

MINUTES

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 2 DECEMBER 2025 at 10.00 am

Present

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

40. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2025

40.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the County Council meeting held on 24 September 2025.

41. Apologies for absence

41.1 Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Chris Collier, Johnny Denis, Aidan Fisher, Julia Hilton, James MacCleary and Brett Wright.

42. Chairman's business

WELCOME

42.1 The Chairman congratulated Councillor Aidan Fisher on his election to the division of Ashdown and Conquest and welcomed him to the County Council.

KEITH STEVENS

42.2 The Chairman shared the sad news of the death of Keith Stevens, Chair of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). As Chair, Keith championed the vital role of parish and town councils, working tirelessly to strengthen the voice of communities across England. Keith

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was also Chair of East Sussex Community Voice, the county's Healthwatch provider. The Council stood for a moment's silence as a mark of respect for Keith Stevens.

DARRELL GALE

42.3 The Chairman congratulated Darrell Gale, Director of Public Health on receiving the prestigious Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) Contribution to the Association Medal in recognition of his outstanding work on Healthy Places, housing, and climate change.

BRODERICK HOUSE CHILDREN'S HOME

42.4 The Chairman informed the Council that Broderick House Children's Home had been rated as Outstanding across all areas, following a successful visit from Ofsted. The Chairman thanked the staff at Broderick House, and the wider staff in Children's Services, for their continued commitment to the children they care for and congratulated them on the outcome of the visit.

CHAIRMAN'S ACTIVITIES

42.5 The Chairman reported that he had attended a number of engagements since the last County Council meeting including, a visit to Sheffield Park and Garden, a joint Civic Visit with the Mayor of Uckfield, a Carer's O'Clock visit hosted by Julia Roberts, Cultureshift, Friends of Sussex Hospices' 30th Anniversary Dinner hosted by Friends of Sussex Hospices at Lancing College, a visit to Knockhatch Adventure Park with Councillor Paul Holbrook, the Lord Lieutenant's Awards Ceremony hosted by the Lord Lieutenant, Polegate Civic Reception hosted by Mayor of Polegate, Eastbourne Silver Band's Concert of Remembrance, Lewes Remembrance Day Parade and Service hosted by Mayor of Lewes TC, Peacehaven Armistice Day hosted by Mayor of Peacehaven, East Sussex Prayer Breakfast hosted by Richard Bickersteth, Commonwealth Service of Remembrance hosted by Linda Wallraven, Peacehaven Mayor's Festive Winter Sizzler hosted by Mayor of Peacehaven, and a visit to Rotherfield St Martin Charity. The Chairman also hosted a Civic Reception at Charleston Manor, Firle.

42.6 The Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman for his ongoing support, including his attendance at the Crafty Collective's Big Mental Health Fundraiser, Bexhill Youth and Community Centre Autumn Fair, Hastings Day Business and Continuity, United Nations of Bexhill and Hastings hosted by United Nations Association, Ocean Symposium and Marine Exhibition 2025 hosted by United Nations Association, Civic Leaders Visit to Bexhill Academy hosted by Chair Trustees, Attwood Trust, Hastings day business and college community lunch, a remembrance service at Bexhill Memorial, and Educational Award Ceremony London.

PETITIONS

42.7 The following petitions were presented before the meeting by Councillors.

Name of Presenting Councillor	Subject of Petition
Councillor Adeniji	Improved road safety measures around Chyngton Primary School.

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PRAYERS

42.8 The Chairman thanked the Reverend C Peter Molloy, St Mark the Evangelist Church, Buxted for leading the prayers before the meeting.

43. Questions from members of the public

43.1 Copies of the questions from members of the public and the answers from Councillors Glazier OBE, Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development, and Councillor Claire Dowling, Lead Member for Transport and Environment are attached to these minutes.

44. Declarations of Interest

44.1 There were no declarations of interest.

45. To receive notice by the Returning Officer certifying the election of a county councillor for the electoral division of Ashdown and Conquest.

45.1 The County Council agreed to receive the Notice by the Returning Officer certifying the election of a County Councillor for the Ashdown and Conquest division at the by-election held on 20 November 2025.

46. Reports

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

Cabinet report – paragraph 1 (Council Monitoring Q1 2025/26), paragraph 2 (Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assessment of Adult Social Care, paragraph 4 (Ofsted Focused Visit – July 2025).

Governance Committee report – paragraph 6 (Members' Allowance Scheme).

NON RESERVED PARAGRAPHS

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

Cabinet report – paragraph 2 (Ashdown Forest Trust Fund).

Governance Committee report – paragraph 1 (Amendment to the Constitution – Access to Information Procedure Rules), paragraph 2 (Amendment to the Constitution – Budget Setting Meeting), paragraph 3 (Scrutiny Call-in process), paragraph 4 (Customer experience annual report) and paragraph 7 (Amendment to the Constitution – Speaking at the Planning Committee).

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47. Report of the Cabinet

Paragraph 1 - Council Monitoring Q1 2025/26.

47.1 Councillor Bennett introduced the reserved paragraph in the Cabinet report.

47.2 The paragraph was noted after debate.

Paragraph 3 - Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assessment of Adult Social Care.

47.3 Councillor Maynard introduced the reserved paragraph in the Cabinet report.

47.4 The paragraph was noted after debate.

Paragraph 4 - Ofsted Focused Visit – July 2025.

47.5 Councillor Bowdler introduced the reserved paragraph in the Cabinet report.

47.6 The paragraph was noted after debate.

48. Report of the Governance Committee

Paragraph 6 - Members' Allowance Scheme.

48.1 Councillor Glazier moved the reserved paragraph.

48.2 The motion, including the recommendations, was CARRIED after debate.

49. Questions from County Councillors

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

Questioner	Respondent	Subject
Councillor Lambert	Councillor Glazier, OBE	Action against abuse and intimidation of the public and Councillors.
Councillor Murphy	Councillor Glazier, OBE	Support for the centenary celebrations of Winnie the Pooh delivered by Wealden District Council and the Ashdown Forest.
Councillor Field	Councillor Maynard	The merger of Sussex and Surrey Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to form a new ICB, and the impact of this on East Sussex.

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Councillor Daniel	Councillor Claire Dowling	Fly-posting on guard rails at junctions.
Councillor Daniel	Councillor Glazier, OBE	Process for asking questions at Full Council meetings.
Councillor Cross	Councillor Maynard	Community cohesion.
Councillor Taylor	Councillor Glazier	Community safety.
Councillor Adeniji	Councillor Claire Dowling	Partnership working with town and parish councils and ESCC highways.

49.2 Seven written questions were received from Councillors Adeniji, Cross, Field, Murphy and Tutt to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment. Councillor Murphy also asked a question to the Leader of the Council. The questions and answers are attached to these minutes. The Lead Member for Transport and Environment, and the Leader responded to supplementary questions.

50. Report of the East Sussex Fire Authority

Paragraph 2 - 2026/27 to 2030/31 Strategic Service Planning and Medium-Term Financial Plan.

50.1 Members commented on paragraph 2 of the East Sussex Fire Authority's report and thanked both the Fire Service and Fire Authority for the services it delivers.

51. Urgent Decisions

51.1 The Chairman informed the Council of an urgent decision taken by the Cabinet at a meeting on 24 September under urgency provisions.

51.2 The report was received and noted.

THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 11.50AM

The reports referred to are included in the minute book

COUNTY COUNCIL – 02 December 2025

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1) Sarah Green – Nutley, East Sussex.

I am a spokesperson for stand up to racism Crowborough. We represent a large and growing community of local residents who are very concerned about the protests in Crowborough and the rise in racism and hostility.

On behalf of our community, I would like to ask ESCC:

1. What plans do they have in place to address the public disorder caused by the large gatherings at the protests, and to prevent racist hate speeches and the protests being hijacked by far-right groups like UKIP and Advance UK?

We are concerned that public information confirms the protests, and our council meetings have been attended by extremists from outside the local area in large numbers. Inflaming local tensions and hostility.

We are concerned to see our local authority figures attending and engaging in encouraging hostilities and hate crimes.

We would like our council to reassure the community that asylum seekers do not pose a safety risk to people living here. Crime statistics show that asylum seekers are not the majority perpetrators.

Response by the Leader

I fully appreciate that the Home Office's considerations, in respect of the use of Crowborough Training Camp (CTC) to accommodate asylum seekers, have generated a significant strength of feeling from a range of individuals and groups who hold different perspectives and views on the matter. The views and concerns are amplified by the absence of meaningful and comprehensive information and facts from the Home Office, as well as the presence of much misinformation, disinformation and rumour.

It is important to again place on record the fact that I, and this council, categorically condemns any form of discrimination, violence, harassment and intimidation.

Any issues and experiences of public order and hate crimes (including unlawful speeches and protests) should be directed to Sussex Police as they are the agency with responsibility for law enforcement.

More generally, we have produced a Community Sentiment Monitoring Framework, supported by the council's Safer Communities Team, Sussex Police, the District & Borough councils and the Fire & Rescue Service. This enables community safety partners to proactively address grievances, promote inclusivity, and disrupt extremist networks and narratives.

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Our Safer Communities Team, through its quarterly newsletter and more focused initiatives such as the Recent Hate Crime Awareness Week, encourages residents to report any examples of hate speech, stickering, leafleting, graffiti or any other intelligence around community tensions to Sussex Police. Any identified mal/mis/dis-information is reported to the Home Office via a template for local authorities.

To date, the County Council has not directly experienced CTC related protests or extremist attendance at public Council meetings but will respond appropriately if it occurs.

I am not aware of any '*local authority figures attending and engaging in encouraging hostilities and hate crimes*' but we, like every other Council, has a Constitution that includes [Part 5 - Section 1 - Members Code of Conduct](#) (including their duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and 'The Seven Principles of Public Life'), which clearly sets out the expectations of all County Councillors.

If you have concerns about the conduct of a specific County Councillor, acting in an official capacity, you can make a complaint using the following link [How to complain about a councillor | East Sussex County Council](#)

2) Denise Harwood – Eastbourne, East Sussex

Are you aware of the impact that the proposed BSIP scheme would have and the congestion it would cause in Station Parade, the Avenue and Upperton Road, along with the impact this would have on the local economy and the retail sector?

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The introduction of the A259 Upperton Road/Station Parade bus priority scheme will build on the existing bus priority measures in Eastbourne town centre on Terminus Road from the station to Bankers Corner, as well as in Gildredge Road, and supports a clear policy direction that is consistent with our Local Transport Plan.

Traffic surveys were undertaken in August and September 2024, to understand congestion levels and driver behaviour in the area. A simulation model was then developed by digitally replicating the traffic patterns of all road users, which measured the impact of the proposed changes.

The modelling centred on the areas around Upperton Road and Station Roundabout, using data from traffic surveys. Findings showed that the proposed bus priority measures are expected to reduce journey times for both buses and general traffic during peak hours.

The scheme has also been carefully considered to minimise disruption to businesses and keep the area accessible for deliveries. For example, while it is proposed that loading restrictions may be introduced on the north side of Station Parade to keep the bus lane running smoothly, the existing loading bays on St Leonard's Road and Southfields Road offer a suitable alternative for businesses receiving deliveries.

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The proposals are based on thorough technical studies and road safety audits. The aim is to strike a fair balance between the needs of all road users, including businesses, shoppers, and public transport users, while supporting the wider objectives of the East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan, Local Transport Plan 4 and Eastbourne Borough Council's Local Plan and Town Centre Action Plan. We are committed to working closely with the local community and businesses to ensure the scheme delivers benefits for everyone and that any concerns are reviewed as the project progresses.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

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

When permits are issued to utilities to work on the highway what conditions are stipulated?

- a) Are there conditions about where the signs are placed?
- b) Are there conditions about additional information, e.g. explaining that businesses are still open or that there is no access to certain businesses?
- c) Are there conditions relating to removal of signs and other paraphernalia when the work is finished?
- d) Are any conditions monitored and/or enforced?

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Each permit is reviewed individually and the appropriate permit conditions for the works being undertaken are requested by the East Sussex Highways Network Coordinator before granting the permit. Conditions can relate to a number of factors such as duration, working hours, manual control of traffic signals, works advertising and additional signage.

a) Are there conditions about where the signs are placed?

Yes, where appropriate the Network Coordinator will specify the location and type of signs as a permit condition along with the date by which they must be erected / dismantled.

b) Are there conditions about additional information, e.g. explaining that businesses are still open or that there is no access to certain businesses?

We can and do request additional signs e.g. "Businesses Open as Usual" signs, where it is appropriate to do so.

c) Are there conditions relating to removal of signs and other paraphernalia when the work is finished?

All works sites must be clear on completion of works. Should signs or other equipment be left on site, following our Inspection (taking photographic evidence) we can issue a section 74 overrun charge, which can vary from £100 per day to £25,000 per day depending on what equipment has been left, where it has been left and if it is affecting traffic/pedestrian flows.

d) Are any conditions monitored and/or enforced?

We undertake approximately 800 permit condition inspections per month, approximately 22% of these permit condition inspections fail. A Fixed Penalty Notice have/are issued for all of these failures.

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

The Planning committee at their meeting on 15 October approve the next stage of the Seaside bus lane in Eastbourne. The report presented to the committee stated that the introduction of the bus lane will deliver “a positive contribution towards improving air quality”.

I believe that the opposite will take place and so that this statement can be monitored I would be grateful if you can provide the current levels of PM10 and PM2.5 readings outside of both St Andrews and Tollgate schools.

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Outdoor air quality is monitored at representative locations across Eastbourne. It is not practical to measure at every location. The three main pollutants in East Sussex that are of concern for health are particulates, nitrogen dioxide and ozone. These are monitored by a mix of continuous air quality monitoring stations and diffusion tubes.

There are two continuous air quality monitoring stations in Eastbourne that measure particulate matter, which are at Devonshire Park and Holly Place.

In 2024, data from these monitoring stations on PM10 indicated that the annual average concentrations were 17 µg/m³ and 10.7 µg/m³ at Devonshire Park and Holly Place respectively. This was slightly lower than the 2023 concentrations of 17.2 µg/m³ and 11.8 µg/m³, and significantly below the annual average threshold of 40 µg/m³ required by the national Air Quality Standards Regulations of 2010.

PM2.5 (which is fine particulate matter that can penetrate deeper into the lungs than PM10) was monitored at one site, namely Holly Place. The PM2.5 annual average in 2024 was 6.7 µg/m³. Again, this was slightly lower than the 2023 annual average of 7.3 µg/m³ and below the annual average threshold of 20 µg/m³ required by the national Air Quality Standards Regulations.

Outdoor air quality monitoring at Devonshire Park and Holly Place is continuous, and all the data is publicly available in real-time on the website of the Sussex Air Quality Partnership (SAQP), which is a partnership of all the local authorities across Sussex. In addition, an annual report on air quality, covering the whole of Eastbourne, has to be prepared by the Borough Council and this is published on the SAQP website.

The Eastbourne Air Quality Strategy is currently out to consultation, and a second drop-in session will be held at Gather Space at the Beacon shopping centre on Friday 23 January 2026 where officers will be answering questions on all matters relating to the strategy document and to air quality. We would be happy to provide more information regarding this engagement if of interest.

3) Question from Councillor Adeniji to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment.

The Council has now completed its initial School Streets trial using Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders at three pilot schools, and I understand that officers are analysing the outcomes and developing a wider assessment framework to guide the potential prioritisation and delivery of future schemes.

Could the Lead Member please provide an update on:

- a) What is the current timeline for finalising the assessment framework that will guide which additional schools are prioritised for School Street schemes? What criteria will form the basis of that framework?
- b) Once the assessment framework is in place, what is the anticipated process and timing for schools to be formally considered for future schemes? As an example, how will Chyngton Primary School in Seaford be evaluated and when might it be assessed, given that it has requested consideration?
- c) Future rollout prospects, including how resourcing and funding will support the delivery of additional School Streets, and how the Council intends to support schools that have already expressed interest in being assessed.

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Thank you for your questions.

As you rightly highlight, we used experimental traffic regulation orders to deliver school street schemes at three pilot schools in the county – Southover Primary in Lewes, All Saints Primary in Sidley - Bexhill, and Langney Primary in Eastbourne. These schemes and the traffic regulation orders were made permanent this summer.

In response to your first question, following the successful delivery of these pilot school street schemes, a draft assessment framework has been developed to identify a further programme of school street schemes across the county, subject to funding. This assessment framework is currently being tested by officers, and it is proposed this will be completed by mid-December 2025.

The draft criteria that is being tested assesses both strategic and local factors. This has been informed from learning following engagement with other local authorities who have adopted similar frameworks. A summary of these draft assessment factors include: -

- Local Policy fit – alignment to the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 and the emerging update to the East Sussex Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan.
- School specific factors – school and local community support, school roll numbers.
- Geographic considerations – such as the type of road, traffic flows, crash record, proximity to bus routes, existing parking restrictions, any traffic displacement,

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number of properties/businesses/services nearby, existing or proposed infrastructure schemes/measures.

In relation to your second question, the draft process will include assessing all schools. This will be undertaken during January 2026, and a draft programme will be included within the East Sussex Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan, which will be subject to a public consultation at the end of January/early February 2026. Chyngton Primary School will be assessed as part of this process and the outcome of this will be communicated with them, as well as all other schools.

In relation to your final question, Government has announced a four year local transport settlement for the period 2026/27 to 2029/30 of both capital and revenue funding. The revenue and capital funding allocations for active travel from 2026/27 onwards are currently unknown; officers understand an announcement from Government on this is imminent.

With the establishment of the Sussex and Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority who will become the local transport authority for the geography, they will likely be responsible for the allocation of the local transport and active travel funding settlements down to the existing upper tier, and new unitary authorities post-local reorganisation, who will remain the local highway authorities and would be expected to deliver, for example, school street schemes.

A draft programme of school streets schemes will be included in the draft updated East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan that will be subject to public and stakeholder consultation in early 2026. The draft final LCWIP is then programmed to come to my decision-making meeting, as Lead Member, in June 2026. This approach will enable the County Council to consider the inclusion of a programme of school streets schemes within future capital local transport investment programmes that are put forward to the new Mayor for the Sussex & Brighton MCCA.

4) Question from Councillor Cross to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment.

Over the last couple of years there have been cuts in bus services in rural areas, where we desperately need them. This exacerbates the vicious circle of low bus use and high car use in the area. A reliable, frequent and all day/everyday bus service would encourage more people onto the buses and thereby increase bus income and trust in the bus service. It would support tourism in the area and improve footfall for local businesses.

The bus companies, particularly Stagecoach, do not appear to have the best interests of residents and passengers at the heart of their business model, and they are running an inefficient and unreliable services in some areas, particularly Number 51 Service running Eastbourne-Tunbridge Wells through the heart of East Sussex (mostly travelling through Wealden).

At the same time as cutting services Stagecoach has been increasing profits – the year ending April 2024 Stagecoach made a post-tax profit of £72.5million, more than three times the profit of the year before (£23.2m).

“As is the case in most parts of the UK, bus services in East Sussex operate in a de-regulated market outside the control of the LTA. The Department for Transport, not ESCC, is responsible for the licensing of operators and services. In this de-regulated environment, operators provide services at their own discretion and set vital features such as routes, timetables, frequencies, and fares. In excess of 90% of all bus journeys in the county are provided on this commercial basis. They do not attract subsidy from ESCC but run only for the revenue generated by passenger usage.”

Enhanced Partnership Plan June 2022

Since this EP draft there has been a government funded £3 price cap on fares (previously £2). Which means that bus services are receiving a subsidy from government, but through ESCC. This could mean that buses are able to increase passenger numbers, and thereby increase profit, whilst government receives nothing. And yet it is unclear how there is accountability for the bus service.

- a) Does the Enhanced Partnership Board have any influence on Stagecoach in terms of monitoring the services and holding them to account for poor performance?
- b) We understand that ESCC supported services are provided under contracts between ESCC and the bus service provider. Is there also a contract in place for the subsidy provided to Stagecoach for the £3 fare (previously £2)?
- c) What is our contractual link between the supported services we fund and the commercial services that Stagecoach run?

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- d) Does the contract have key performance indicators (KPIs) that relate just to the supported service, or to the whole bus services? Is payment reliant on reaching these KPIs?
- e) Does the awarding of the supported services depend on the company running a reliable and efficient commercial service that enable residents in rural areas to depend on them for moving around the County?
- f) What is being done to encourage Stagecoach to spend some of their massive profits improving and extending the bus services in the rural areas.
- g) Do you think we would have a better rural bus service if we had opted for the franchise model under the BSIP, which has been so successful in other areas?
- h) The Cuckoo Line north of Hailsham was opened under Act of Parliament in 1880. In 1964/65 local residents were consulted by the British Railways Board. Residents were promised an adequate bus replacement service as far as Tunbridge Wells. The Abandonment Order was granted on condition that these bus routes would continue to exist. At that time the frequency was one bus every quarter of an hour. Legally the onus then fell on Southdown/Maidstone & District to fulfil their obligations. This then passed to the National Bus Company and then to Stagecoach. Does this still pertain?

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

- a) **Does the Enhanced Partnership Board have any influence on Stagecoach in terms of monitoring the services and holding them to account for poor performance?**

The Enhanced Partnership is a collaborative framework that reviews key areas such as:

- Service reliability and punctuality.
- Delivery of agreed improvements (e.g., ticketing, real-time information).
- Compliance with Enhanced Partnership Scheme obligations.

The BSIP Board oversees delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and ensures alignment with the Enhanced Partnership. The BSIP sets out targets and metrics aligned with the National Bus Strategy, including:

- Punctuality and Reliability: % of buses on time and service cancellations.
- Patronage Growth: Passenger numbers compared to baseline (pre-Covid / 2019).
- Journey Times: Average speed and congestion impact.
- Customer Satisfaction: Surveys via Transport Focus and NHT.
- Environmental Measures: % of low/zero-emission fleet and idling reduction.
- Accessibility: Coverage of rural areas and DDRT performance.

It acts as the main governance body for monitoring progress, funding allocation, and compliance with DfT requirement.

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Recent changes to the timetable implemented by Stagecoach from September to improve reliability has been successful. Current figures put performance up from c.50% to above 70% as at the end of October 2025.

- b) We understand that ESCC supported services are provided under contracts between ESCC and the bus service provider. Is there also a contract in place for the subsidy provided to Stagecoach for the £3 fare (previously £2)?**

This is a national scheme funded and administered by the Department for Transport until March 2027, ensuring services remain affordable and supporting bus travel, particularly in rural areas. Reimbursement of Stagecoach's reduced fares income in participating in the £3 fare cap is arranged by the Department of Transport.

- c) What is our contractual link between the supported services we fund and the commercial services that Stagecoach run?**

Commercial services, by definition, are not contracted and do not need funding support. There is no contractual link between commercial and supported services.

- d) Does the contract have key performance indicators (KPIs) that relate just to the supported service, or to the whole bus services? Is payment reliant on reaching these KPIs?**

There are obligations for bus operators of all bus services set out in the East Sussex Enhanced Plan Scheme. [east-sussex-enhanced-partnership-scheme-31-march-2024.pdf](#)

Payment for supported bus services can be withheld if the contracted journey does not run except for reasons beyond the operator's control.

- e) Does the awarding of the supported services depend on the company running a reliable and efficient commercial service that enable residents in rural areas to depend on them for moving around the County?**

Bus operators must pass the quality requirements of the joint East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for Public Bus Services to be able to submit a bus tender. These are general quality requirements relating to areas of business continuity, performance management, training, recruitment, social value and efficiency.

The awarding of supported service contracts cannot be linked to the operator's commercial services in rural areas as this would inhibit competition for contracted bus services.

- f) What is being done to encourage Stagecoach to spend some of their massive profits improving and extending the bus services in the rural areas.**

This profit figure is for all Stagecoach's bus activities across the UK, with an annual turnover exceeding £1.5 billion. [STAGECOACH GROUP LIMITED filing history - Find and update company information - GOV.UK](#)

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Stagecoach are struggling to financially sustain bus services on certain routes in East Sussex due to the higher costs incurred by traffic congestion and the relatively low number of bus users due to the more rural nature of the county. The measures in the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership are vitally important in contributing to improvements in bus services, though the first task has been to stem further reductions in service provision.

g) Do you think we would have a better rural bus service if we had opted for the franchise model under the BSIP, which has been so successful in other areas?

The franchise model requires very significant funding to set up and also likely to require higher levels of on-going funding. The view within the EP is that the EP remains the pragmatic approach, given that BSIP funding has been offered in short term increments.

h) The Cuckoo Line north of Hailsham was opened under Act of Parliament in 1880. In 1964/65 local residents were consulted by the British Railways Board. Residents were promised an adequate bus replacement service as far as Tunbridge Wells. The Abandonment Order was granted on condition that these bus routes would continue to exist. At that time the frequency was one bus every quarter of an hour. Legally the onus then fell on Southdown/Maidstone & District to fulfil their obligations. This then passed to the National Bus Company and then to Stagecoach. Does this still pertain?

This is no longer the case; it was intended to last for a reasonable period after closure linked to licensing and subsidy arrangements under the old regulatory regime. The National Bus Company was dissolved in the late 1980s, in addition bus deregulation under the Transport Act 1985 removed most statutory service obligations, replacing them with a commercial market plus local authority tendered services.

Today, service provision is governed by:

- Local Transport Authority contracts for East Sussex County Council supported routes
- Public Service Obligation (PSO) regulations under the 2023 UK regime, which allow authorities to contract for socially necessary services—but these are new contracts, not historic obligations. These services are subject to funding, for which ESCC has a prioritisation for.

Any continuation of those routes today depends on commercial viability or local authority subsidy under BSIP or Enhanced Partnership arrangements.

5) Question from Councillor Murphy to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Hailsham has had a huge amount of large housing development over the last 4 years and there are a large number of conflicting temporary direction signs fixed to lamppost and street furniture that the developers have put up to direct traffic to these developments.

Can you confirm that these signs are for Construction traffic and are intended to direct large construction vehicles on a safe route to the development.

There are increasingly large vehicles using the town High Street and it is causing traffic problems negotiating around the turns into George Street and holding up traffic when there are busses in the High Street.

- a) Will ESCC Highways seek to review the existing signs and licenses to ensure that the large vehicle do stay out of the High Street?
- b) Will ESCC Highways adopt a policy on all new license applications of no large construction vehicles in the High Street?
- c) Will ESCC Highways write to Google Maps, Marin, Tom-Tom and any other satellite navigation system and inform them that the Hailsham High Street is not suitable for large vehicles?

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

- a) Will ESCC Highways seek to review the existing signs and licenses to ensure that the large vehicle do stay out of the High Street?**

Routing of construction vehicles is generally controlled through Construction Traffic Management Plans (CTMP), which are secured through planning conditions attached to the corresponding planning permissions. The request for large vehicles to stay out of the High Street would be dependent on the details of each Construction Transport Management Plan (CTMP) associated with the various planning permissions and where the construction site is. Ultimately, it will be the planning authority (Wealden District Council) to agree the CTMPs, although ESCC are generally a consultee on these. Where possible, ESCC do highlight / advise avoiding the High Street and try to ensure any unnecessary signage is removed. We will continue to do this.

- b) Will ESCC Highways adopt a policy on all new license applications of no large construction vehicles in the High Street?**

See our response to question a. We would also point out that this depends where the development site is exactly, what the access options may be and the specific requirements for a given development.

- c) Will ESCC Highways write to Google Maps, Marin, Tom-Tom and any other satellite navigation system and inform them that the Hailsham High Street is not suitable for large vehicles?**

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We are aware that other Highway Authorities have made approaches to these companies in the past, but little to no change has resulted. This is not a problem exclusive to East Sussex and it appears there is no easy solution, apart from putting up signs and the use of specialist sat navs for larger vehicles, however many lorry drivers don't appear to use these as they are more expensive than standard. A more permanent solution would be a TRO such as a weight limit. We will raise this matter at our regional forum of Highway Authorities, to see if there is a way to guide these companies better on such matters.

6) Question from Councillor Murphy to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Hailsham has a number of utility roadwork temporary closures in the past year causing untold misery for traffic trying to enter and leave the town. Whilst Highways cannot deny utility companies the right to dig up roads, ESCC have also carried out temporary road closures particularly on South Road and Ersham Road in the past two years.

Unfortunately, there have been some latent defects left behind after these works that have resulted in additional remedial works having to be carried out.

- a) What is the level of monitoring carried out on the utilities and ESCC contractors' roads works?
- b) If a defect is identified that requires remedial action, is this carried out at the contractors' expense or does the additional expense fall to ESCC?
- c) What timescale should we reasonably expect these defects be rectified?

Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

a) What is the level of monitoring carried out on the utilities and ESCC contractors' roads works?

On average we undertake 800 permit condition Inspections and 1,330 site Inspections per month on Utilities and ESCC works. In October we had a defect failure rate of 12.6%.

b) If a defect is identified that requires remedial action, is this carried out at the contractors' expense or does the additional expense fall to ESCC?

All defects are rectified by the Utility/contractor, ESCC do not meet the cost of any remedial work on Utility defects.

c) What timescale should we reasonably expect these defects be rectified?

The defect process states Utilities have 10 days to dispute the defect, having accepted the defect remedial works should be undertaken within 20 days. Where the undertaker fails to rectify the non-compliant reinstatement within the prescribed timescales, if required, the authority may undertake the remedial work and recover their reasonable costs from the undertaker.

7) Question from Councillor Murphy to the Leader.

The recent proposal by the Home Office to house up to 600 asylum seekers at Crowborough training camp has caused huge stress and anxiety to the residents of the town and further afield in Wealden. The situation in the town has not been helped by elected members at all levels seeking to gain political capital out of the situation. Residents are rightly concerned but they also have a right to have all the facts presented to them and not the misinformation and half-truths that have been used by those who seek to sow division and distrust.

There has been several public meetings held in Crowborough organised by WDC, Crowborough Town Council, the MP and a political party. The County council has been criticized at these meetings for being absent and not turning up as invited.

The situation now in Crowborough is one that has culminated in public meetings degenerating into aggressive, hostile environments where local women councillors were being confronted, abused and intimidated. They had to be escorted to their vehicles and the Town Council had now been forced to engage security for their subsequent Town Council meeting.

This is in stark contrast to when, three years ago, the Home Office installed 130 asylum seekers at the Boship Hotel with 48 hours' notice. Residents of Hailsham and the surrounding villages were rightly concerned at the time but there was no misinformation issued by elected members at national or local level.

This matter should have been debated at full council, in the absence of that these questions require an urgent reply from the Leader.

- a) Will the Council seek to reduce tension in the town by issuing a letter to each household detailing the timeline of the announcements by the Home Office and ESCC responses. This letter to include details of the services ESCC are expected to provide as requested by the Home Office?
- b) Will the Council remind elected members at all levels of the duty of care to represent all residents, not just those who seek to divide and confront?
- c) Will the Council ensure that senior officers will, when invited, attend all meetings organised by the Home Office, Wealden District Council, Sussex Police, NHS Sussex and other affected official organisations?
- d) Will the Council convene a whole council forum for ESCC Councillors on the subject of isolated encampments to house asylum seekers and the comparison of the County Council's responses and handling of the Home Office asylum seeker proposals for the Boship Hotel, Crowborough Camp and Northeye Camp?
- e) Will the Council issue Councillors with the name of the police officer responsible for Councillor safety in order that they can report any instances of verbal, physical or virtual threats?

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- f) Will the Council provide advice to schools in the Crowborough area to prioritise the mental health and well-being of all pupils and staff when handling enquiries from pupils that would be anxious about the situation regarding the conflict in the Town?

Response by the Leader

I fully appreciate and understand the Crowborough residents' anxiety and concerns regarding the Home Office's considerations in respect of accommodating a large number of single adult male asylum seekers at Crowborough Training Camp (CTC). These concerns, I am sure, are amplified by the absence of meaningful and comprehensive information and facts, as well as the presence of much misinformation and rumour. There are many questions that remain unanswered and we are continuing to work with Wealden District Council (WDC), as the local lead agency, and other statutory partners to better understand the Home Office's considerations and, in turn, ensure that they are in possession of all of the local influencing factors, prior to them making a decision.

- a) Will the Council seek to reduce tension in the town by issuing a letter to each household detailing the timeline of the announcements by the Home Office and ESCC responses. This letter to include details of the services ESCC are expected to provide as requested by the Home Office?**

The Home Office formally announced its intentions to use Crowborough Training Camp to accommodate asylum seekers on 28th October 2025. This followed an unofficial release (leak) of this information earlier in the same week. The county council was first informed in strict confidence, alongside other statutory partners on 10th October 2025. The council has made no formal responses to the Home Office as our statutory duties and powers only apply if the camp is mobilised. We have however, worked with Wealden District Council, as the local lead agency, and other statutory partners to obtain more details of the proposals from the Home Office so that we can better assess any potential impact on our services and the wider community.

We will not, at this stage, issue a letter to each Crowborough household, as the responsibility for communication and engagement on this matter sits with the Home Office and we have no additional information to add beyond what is already widely available and can be accessed through the following links on the Home Office, Wealden District Council and our own websites. We will keep this position under review:

[Crowborough Training Camp, East Sussex: factsheet - GOV.UK](#)

[Crowborough Army Camp - Wealden District Council](#)

[Support for different migrant groups | East Sussex County Council](#)

We have not been requested to provide any services in respect of the proposal, nor do we expect to be.

If the proposal goes ahead, the council will have some limited statutory duties and powers as the asylum seekers accommodated at CTC would be considered as 'residents' of East Sussex, albeit temporary. Details of our Duty of Care for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in East Sussex can be found through the following link to our website:

[Duty of care for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in East Sussex | East Sussex County Council](#)

The paragraphs below set out some of the main statutory duties that may be relevant if CTC were to become operational and accommodate asylum seekers. The lists excludes our duties in respect of children and young people as we have been informed that asylum seekers accommodated will be over the age of 18.

Adult Social Care

- Local authorities have a duty to assess asylum seekers in relation to their care and support needs under the Care Act 2014 if requested. It is, however, important to recognise the distinction from Home Office support. Asylum seekers can receive support from the Home Office (under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999) for 'destitution', but the Care Act applies to those who have additional care and support needs. Asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) may receive support under the Care Act 2014 if their needs are not solely due to 'destitution' and a human rights assessment is completed.
- Adult asylum seekers are entitled to safeguarding under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 if they meet the specific criteria, irrespective of their immigration status. The local authority has a duty to act if it reasonably suspects an adult in its area:
 - Has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting those needs);
 - Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
 - As a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect.

Public Health

- Asylum seekers are considered as 'residents' so we have a population responsibility for health improvement and health protection.
In reality, this would mainly apply to infection prevention and ensuring any communicable diseases are well handled.

Community Safety

- Prevent (The aim of Prevent is to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism and is part of CONTEST, the national counter-terrorism strategy). We have incorporated the potential occupation of CTC in our revised Situational Risk Assessment for Prevent and will review and update the assessment as more information becomes available and the situation develops.

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- ESCC is a member of the multi-agency Wealden District Community Safety Partnership (Safer Wealden Partnership), chaired by Wealden District Council.

b) Will the Council remind elected members at all levels of the duty of care to represent all residents, not just those who seek to divide and confront?

The council's Constitution includes [Part 5 - Section 1 - Members Code of Conduct](#) (including 'The Seven Principles of Public Life'), which clearly sets out the expectations of all County Councillors. If any County Councillor is unclear of the expectations of their role and associated responsibilities, they should review this Section and / or seek advice from the council's Monitoring Officer.

c) Will the Council ensure that senior officers will, when invited, attend all meetings organised by the Home Office, Wealden District Council, Sussex Police, NHS Sussex and other affected official organisations?

Senior council officers have, and will continue, to attend all strategic, operational and tactical meetings (as well as its own internal meetings), organised by the Home Office or system partners, in respect of this proposal. Officers have not attended any public meetings or the Wealden District Council Scrutiny Committee, for the same reasons as set out in the response to Question 1 - the responsibility for communication and engagement on this matter sits with the Home Office and we have no additional information to add beyond what is already widely available. ESCC officers do not attend other councils' scrutiny committee to ensure accountability lines are clear. As also described in the response to Question 1, the council's limited statutory duties and powers would relate to the operation of asylum accommodation at CTC, as opposed to any consideration or proposal.

d) Will the Council convene a whole council forum for ESCC Councillors on the subject of isolated encampments to house asylum seekers and the comparison of the County Council's responses and handling of the Home Office asylum seeker proposals for the Boship Hotel, Crowborough Camp and Northeye Camp?

No, not at this stage, but we will keep this position under review. Whole Council Forums are an incredibly useful mechanism for sharing and discussing information and topics in detail with and between Members. As you know, we did touch upon the proposals relating to CTC at the end of the last Whole Council Forum on Reconciling Policy Performance and Resources (RPPR) and essentially, beyond the details contained on the three webpages listed in the response to Questions 1, we have no further information to share or discuss at this stage.

For the avoidance of doubt, the council's 'response and handling' to the CTC proposals is identical to similar Home Office proposals for Northeye and the Boship Hotel (and other asylum accommodation proposals in the county).

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- e) Will the Council issue Councillors with the name of the police officer responsible for Councillor safety in order that they can report any instances of verbal, physical or virtual threats?**

I, and this council, unreservedly condemns any form of violence and intimidation towards Councillors and members of the public. Anyone in an emergency situation where there is an immediate risk to them (or another person) or when a crime is being committed, should call 999. Anyone who needs crime prevention or personal safety advice or to report a crime that does not need an emergency response, should call 101.

In terms of a named police officer responsible for Councillor safety, this is a matter for Sussex Police and you should contact them direct for a response.

- f) Will the Council provide advice to schools in the Crowborough area to prioritise the mental health and well-being of all pupils and staff when handling enquiries from pupils that would be anxious about the situation regarding the conflict in the Town.?**

The council has been, and will continue to be, in contact with all of the local schools in the area to provide information, advice and support in respect of this matter.