in implementing further savings will divert staff resource from service provision and development.

4. The barriers Government can help reduce or remove

There are a range of barriers which prevent the Council being more productive or sustainable which Government could help reduce or remove as set out below. The way in which central Government departments work with local government and local places can be an overarching barrier. The [Partnerships for People and Places \(PfPP\) programme](#) (in which ESCC participated) recently set out five barriers to place-based working and ways these could be addressed. Barriers included the overly complex and varying organisational structures in Government departments which make them difficult and time consuming for local authorities to navigate – the East Sussex team was required to engage with 26 individuals across ten teams in two Government departments to progress the PfPP project.

Financial barriers

A number of national issues are contributing to the Council's very significant financial challenges and ability to use the resources we have to best effect:

- Funding is not appropriately aligned to need – the funding formula on which local authority allocations are based requires fundamental reform to ensure it properly reflects the cost of providing services in different areas. There is currently over-reliance on raising income through Council Tax which is unrelated to need and is particularly difficult in areas like East Sussex where need for services, especially social care, is high but residents' ability to contribute more is very limited given below average wage levels and one of the highest band D rates in the country.
- Single year financial settlements limit our ability to plan and use resources most effectively – we need longer term settlements, including certainty on Council Tax referendum limits.
- Multiple ringfenced grants, with restrictive criteria and reporting requirements – we need greater freedom to allow local decision making on the best use of funding.
- Bidding processes, multiple funding pots and time-limited funding/pilots – these create additional work, a lack of flexibility to meet local needs and wasted time and resource in standing up/winding down provision or developing unsuccessful bids.
- National reforms which create new duties and responsibilities for the Council but are not fully funded – a key risk relates to Adult Social Care charging reforms which will, if implemented, have a major impact on councils in the south east, including East Sussex, with older populations, high levels of people self-funding their care and additional challenges in the independent sector market.
- A lack of early information on the funding available to meet new duties, and the specific obligations involved, to enable councils to plan effectively – for example in relation to Extended Producer Responsibility (Packaging) reforms.

National policy and legislative barriers

There are a significant number of requirements placed on the Council by national policy and legislation which reduce or remove our ability to target services most effectively and/or use our resources most effectively. Key areas in need of national reform or review include:

- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) – wholesale reform of the SEND system is required and funding must either be increased to meet eligibility criteria or eligibility criteria reduced to match available funding.
- Home to school transport – reforms to entitlement to make it more proportionate and affordable, including the ability to means-test so that families in a position to contribute to the cost are required to do so.
- Concessionary fares – reform to enable targeting of free travel to those most in need, such as through means-testing.
- The residential placements market and the agency staffing market in children's social care - both require greater controls on the costs charged and the profits made by independent sector providers, and how these services are made available.
- Looked After Children (LAC) reviews – a review and reduction in the number of professionals required to attend LAC reviews so we can make local decisions about the best use of limited staff time.
- NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) – there is a need to review the CHC framework and create a fairer regime for funding care for people with long-term complex health needs.
- Utility company street works – greater powers for local authorities to manage the activities of utility companies on the highway which will enable better co-ordination of works and a reduction in inadequate repairs.
- Migration – a joined up, place-based approach from Government is required to address inconsistencies and a lack of co-ordination across multiple national schemes which play out locally in ways that create additional issues and work.
- Virtual (formal) meetings – legislative change to provide for local choice over which meetings may be held virtually in order to make best use of time, maximise accessibility and minimise travel costs and associated carbon emissions.

- Coroner's services – to review the role of local authorities in providing support services to HM Coroners.

Barriers to taking a more preventative approach

Providing early, upstream support can lead to better outcomes for people and reduce the higher intensity demand placed on a range of public sector organisations. We also want to invest in more cost-effective, proactive approaches to areas like maintaining our roads. With our current funding levels and the rising cost of delivering statutory services we are having to make difficult decisions to further reduce the amount of preventative work we do. We know these are not the best decisions for the medium or longer term but we have no choice. **We need Government to recognise the evidence-based case for prevention**, including:

- Providing significant additional investment in early help and family help as recommended by the MacAlister review of children's social care.
- Providing additional investment so we can provide better support for pupils with SEND, and those at risk of exclusion, in mainstream schools.
- Investing in health improvement and services that can maintain people's independence through Adult Social Care, Public Health and the NHS.
- Funding changes to allow more proactive planned roads maintenance, which would help us spend less on reactive repairs including pothole filling and the associated costs and work generated from roads being less well maintained.
- Greater investment in local economic growth and skills development, with increased local flexibility to meet local needs, which would increase independence and reduce need for support through access to good jobs.
- Housing – a strategic approach to addressing rising homelessness and the systemic and structural problems in the housing market, particularly in high cost areas such as the south east, which have a knock-on effect on demand for public services.

Capacity barriers

Although we work hard to deliver as much as we can with the resources we have available we still have challenges relating to capacity. We need Government recognition and support in the following areas:

- Workforce – we continue to face challenges in recruiting and retaining the essential staff we need. This is particularly the case in skilled areas such as social work, legal services or property services, and in areas where pay levels compare less favourably to other sectors. In social care, the impact of recent visa changes on overseas workers is also contributing to high vacancy rates.
- Ability to invest in technology – the significant financial pressures we face limit our capacity to invest in new technology and developing or recruiting staff with the specialist skills required.
- Capacity to further develop/improve services – the steps taken over many years to manage with reduced resources means that our managers and staff are stretched fulfilling their core roles. This means there is very limited capacity to implement significant change programmes. This is particularly the case in support services which have been reduced more significantly in order to prioritise funding for frontline services.
- Data sharing – improved data sharing by Government departments such as DWP to enable more automated processing in areas such as blue badges.

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to:	Place Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	12 July 2024
By:	Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
Title:	East Sussex Highways Year 1 Performance Report and Pothole Review Update
Purpose:	To update the Scrutiny Committee on the performance of the first year of the Highways Infrastructure Services contract with Balfour Beatty Living Places and provide an update on the scrutiny pothole review recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) The Place Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the performance of the first year of the Highways Infrastructure and Services contract with Balfour Beatty Living Places; and**
 - (2) Note the updates to the pothole review recommendations contained in Appendix 2 of the report.**
-

1 Background Information

1.1. The highways infrastructure services contract with Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) commenced on 1 May 2023. This report summarises the performance of the contractor through the first year.

1.2. The contract is delivered against specific service outcomes as agreed as part of the re-procurement of the highway's infrastructure services contract. These include, quality assurance; to have the best area network condition for the investment available; effective stakeholder management, sustainable economic growth, and carbon reduction.

1.3. Service Performance Indicators (SPIs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were developed as part of the re-procurement process. A full list of SPIs and KPIS, including their outturns are detailed in Appendix 1.

1.4. The SPIs and KPIs are monitored through an evidence-based audit process carried out by the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Contracts Management Group (CMG). Performance management is overseen by the contract's Service Management Board, made up of senior managers from ESCC and BBLP, who meet monthly.

1.5. The contract is designed to incentivise BBLP to provide an efficient and effective service. This is achieved through operating an SPI Incentive Model, where the successful performance of the individual SPIs in each service area enables the contractor to access a financial reward should levels of performance meet or exceed their targets. The funds for the financial incentive are derived by the Contractor delivering works throughout the year at a cost less than the agreed price for those works. This is achieved through efficiencies in operational delivery. Should no such efficiencies be achieved then there would be no financial reward even if the SPI targets are met. If the Contractor falls below defined lower performance levels then it puts its declared profit at risk for poor performance.

1.6 There is further incentive to the contractor to perform well in the form of the KPI Extension Model which has also been adopted. This provides the contractor an opportunity to access the seven year extension of the contract if all the KPIs are met or exceeded. This will not be considered until year four of the contract where a business case would be submitted by the contractor outlining their performance.

1.7 Whilst SPIs need to be robust in nature, it is acknowledged that there will be some mitigating factors outside the control of the Contractor which affect their ability to achieve the targets. In year 1 of the contract that has included the impact the performance of the previous contractor had on the number of claims being submitted and the number of outstanding defects left on the network. As such a 'soft start' for the SPIs was agreed, with these not being formally measured until November 2023.

1.8 A further extension of a 'soft start' was also permitted on SPI 15, in relation to the number of claims being submitted, which had been impacted by both the inclement weather experienced in 2023, and the number of outstanding claims not closed by the previous contractor. This extension ends in June 2024, and no further extensions will be granted in relation to this.

1.9 Performance is not only monitored using the SPIs outlined in Appendix 1. The scrutiny committee continues to act as a critical friend to the service, to identify areas of improvement. This is most welcome by the department and on 23 January 2024 the outcome of the scrutiny review of pothole management was taken to Cabinet and 13 recommendations were ratified. 10 recommendations have now been completed and 3 are ongoing to be completed this financial year. See Appendix 2 for an update on each recommendation.

2 SPI Outturns for Year 1

2.1 There are 17 SPIs measuring specific areas of the service. It is important to note that the SPIs cannot be used in isolation to measure the performance of the overall contract, and it is acknowledged that there are areas where significant improvement is needed, which have not been highlighted using the SPI mechanism, but are being addressed via the appropriate contract mechanisms.

2.2 SPIs are one tool to measure whether the service is efficient and effective. Overall, there are a number of areas where BBLP have excelled and provided the expected service levels.

2.3 Out of 17 SPIs, 7 have met or exceeded the target and are considered "green" or a pass. 4 SPI's met the lower threshold of the performance score and therefore considered "amber" within acceptable limits, however 5 did not meet the lower threshold, these are considered "red" and are marked as fail.

2.4 The overall outturn for year one is 86.1% against the minimum target of 91.9%. As such this overall score is considered a fail. A full summary of the scores is provided in Appendix 1.

3 Results of SPIs in Year 1

3.1 In Appendix 1 it is important to note that a number of SPIs were successful and demonstrate areas of real achievement by BBLP.

- SPI 5 for Winter Maintenance has met its target of 100% precautionary treatments delivered within the target treatment time for each route in the Winter Service Plan and BBLP delivered a successful winter maintenance service during the first winter of their contract.
- SPI 7, notified defects corrected within the defect correction period, and SPI 9, final accounts submitted right first time, have both achieved their targets in year 1

and there is focus on these to ensure this continues into year 2. Please note that SPI 7 measures scheme defects, not reactive works such as potholes.

- SPIs 11, 13 and 14 - the SPIs for timely responses have all done well and met or exceeded their targets, and BBLP continue to successfully deliver communications on time.
- It should be noted that quality of communications is difficult to successfully or meaningfully measure and is therefore not included in the SPIs. However, as above there are other mechanisms for performance to be monitored. The CMG have identified quality issues with BBLP stakeholder management approach and these are being addressed robustly, with a detailed notice of concern being issued. This is being continually reported against with BBLP providing the CMG with a detailed action plan with key areas of improvement.
- SPI 16, Social Value, has arguably been the most successful SPI given there was a big gap in resource initially and the amount of work that has been carried out to bring the score to almost 100%. There has been a great number of social value initiatives in a number of priority areas including; support and training provided to local businesses; apprenticeships and NVQs offered; work experience provided; job opportunities for those in long-term unemployment, people with disabilities, local ex-offenders and 18-24 year olds not in employment, education, or training; support for care leavers; fundraising activities and donations provided to locally based voluntary and community groups; commercial support and facilities offered to local voluntary and community groups; and initiatives to tackle homelessness and support rough sleepers. This has all been done in collaboration with the CMG, other key ESCC teams and sub-contractors and there is robust plan in place for year 2 to continue the success of BBLPs social value commitment.
- SPI 17, Local Growth, continues to exceed the target of the contractor's defined costs being spent locally supporting the promotion of economic growth in the county.

3.2 As demonstrated in Appendix 1, 9 of the SPIs have not met the necessary target. The below outlines where improvement has been identified in key areas.

- SPI 2 & 3 – Whilst it is acknowledged that BBLP have been in the main successful at addressing immediate emergencies (category ones), there have been issues with the scheduling and quality of permanent repairs carried out within the necessary time frames. BBLP have acknowledged this area of failure and have appointed a new sub-contractor to deliver carriageway repairs, with more stringent requirements in place. The ESCC CMG is also formally addressing this matter through the contract mechanisms, where BBLP are regularly reporting and demonstrating the improvement to this area of work.
- SPI 6 – this relates to works being done to the expected quality, and no outstanding or remedial works should be necessary. It is measured against both reactive safety repairs and the larger scale improvement schemes. This SPI has not been successful due to the number of “works defects” (formal notification of works not being done to required standard) having to be raised by the CMG. BBLP

is working closely with CMG to improve this, and this will include carrying out more robust joint inspections where the CMG can highlight areas of concerns at the point of source on site and educate the contractor on what is expected.

- SPI 8 – there is a requirement for the entire programme of works to be completed by the end of the service year (31 March). As there were a number of schemes that did not meet the deadline, mainly due to defects being raised by the client on works, this SPI was a fail. Improved live monitoring and data analysis by the BBLP Performance team will enable this to be better managed.
- SPI 10 – this focuses on permits being complied with and that appropriate records are provided around when works started and were completed. Whilst BBLP has been successful at measuring the commencement and completion date of schemes, they have not been ensuring that appropriate signage is being erected at the time of scheme, and therefore not providing the necessary information. BBLP are addressing this with increased education and communications to the sub-contractors and penalties being passed to the sub-contractor if there is a failure.
- SPI 12, Work Activities started on time, measures whether works started on the day stated in the letter/email communication sent to members, key stakeholders and residents. This measure is within 10% of the target due primarily to several schemes where the contractor was not ready to start due to resources not being available, even though they were previously identified to carry out the work. This will be a focus for improvement moving into year two, where key gateways have to be met before communications are sent out. Including firm confirmation of resources being sourced and allocated.

4 Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

4.1 Whilst it is acknowledged there have been a number of challenges in year 1 outside the control of BBLP, including inclement weather, the results for year one of the contract are below the standard expected.

4.2 The CMG have started, and will continue, to address areas of poor performance. In particular around the strategic management of operational delivery and stakeholder engagement. This has included issuing formal notices of concern, which require demonstrative action from BBLP to remedy the issues.

4.3 BBLP acknowledge that the performance in year 1 has been disappointing and are currently devising an improvement plan which will be closely monitored by the CMG performance analysts.

4.4 The CMG will ensure the remaining three actions outlined in the Scrutiny Review, are actioned by the end of the financial year and further update is provided at that time to confirm that all actions are closed.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Pippa Mabey
Tel. No. 01273 335506
Email: pippa.mabey@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

All

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1

Highways Service Performance Indicators - Year 1

<u>Reporting Period</u>		Year 1 Result
<u>Performance Area</u>	<u>SPI Description</u>	<u>YTD Performance</u>
Quality Assurance	SPI 01 – Defects response within time	98.8%
	SPI 02 – Safety defect correction within time for Carriageway/Cycleway/Footway asset types	71.7%
	SPI 03 – Safety defects correction within time for other asset types	86.2%
	SPI 04 – Safety defects permanently repaired first time	91.3%
	SPI 05 – Winter Maintenance – Precautionary Treatments	100.0%
	SPI 06 – Defect free works	65.6%
	SPI 07 – Notified Defects	100.0%
	SPI 08 – Programme Delivery – Work Activities	76.8%
	SPI 09 – Final Accounts	90.5%
	SPI 10 – Permit regulations met on site	78.4%
Stakeholder Engagement	SPI 11 – Well planned permits	90.5%
	SPI 12 – Work Activities started on time	81.8%
	SPI 13 – Works communications	92.8%
	SPI 14 – Communications - Timely Response	93.6%
	SPI 15 – Third-party claims timely response	
Promote Economic Growth	SPI 16 – Social Value Plan Commitments	99.8%
	SPI 17 – Local Spend	61.1%
Nil Return		
SPI is Above or Equal to Target		
SPI is within 10% of Target		
SPI is below 10% of Target		

Performance Level Target - Year 1	91.9%
Performance Level Achieved - Year 1	86.2%
Normalised Performance Level - Year 1	93.8%

Highways Key Performance Indicators

Outcomes	KPI No.	Name	Brief description
Quality Assurance	1	KPI 1	Combined SPI 1-10 performance within KPI 1
Effective Stakeholder Engagement	2	KPI 2	Combined SPI 11-15 performance within KPI 2
Promote Economic Growth	3	KPI 3	Combined SPI 16-17 performance within KPI 3
Promote Economic Growth	4	Supply chain strategy	Delivery of supply chain strategy
Carbon Neutrality	5	Carbon Reduction Plan	Delivery of annual Carbon Reduction Plan
Quality Assurance	6	Business Improvement	Contractors' performance against contractor's quality plan

PLACE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF POTHOLE MANAGEMENT – ACTION PLAN			
SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION		DIRECTOR’S RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN	TIMESCALE
R1.	The Board recommends that officers develop a strategy for highway drainage, in order to target highways drainage investment requirements more accurately and to help prevent water damage to road surfaces.	<p>We are reviewing and updating all Asset Management Policies and Plans to create a suite of documents that better reflect the Asset Management Objectives, to ensure that they are reflected in the execution of works. These will be presented to Lead Member in December 2024.</p> <p>The current 2015-2018 Highway Asset Management Drainage Strategy is being updated during this review and the 2025-28 Drainage Asset Management Plan will accurately reflect our drainage asset inventory, include detail of available resources, and the known areas at risk of flooding. This approach will allow targeted investment in line with the Asset Management Approach.</p>	Asset Management Plan – Drainage, will be prepared for Oct 2024 and submitted to lead member in December 2024.
R2.	The Board recommends the Council lobbies Government to make changes to the way utility companies operate and are regulated under the New Roads and Street Works Act and in particular to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lower the time allowed for permanent reinstatements from 6 months to 3 months;• Extend the reinstatement works guarantee period from 2 years to 5 years;• Raise the level of financial penalties for failing to comply with the requirements of the Act;	<p>A letter was sent on 9 November from Councillor Keith Glazier on behalf of the South East Seven to the Secretary of State for Transport outlining the impact utility companies’ street works have on the highways network and with some suggestions for giving local authorities greater oversight/management of their activities.</p> <p>We will share the response with the Committee when received.</p>	Completed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce timescales for utility companies to repair defective apparatus once it has been reported to them, with penalties for non-compliance; and • Increase the number of utility company inspections that can be recharged from 30%. 		
R3.	The Board recommends officers explore the feasibility of increasing the amount and type of inspections of utility company reinstatement work to drive up quality and lobby Government for funding to do so.	<p>The DFT has recently introduced “Performance-Based Inspections”, which in essence allows authorities to undertake additional “chargeable” inspections based on a utility companies performance. If an undertaker has a failure rate lower than 15%, then a 30% sample rate will be applied for inspections carried out, if an undertaker has a failure rate of 15% or higher, then a 50% sample rate will be applied for inspections carried out. These percentages are reviewed quarterly, so any increase will be relevant to recent performance, and whilst may generate some additional inspections it will be applied where performance justifies it.</p> <p>Most of the utility companies in ESCC will be in the 30% sampling bracket, therefore any significant increase to inspections would require additional funding which may require further dialogue with Government.</p>	Completed - Officers will, where appropriate, continue to lobby for additional funding, however the current inspection regime of utility companies is felt to be appropriate and therefore no further action.
R4.	The Board recommends that Guide to Highways is amended to include a reference to the current practice of risk assessing reported road defects which ensures the risks posed to different types of road user are appropriately met through repairs.	Noted – the Guide to Highways is currently being reviewed and this reference will be included in the updates made by March 2024.	The guide to highways has been reviewed and amended. There are some further amendments needed and the new version will

			be updated to the East Sussex Highways website, and shared with members, by the end of the July 2024
R5.	The Board supports the Cabinet report recommendation that a greater proportion of capital funding is allocated from the highways structural maintenance budget to patching and surface dressing in future years, and reviews are undertaken on a periodic basis.	This approach has been implemented and we have increased the number of patching and surface dressing schemes in the upcoming delivery programmes and reviews against our asset plan will be ongoing.	Completed
R6.	The Board recommends that it is made clear in reporting information that the road condition performance targets refer to the percentage of road length, and that all roads are likely to have a mixture of green, amber and red condition sections of road.	Noted this will be included where appropriate going forward	Noted.
R7.	The Review Board recommends that annual performance monitoring reports are presented to the Place Scrutiny Committee to maximise transparency and scrutiny of pothole repairs, contract key performance indicators (KPIs), and planned highway maintenance work, with the first report scheduled for July 2024.	Noted, the department will consider how best to report this to scrutiny committee.	Completed - This report is being presented in conjunction with this update.
R8.	The Board recommends that officers continue to allocate specific, defined levels of investment within the existing highways infrastructure maintenance capital budget, to tackle clusters of potholes and address	As above this approach has been fully adopted and a greater amount of funding has been/will be spent on patching and surface dressing programmes.	Completed – Hotspot planning for “repeat issues” is underway, and the next two

	public concerns about this issue, for example by undertaking patching repairs and surface dressing.	Where issues are repeatedly reported this information is used to help shape future work programmes.	annual capital budgets will focus on a patching/surfacing dressing approach.
R9.	The Board recommends that the Guide to Highways on the East Sussex Highways web site is amended to reflect that repairs gangs, BBLP and the Council exercise a degree of flexibility in their approach to repairing safety intervention level defects and will repair other safety intervention level defects they find whilst on site.	<p>Whilst we understand the sentiment of this suggestion, there is a high risk with this confusing/disappointing the public as it is not always appropriate to “flex” the policy.</p> <p>There is a risk that customers would see inconsistency of approach.</p> <p>However, our policy documents are clear and when the intervention level is ‘flexed’ on a risk based approach it will be for good reason and we can explain this on a case by case basis.</p>	Noted - No further action required.
R10.	The Board recommends that the Council continues to lobby Government for better long-term funding arrangements for pothole repairs, and highways maintenance, so that it can plan effectively, does not have to expend resources bidding for funding and can address local road conditions.	The Council faces a number of long term funding challenges across the wide range of services it provides. As such the Council, through SE7 in particular, does make the case for additional support across these services. The Government has recently announced the outcomes of Network North which sets out increased government funding for highways.	Completed - This is now embedded as BAU.
R11.	The Board recommends that if funding pressures ease or additional funding becomes available, the Council considers making additional investment in highway drainage.	Noted and for consideration through the RPPR process	Noted - No further action required
R12.	The Board recommends that the Department continues to maintain an active approach to modelling highway investment levels needed to achieve the Council’s road condition targets and feed the outcomes into the	Noted – this will take place every two to three years moving forward.	Noted – no further action required

	Reconciling Policy, Performance Resources (RPPR) budget setting process.		
R13.	The Board recommends that officers review the visibility and usability of website information on planned maintenance work on potholes to make it easier to find and use online, including via the East Sussex County Council website and the upcoming app, and in particular information for patching, resurfacing and revenue funded advisories.	<p>The website is continually being reviewed, with the most recent and significant change being an update which will allow users to see previously reported potholes and street lighting issues on the mapping system. This will be rolled out for other asset types in the coming weeks.</p> <p>Updates will be communicated as improvements are applied to the website and the Member's portal is developed. With a full update provided in July 2024.</p>	<p>Ongoing – Officers are currently undertaking a major refresh project of the website and associated papers.</p> <p>The Members portal has now been developed, and will be rolled out to members by the end of July 2024.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to:	Place Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	12 July 2024
By:	Deputy Chief Executive
Title:	Place Scrutiny Committee future work programme
Purpose:	To review and agree items for the Place Scrutiny Committee's future work programme and receive updates on previous work.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Place Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Review and agree the agenda items for the future Committee meetings, including items listed in the updated work programme in appendix 1;**
 - 2) Review upcoming items on East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) Forward Plan in appendix 2 to identify any issues that may require more detailed scrutiny;**
 - 3) Note the report back from the Scoping Board in section 4.1 of the report and agree to proceed with a review of Local Speed Limit Policy and appoint Cllr Hollidge as chair of the Review Board;**
 - 4) Note the update from the LTP Reference Group and Economic Growth Strategy Reference Group as set out in sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the report.**
-

1. Background

1.1 The work programme is an important tool in ensuring the correct focus and best use of the Committee's time in scrutinising topics that are of importance to the residents of East Sussex, and the efficient and effective working of the Council. It also provides clarity for those who may be requested to give evidence to the Committee on the issues under review, and the questions the Committee requires answers to.

1.2. Discussion of the work programme provides the Committee with the opportunity to examine topics that it may be of value to scrutinise, and to decide whether further scoping work is required. This provides a basis for deciding the best way of scrutinising a topic, the timescale, and who from the Committee will be involved in carrying out the review work. If there are a number of topics for review, the Committee can determine the priority of the work within the resources available to the Committee.

2. Work programme and future scrutiny reviews

2.1 The Committee is asked to review the items in the current work programme and discuss the future agenda items and other scrutiny work of the Committee for inclusion in the Committee's future work programme. A copy of an updated work programme is contained in appendix 1 of the report for consideration by the Committee.

2.2 The Committee is also asked to consider whether there are any potential topics for future scrutiny reviews, or agenda items for future meetings, that should be included in the work programme, including items contained the Council's Forward Plan of decisions. This can include any topics or issues identified through the Committee's work on the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process discussed earlier in the agenda.

3. Forward Plan

3.1 A copy of the Council's Forward Plan of executive decisions for the period 1 July 2024 to 31 October 2024 is included in appendix 2. The Committee is requested to review the forthcoming items on the Forward Plan to identify any issues that may require scrutiny work. The Forward Plan is revised and published on a monthly basis, and Committee members should regularly review the Forward Plan.

4. Scrutiny Review of Local Speed Limit Policy – Scoping Board

4.1 The scoping board for the potential Scrutiny Review of Local Speed Limit Policy met on 21 May 2024. It was comprised of Councillors Beaver, Hilton, Hollidge (Chair), Kirby-Green, Redstone and Wright. The Board considered a range of initial information and evidence on the topic and discussed potential lines of enquiry for a review. The scoping board is working to agree a terms of reference for the review and recommends that the Committee proceed with a scrutiny review of this topic. The review board will be comprised of Councillors Beaver, Hilton, Hollidge (Chair), Kirby-Green, Lunn, Murphy, Redstone, and Wright.

5. Reference Group and Working Group Updates

Local Transport Plan (LTP) Reference Group

5.1 Since the last Committee meeting the LTP Reference Group has met to receive an update on the outcome of the public consultation and to consider the suggested changes to the draft LTP in the light of the consultation. There had been a good response to the public consultation with positive feedback and support for the proposed vision, objectives and interventions contained in the draft LTP. Work is continuing to update the Rail Strategy, develop a Freight Strategy and enrich the Equalities Impact Assessment. In its future work, the LTP Reference Group will consider the final version of the draft LTP prior to it being considered by Cabinet in September. The next meeting of the LTP Reference Group is scheduled for 2 September 2024.

The Economic Growth Strategy (EGS) Reference Group

5.2 The Economic Growth Strategy (EGS) Reference Group has completed its work on the draft Economic Growth Strategy which is being developed by Team East Sussex (TES) and its partners as a Strategy for East Sussex. The EGS Reference Group is one of a number of other stakeholders who have been providing input into the development of the Strategy. The work of the Reference Group has included examining the feedback from stakeholder engagement activities on the new Strategy; meeting with businesses representatives and other stakeholders to hear their views on what should be included the Strategy; and consideration of the draft Strategy document. The Strategy is now going through an approval process and will be considered by Cabinet in September.

6. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

6.1 The Place Scrutiny Committee is recommended to consider the work programme contained in appendix 1 and agree any further agenda items or topics for scrutiny reviews to be included in the future work programme. The Committee is also recommended to review the Council's Forward Plan of decisions to identify any issues that may require more detailed scrutiny, and agree to proceed with a Scrutiny Review of Local Speed Limit Policy.

PHILIP BAKER
Deputy Chief Executive

Contact Officer: Martin Jenks, Senior Scrutiny Adviser
Tel. No. 01273 481327
Email: martin.jenks@eastsussex.gov.uk

Place Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme

Current Scrutiny Reviews		
Title of Review	Detail	Proposed Completion Date
Scrutiny Review of Local Speed Limit Policy	Following the consideration of initial information and evidence at a scoping board meeting held on 21 May 2024, the board has recommended that the Committee undertake a scrutiny review of Local Speed Limit Policy. The following committee members have indicated they wish to take part in this work: Councillors Beaver, Hollidge (chair), Hilton, Kirby-Green, Lunn, Murphy, Redstone and Wright.	November 2024
Initial Scoping Reviews		
Subject area for initial scoping	Detail	Proposed Dates
To be agreed		
List of Suggested Potential Future Scrutiny Review or Reference Group Topics		
Suggested Topic	Detail	
Footway (Pavement) Maintenance	This topic was discussed as part of the Scrutiny Review of Pothole Management and the Review Board has suggested that the Committee may wish to carry out a scrutiny review on this topic. Some of the issues regarding additional investment in pavement maintenance may be similar to those examined as part of the pothole review.	
Highway Drainage	The Review Board who worked on the Scrutiny Review of Pothole Management has also suggested that the Committee may wish to carry out a scrutiny review on highway drainage. This topic has links to storm overflows, flood risk management and climate change mitigation measures.	

Climate Change	The Committee has agreed to consider scoping a review to examine the Council's countywide work on climate change, which could look at countywide actions and how the Council works with other organisations (e.g. District and Borough councils) on this issue.	
Parking Policy	A potential review of parking policy examining how the Council manages highway space in relation to allowing vehicles to park on street including for Electric Vehicle charging; the rational for pricing and could it be revised (e.g. can parking policy influence or encourage to more Active Travel); how the Council uses any parking revenue surplus and how that can be used under 2004 Traffic Management Act to fund other transport measures in areas where public expect ESCC to deliver services or projects where the Council does not have funding.	
Scrutiny Reference and Working Groups		
Reference Group Title	Subject Area	Meetings Dates
Local Transport Plan (LTP4) – Reference Group	The Committee has formed a Reference Group to work alongside officers on the development of the revised Local Transport Plan (LTP 4) focussing on sustainable transport issues. It is taking part in a series of workshops on the development of the LTP4.	2 nd September 2024.
East Sussex Economic Growth Strategy (EGS) Reference Group	The reference group has completed its work to provide scrutiny input into the development of the draft Strategy. The Reference Group has indicated that it may wish to comment on the implementation plan which will be developed later in the year.	To be agreed.
Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) Working Group	The Committee has agreed to re-establish the CEAP Working Group to provide scrutiny input into the update of the corporate Climate Emergency Action Plan (the current Action Plan is due to expire in March 2025). Membership of the Working Group consists of Cllr Hilton, Cllr Redstone (Chair) and Cllr Tutt.	24 July and further dates to be confirmed.
Reports for Information/Briefings		
Subject	Detail	Proposed Date
Increased Use of Artificial Intelligence.	For the committee to have a briefing or report on the increased use of AI, including what was happening currently, a risk analysis and the potential benefits (e.g. where AI could be used to gain efficiencies in areas such as process documentation).	November 2024

The Keep	A report or briefing on The Keep including information on who uses it, how the service works, what are the costs of the service and how it generates income, together with a site visit for committee members.	To be agreed
Funding bids and opportunities from Government	A report or briefing outlining how ESCC can work collaboratively with District and Borough councils in East Sussex to ensure funding allocated as part of Levelling Up and Town Deals etc. (managed by Government and the relevant District or Borough councils) improves Traffic Management, Movement and Access, Highway improvements and the Public Realm in these areas which are ESCC's responsibility.	To be confirmed
Training and Development		
Title of Training/Briefing	Detail	Proposed Date
Place Scrutiny Committee Away Day.	Work planning Away Day to review the Committee's work programme and carry out horizon scanning of potential scrutiny topics, changes and challenges facing the Council where scrutiny input would be beneficial.	9 September 2024
Future Committee Agenda Items		Author/Witnesses
23 September 2024		
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	To continue the Committee's work on the RPPR process for 2025/26, by reviewing Portfolio Plans and service based information.	Chief Executive / Senior Scrutiny Adviser
Scrutiny Review of Procurement: Social Value and Buying Local	To receive the second update report on the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Procurement: Social Value and Buying Local.	Chief Operating Officer / Director of Procurement / Head of Policy & Modernisation, Orbis
Future Use of County Hall.	To receive a report on the work being undertaken on the future use of County Hall and the options that are being considered.	Chief Operating Officer / Assistant Director Property
Flood Risk Management.	To receive a report on flood risk management outlining ESCC's role as the Lead Local Flood Authority and an overview of current work activity.	Director of Communities Economy and Transport / Assistant Director Economy

Climate Adaptation measures.	To receive a report on the Council's climate adaptation work following the publication of the Government's new 5 year climate change adaptation strategy.	Director of Communities Economy and Transport / Assistant Director Economy
Work Programme	To consider items for inclusion in the Committee's work programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports for future meetings • Scrutiny reviews and potential scrutiny reviews • Items from the Forward Plan 	Senior Scrutiny Adviser
28 November 2024		
Water Supply Future Demand Planning and Water Supply Issues	To receive a presentation from South East Water and Southern Water about their longer terms plans for supplying water to East Sussex residents and businesses, and hear from them about the actions they are taking to resolve recent water supply issues in the County.	Representatives from South East Water and Southern Water.
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	The Committee will examine any additional information requested at the September meeting and consider any updated RPPR information for 2025/26.	Chief Executive / Senior Scrutiny Adviser
RPPR – Income from Fees and Charges	A report outlining financial information on the fees and charges income for the services within the remit of the Committee, the mechanisms for reviewing fees and charges to ensure they cover costs, and whether there are opportunities to use increases in fees and charges income to support service activity.	Chief Finance Officer / Chief Operating Officer / Director of Communities Economy and Transport.
Work Programme	To consider items for inclusion in the Committee's work programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports for future meetings • Scrutiny reviews and potential scrutiny reviews • Items from the Forward Plan 	Senior Scrutiny Adviser
20 March 2025		
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	The Committee will review its input into the RPPR budget setting process, and the impact of any recommendations or comments made by the Committee.	Chief Executive / Senior Scrutiny Adviser
Scrutiny Review of Pothole Management	To receive the second update report on the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Pothole Management	Assistant Director, Operations / Highways Contract Manager
Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Active Travel Ratings.	To receive an update report on the LCWIP to understand what progress is being made and the update of the LCWIP that will be undertaken as part of the LTP policy review. The report is to include information on the Council's Active Travel Rating and what ESCC will have to do to move from the current rating of 1 towards achieving a higher rating of 2 or 3: Local authority active travel capability ratings (accessible version) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	Director of Communities Economy and Transport / Assistant Director Economy

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Flexi-Bus Service	The Committee requested a report on the new Flexi-Bus service, including an evaluation of the use and success of the service.	Director of Communities Economy and Transport / Assistant Director Operations
Work Programme	To consider items for inclusion in the Committee's work programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports for future meetings • Scrutiny reviews and potential scrutiny reviews • Items from the Forward Plan 	Senior Scrutiny Adviser
Future Items – to be scheduled		Witnesses
Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) Road Collisions	The Committee requested an update report on the effectiveness of the interventions that have been put in place to try and reduce the number of KSI collisions on the County's roads, and have an outline of the measures that other local authorities have put in place to tackle this issue.	Director of Communities Economy and Transport / Assistant Director Communities

This page is intentionally left blank

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN

The Leader of the County Council is required to publish a forward plan setting out matters which the Leader believes will be the subject of a key decision by the Cabinet, individual Cabinet member or officer in the period covered by the Plan (the subsequent four months). The Council's Constitution states that a key decision is one that involves

- (a) expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the County Council's budget, namely above £500,000 per annum; or
- (b) is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions.

As a matter of good practice, the Council's Forward Plan includes other items in addition to key decisions that are to be considered by the Cabinet/individual members. This additional information is provided to inform local residents of all matters to be considered, with the exception of issues which are dealt with under the urgency provisions. Only key decisions to be taken by officers are included.

For each decision included on the Plan the following information is provided:

Page 277 - the name of the individual or body that is to make the decision and the date of the meeting or relevant time period for an officer decision
the title of the report and decision to be considered
groups that will be consulted prior to the decision being taken
a list of documents that will be considered when making the decision
the name and telephone number of the contact officer for each item.

The Plan is updated and published every month on the Council's website two weeks before the start of the period to be covered.

Meetings of the Cabinet/individual members are open to the public (with the exception of discussion regarding reports which contain exempt/confidential information). Copies of agenda and reports for meetings are available on the website in advance of meetings. Key decisions taken by officers will not be taken at a meeting – documents listed can be made available on request to the contact officer, with the exception of those which contain exempt/confidential information.

For further details on the time of meetings and general information about the Plan please contact Stuart McKeown at County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE, or telephone 01273 481583 or send an e-mail to stuart.mckeown@eastsussex.gov.uk. For further detailed information regarding specific issues to be considered by the Cabinet, individual Member or officer please contact the named contact officer for the item concerned.

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE

For copies of reports or other documents please contact the officer listed on the Plan or phone 01273 335274.

FORWARD PLAN – EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (including Key Decisions) –1 July 2024 TO 31 October 2024

Additional notices in relation to Key Decisions and/or private decisions are available on the [Council's website](#).

Cabinet membership:

Councillor Keith Glazier - Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development
Councillor Nick Bennett – Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change
Councillor Penny di Cara – Lead Member for Economy
Councillor Claire Dowling – Lead Member for Transport and Environment
Councillor Carl Maynard – Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health
Councillor Bob Bowdler – Lead Member for Children and Families
Councillor Bob Standley – Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability

Date for Decision	Decision Taker	Decision/Key Issue	Decision to be taken wholly or partly in private (P) or Key Decision (KD)	Consultation	List of Documents to be submitted to decision maker	Contact Officer
15 Jul 2024	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Petition: For East Sussex County Council to agree to proceed without further delay to proceed with our simple and affordable 20mph safety scheme, which requires just the change of signage To consider the petition asking that the County Council change the existing 30mph speed limit in Burwash High Street to a 20mph speed limit.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Kelly Burr 01273 482824

15 Jul 2024	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Proposed update to the East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Approve the updated East Sussex BSIP.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Craig Lamberton 01273 337 525
15 Jul 2024	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	School Streets - results of the consultation and next steps To note the feedback from the co-design work with the school community on the three school streets schemes at; All Saints CE Primary, Bexhill, Southover CE Primary, Lewes and Langney Primary, Eastbourne, and the results of the public consultation undertaken between 10 May- 31 May 2024. To consider construction of the three school streets schemes (including advertising the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order).			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Lisa Simmonds 0345 608 0190
15 Jul 2024	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections consultation To note the outcomes of the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections public consultation and to approve proceeding to detailed design.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ellie McDaniel 01273 335464
15 Jul 2024	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Petition: Zebra crossing in Green Street, Eastbourne To consider a petition for a zebra crossing, bollards and repairs to road surface in Green Street, Eastbourne.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Clare Akehurst 0345 60 80 193
15 Jul 2024	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	To approve the granting of a new Lease to the Trustees of the West Hills & District Community Centre The current Lease dated 12 March 2008	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Joanne Johnston, Zoe Tweed 01273 336621,

		expires 11 March 2023 and it is proposed that ESCC grant the Trustees a new Lease for a period of 25 years which will allow the Trustees to be able to seek grant funding.				07701 021868
15 Jul 2024	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Land known as Site 6, Easter Island Place, Eastbourne Decision regarding the Council's recommended property strategy.	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Rebecca Lewis 07955 312 371
15 Jul 2024	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Provision of Electricity and Gas This decision is seeking approval for East Sussex County Council's purchasing and invoicing of gas and electricity. It will set out procurement for schools and non-schools portfolio.	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Andrea Shearing 07552 286716
16 Jul 2024	Cabinet	Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion 2023/24 To note the Internal Audit Service's Opinion on the Council's control environment			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Nigel Chilcott 01273 481992
16 Jul 2024	Cabinet	Ashdown Forest Trust Fund 2023/24 To inform Cabinet of the movements on the Trust Fund during 2023/24 and the closing position as at 31 March 2024.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Jill Fisher 01273 482542
16 Jul 2024	Cabinet	Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge of Adult Social Care The Council commissioned an LGA Peer Challenge Review of Adult Social Care in February 2024 as part of its preparation for assessment by the Care Quality	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Mark Stainton 01273 481238

		Commission (CQC). The report to Cabinet summarises the findings from the LGA review and asks Cabinet to agree the action plan that ASCH have drawn up to address areas for development or strengthening performance.				
16 Jul 2024	Cabinet	<p>Carriageway Patching Report</p> <p>To consider investing an additional £1.0m in carriageway patching. The Council's budget for patching is approximately £1.0m per annum and is used to maintain those sections of road that require greater intervention than pothole repairs as well as address those potholes and defects that don't meet the Council's intervention criteria for repair from the revenue budget. There is currently a backlog of patching equating to approximately £3.0m.</p>	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Karl Taylor 01273 482207
19 Jul 2024	Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development	<p>Sussex Integrated Care Strategy Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) year 2 refresh</p> <p>To enable consideration and agreement of the year 2 refresh of the joint Sussex Shared Delivery Plan (SDP). This will focus on content as it relates to delivering the agreed East Sussex County Council and NHS priorities for the population of East Sussex in the Sussex Integrated Care Strategy and the East Sussex Health and Care Partnership plans.</p>	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Vicky Smith 01273 482036

23 Jul 2024	Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Homes for Ukraine - Extension of Support into Work Programme The Lead Member is asked to approve a 12 month extension to the Support into Work programme which is being delivered as part of the Homes for Ukraine Programme. Support into Work provides skills and employability training, language courses and supports access to local employment for Ukrainian guests and other migrant, refugee and asylum seeker groups living in East Sussex.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Pippa Mabey, Mark Hendriks 01273 335506,
25 Jul 2024 Page 282	Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability	Request for Waiver - Direct Award of a contract without competition - South Brockwells Farm This request is for the Lead Member to approve a Direct Award Contract for South Brockwells Farm to provide teachers/tutors for children and young people on the Interim Provision Service (IPS) caseload. This is to be awarded for a short duration and is proposed as an interim measure until the requirement can be delivered via the Education Department's upcoming Preferred Supplier Approved List.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Jane Flock 07706000339
25 Jul 2024	Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability	2024-2030 Excellence For All For the Lead Member to approve the updated content of the Excellence For All 2024-2030 strategy. This iteration of Excellence For All will look ahead to 2030. It will guide the service's work as a division and the work of the Joint, Primary and Secondary boards. It will also			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Bethan Twigg 07557 203791

		be a key driver in the service's wider partnership work with colleagues.				
July 2024	Chief Operating Officer	Provision of Water, Wastewater and Ancillary Services Contracts for businesses and public organisations are available for the invoicing of fresh water and waste water. This decision is seeking approval for a contract for East Sussex County Council in regard to the above services.	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Andrea Shearing 07552 286716
August 2024 Page 283	Chief Operating Officer	Planned Maintenance Contractor Framework 2024-2028 (re-procurement) Decision to procure a contractor framework to provide planned maintenance services to undertake works to council owned property for East Sussex County Council and other named partners including Brighton & Hove City Council. This procurement is to replace an existing framework which is due to complete its term in August 2024. The framework will cover a number of Lots. (Lots are categories of work types and project values). Individual Lots listed as follows: Lot A - Mechanical Services, Lot B - Electrical Services, Lot C - Roofing Works, Lot D - Building Works up to £100k, Lot E - Building Works Generally above £100k - £250k, Lot F - Building Works Generally above £250k - £1m, Lot G - Asbestos Removal - Planned and Reactive Works.	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Nigel Brown 07394 410630

August 2024	Chief Operating Officer	<p>Award of Phase 2 property contract for Adult Social Care's Supported Living Programme (Jasmine)</p> <p>A decision is required to enter into a negotiated building contract with a contractor procured following the administration of Westridge in August 2023. The capital project seeks to extend and redevelop 2 Adult Social Care properties. This decision is for Jasmine Lodge, Northiam in Phase 2. Project description- Phase 2: Reconfiguration and extension of 1 Bungalow to provide ensuite facilities for residents. This reflects a change from residential care to supported living offering people a home with security of tenure.</p>	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Nigel Brown 07394 410630
August 2024	Chief Operating Officer	<p>Award of Phase 2 property contract for Adult Social Care's Supported Living Programme (Grangemead)</p> <p>A decision is required to enter into a negotiated building contract with a contractor procured following the administration of Westridge in August 2023. The capital project seeks to extend and redevelop 2 Adult Social Care properties. This decision is for Grangemead, Hailsham in Phase 2. Project description- Phase 2: Remodelling of Grangemead vacant wing to create 7 self-contained flats with access to appropriate support.</p>	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Nigel Brown 07394 410630

3 Sep 2024	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	New property arrangements for Rye Sports Centre To agree new 20 year Lease Agreement between East Sussex County Council and Rye Town Council and under lease by Rye Town Council to the Rye Recreation and Wellbeing Community Interest Company. This is to enable the continuation of the curriculum and community use of Rye Sports Centre and swimming pool.	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Nigel Brown, Pauline Young 07394 410630, 01273 481180
10 Sep 2024	Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability	West Rise Community Infant School and West Rise Junior School To update the Lead Member on the outcome of a consultation on the proposed amalgamation of West Rise Community Infant School and West Rise Junior School and to seek approval for next steps.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Gary Langford 01273 481758
17 Sep 2024	Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development	Local Growth Fund - Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package (ESWWCP) To note and approve the revised Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package in line with the previous South East Local Enterprise Partnership Accountability Board reporting protocol.		Lead Member for Transport and Environment – January 2024. (support) Eastbourne Borough Council (support) Wealden District Council (support) Team East Sussex (Endorsed January 2024)	Report, other documents may also be submitted	Tracy Vaks 01273 482123

23 Sep 2024	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	<p>Response to Defra consultations on implementing Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010</p> <p>Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, East Sussex County Council became the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for the county. The LLFA role includes a statutory consultee to major planning applications. Parts of the Flood and Water Management Act have never been implemented and this includes Schedule 3, which will introduce additional duties and burdens to the County Council, including the statutory role of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Approval Body and Adopting Authority. The Government has recently indicated its intention to implement Schedule 3 and is due to consult on a series of documents in Autumn 2023, which will set out how Schedule 3 will work in practice, as well as setting out matters such as proposed transitional arrangements and any new burdens monies. The report to the Lead Member will set out the County Councils proposed response to this consultation.</p>			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ed Sheath 01273 481632
23 Sep 2024	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	<p>Petition for the construction of a pedestrian crossing on the B2096 Battle Road outside Punnetts Town Community Primary School</p> <p>To consider the petition asking that the County Council constructs a pedestrian crossing on the B2096 Battle Road outside Punnetts Town Community Primary School to assist children to safely cross the road</p>			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Helen Clee 0345 6080193

		from the car park to the school.				
26 Sep 2024	Cabinet	Local Transport Plan 4 - adoption To note the feedback from the draft strategy public consultation period (27 November 2023 – 25 February 2024) and the subsequent updates to the Local Transport Plan 4 following this consultation period. To seek adoption of the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Lisa Simmonds 0345 608 0190
26 Sep 2024	Cabinet	East Sussex Economic Prosperity Strategy 2024 - 2050 Cabinet is recommended to review and endorse the new East Sussex Economic Prosperity Strategy, developed in partnership with Team East Sussex (TES), the public/private de facto growth board for the county. Cabinet is asked to recommend to Full Council that the Strategy be approved. It fulfils the responsibility of strategic economic planning placed upon East Sussex County Council following transfer of Local Enterprise Partnership functions to locally democratic institutions.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Katy Thomas 01273 482645
26 Sep 2024	Cabinet	Annual progress report on becoming a carbon neutral Council The County Council provides a report annually on its progress towards the target of achieving carbon neutrality from its activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Andy Arnold 01273 481606

26 Sep 2024	Cabinet	Council Monitoring Quarter 1 To consider the Council Monitoring report for the first quarter of the financial year 2024/25 as part of the Council's Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) budget monitoring process.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Victoria Beard 07894 708914
15 October 2024	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	County Hall campus - asset review As part of the Council's Asset Management Plan 2020-2025, the Council has been undertaking a review of its office accommodation. It's Hastings and Eastbourne offices review and implementation are now complete. An independent review of the County's largest asset at County Hall, including Westfield House is completed and the findings of this will be set out for the Lead Member to decide on the way forward.	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Nigel Brown 07394 410630