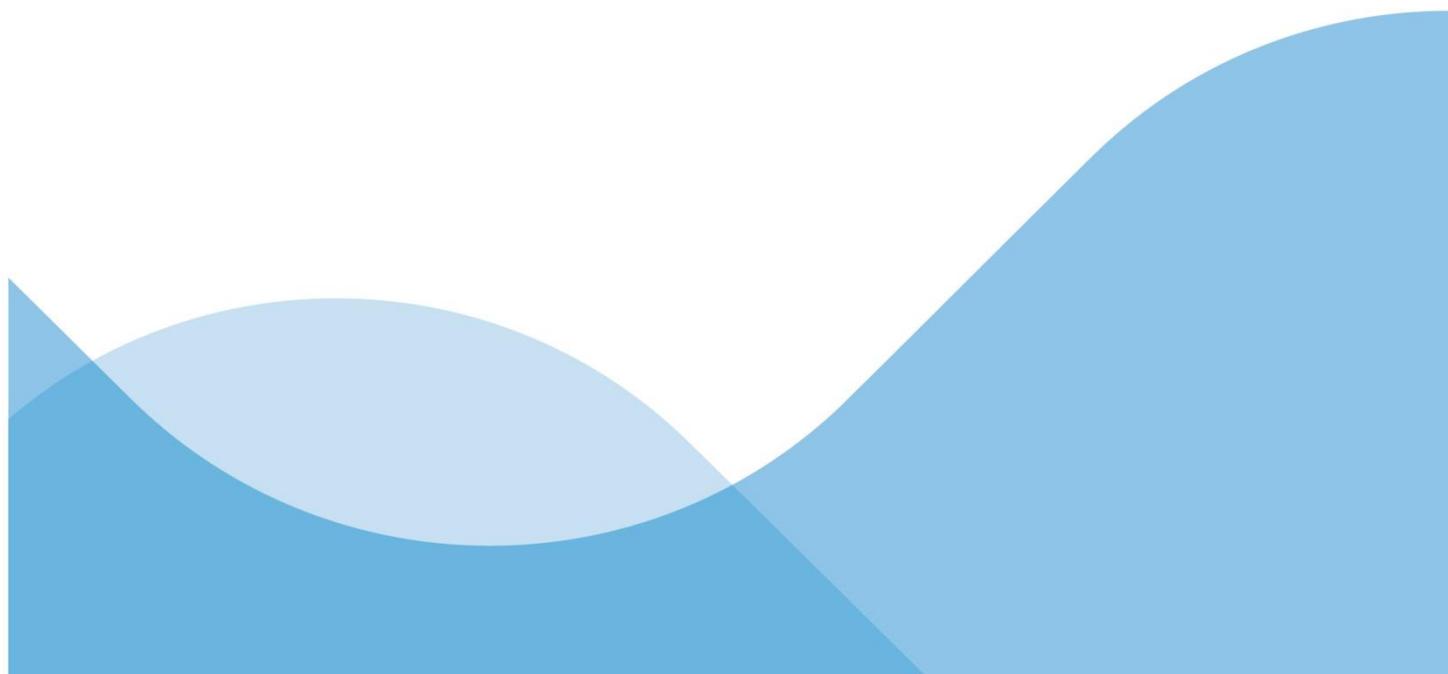


Meeting of  
East Sussex County Council  
on Tuesday, 24 March 2026  
at 10.00 am

*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: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/your-council/videos-of-council-meetings/webcasts>*





# EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

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## To the Members of the County Council

You are summoned to attend a meeting of the East Sussex County Council to be held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes, **on Tuesday, 24 March 2026 at 10.00 am** to transact the following business

1. **Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 February 2026** (*Pages 5 - 20*)
2. **Apologies for absence**
3. **Chairman's business**
4. **Questions from members of the public**
5. **Report of the Cabinet** (*Pages 21 - 28*)
6. **Report of the Governance Committee** (*Pages 29 - 30*)
7. **Notice of Motion - Digital ID scheme** (*Pages 31 - 32*)

The Chairman has directed under Standing Order 36.9 (1) that the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Tutt shall stand referred to the County Council.

This Council resolves to:

1. Formally oppose the Labour Government's Digital ID plans;
2. Request the Leader of the Council writes to:
  - The Secretary of State for the Home Office and the Minister for Digital Infrastructure expressing this Council's firm opposition to Labour's Digital ID system and calling for the plans to be scrapped.
  - Members of Parliament across East Sussex asking for their firm commitment to oppose Labour's Digital ID system and ask them to confirm that they will instead advocate for the cost to be diverted in to settling SEND deficits nationally.
3. Work with local voluntary, digital inclusion and civil liberties groups to ensure that no resident in East Sussex is penalised or excluded as a result of any national identification scheme.

## 8. **Notice of Motion - Highways** (*Pages 33 - 36*)

The Chairman has directed under Standing Order 36.9 (1) that the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Taylor shall stand referred to the County Council.

This Council resolves to:

Request the Cabinet to bring the highways service back into council ownership and control by 2030.

This will likely involve:

- Adopting an "In-house by Default" and Intelligent Client Policy, making direct delivery the baseline against which all future outsourcing proposals are measured.
- Mandating a formal Insourcing and Council Ownership Feasibility

Study for the Highways Term Maintenance Contract (TMC) no later than 18 months before its expiry.

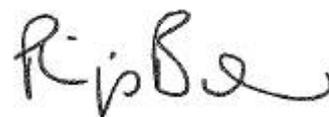
- Developing a "Public Interest Test" for all major contracts, assessing:
  - Financial Transparency: Removal of contractor profit margins.
  - Social Value: Ensuring the Real Living Wage and local apprenticeships.
  - Agility: The ability to redirect resources instantly without contractual penalty.

## 9. Questions from County Councillors

- a) Oral questions to Cabinet Members
- b) Written questions of which notice has been given pursuant to Standing Order 44

*Note: There will be a period for collective prayers and quiet reflection in the Council Chamber from 9.30 am to 9.45 am. The prayers will be led by Chris Webster, Curate – All Saints Eastbourne. The Chairman would be delighted to be joined by any members of staff and Councillors who wish to attend.*

County Hall  
St Anne's Crescent  
LEWES  
East Sussex BN7 1UE



PHILIP BAKER  
Deputy Chief Executive

16 March 2026

## MINUTES

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### EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

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**MINUTES of a MEETING of the EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 10 FEBRUARY 2026 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, Johnny Denis, Penny di Cara, Chris Dowling, Claire Dowling, Kathryn Field, Councillor Aidan Fisher, Gerard Fox, Nuala Geary, Keith Glazier, OBE, Alan Hay, Julia Hilton, Ian Hollidge, Stephen Holt, Johanna Howell, Eleanor Kirby-Green, Carolyn Lambert, Tom Liddiard, Philip Lunn, James MacCleary, Wendy Maples, Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood, Carl Maynard, Matthew Milligan, Steve Murphy, Sarah Osborne, Paul Redstone, Christine Robinson, Pat Rodohan, Phil Scott, Daniel Shing, Stephen Shing, Alan Shuttleworth, Bob Standley, Colin Swansborough, Georgia Taylor, David Tutt, John Ungar, Trevor Webb and Brett Wright

#### **52. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2025**

52.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the County Council meeting held on 2 December 2025.

#### **53. Apologies for absence**

53.1 Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Chris Collier and Godfrey Daniel.

#### **54. Chairman's business**

54.1 The Chairman shared the sad news of the death of three former councillors Joy Hughes, John Wilson and Michael Phillips.

## MINUTES

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### FORMER COUNCILLOR JOY HUGHES

54.2 The Chairman shared that Joy Hughes was elected to the County Council in 2009 and represented the Bexhill King Offa division until 2013. She served as a member of the Planning Committee and Regulatory Committee.

### FORMER COUNCILLOR JOHN WILSON

54.3 The Chairman informed the Council that John Wilson was elected to the County Council in 2005 and represented the Hastings Ashdown and Conquest division until 2009. He served as a member of several committees of the council, including the Community Services Scrutiny Committee, Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Regulatory Committee and East Sussex Fire Authority.

### FORMER COUNCILLOR MICHAEL PHILLIPS

54.4 The Chairman shared that Michael Phillips was elected to the County Council in 2013 and represented the Bexhill King Offa division until 2017. He served as a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel during his tenure.

54.5 The Council stood for a moment's silence as a mark of respect for the former councillors.

### NEW YEAR'S HONOURS

54.6 On behalf of the Council, the Chairman congratulated all those who live or work in East Sussex who were recognised in the New Year's honours. With a special mention to Angela Wooller, Apprenticeship and Qualifications Manager who was awarded a BEM for services to Further Education.

### CHAIRMAN'S ACTIVITIES

54.7 The Chairman reported that he had attended a number of engagements since the last meeting of the Council including: Little Gate Farm Civic Visit with Andrea Randall-Smith, a Citizenship Ceremony with Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Dr Deborah Ghate DL, Civic Christmas Carol Services hosted by the Mayor of Crowborough, the Mayor of Seaford and the Mayor of Polegate, the Chichester Cathedral Carol Service and a meeting with Directors of Tourism Alliance.

54.8 The Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman for his ongoing support, including his attendance at the West Sussex Fire & Rescue and West Sussex County Council Carol Service and Pantomime Evening hosted by Mayor of Polegate.

### PETITIONS

54.9 The following petition was presented before the meeting by Councillors

<b>Name of Presenting Councillor(s)</b>	<b>Subject of Petition</b>
Councillors Stephen Shing and Swansborough	Fully repair and reinstate St Martins Road and its footways and introduce a 20mph speed limit on St Martins Road, Eastbourne

### PRAYERS

## MINUTES

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54.10 The Chairman thanked the Reverend Prebendary Stephen Stuckes, Cuckmere Churches for leading the prayers before the meeting.

### **55. Questions from members of the public**

55.1 Copies of the questions from members of the public and the answers from Councillor Claire Dowling, Lead Member for Transport and Environment are attached to these minutes.

### **56. Declarations of Interest**

56.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### **57. Reports**

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

Cabinet report – paragraph 1 (Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)) and paragraph 3 (Annual Looked After Children report 2024-2025).

#### NON RESERVED PARAGRAPHS

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

Cabinet report – paragraph 2 (Council Monitoring: Quarter 2 2025/26), paragraph 4 (Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2026/27), and paragraph 5 (The Conservators of Ashdown Forest 2025/26 forecast outturn position and updated medium term financial plan including the 2026/27 budget).

Governance Committee – paragraph 1 (Pay Policy Statement) and paragraph 2 (Scheme of Members' Allowances – Index for Annual Adjustment to Allowances).

### **58. Report of the Cabinet**

Paragraph 1 - Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)

58.1 Under Standing Order 23, the Council agreed that the speeches of the Leaders of the 5 Groups (or their nominees) on paragraph 2 of the Cabinet's report be extended beyond 5 minutes.

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

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

- (1) approve in principle the draft Council Plan 2026/27 at Appendix 1 and authorise the Chief Executive to finalise the Plan in consultation with the relevant Lead Members;
- (2) approve the net Revenue Budget estimate of £693.2m for 2026/27 set out in Appendix 2 (Medium Term Financial Plan) and Appendix 3 (draft) (Budget Summary) and authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, Leader and Deputy Leader, to make adjustments to the presentation of the Budget Summary to reflect the final settlement and final budget decisions;
- (3) in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to agree that:
  - (i) the net budget requirement is £693.2m and the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as its council tax requirement (see Appendix 5) for the year 2026/27 is £420.8m;
  - (ii) the amount calculated by East Sussex County Council as the basic amount of council tax (i.e. for a band D property) for the year 2026/27 is £1,960.29 and represents a 4.99% (2% of which relates to the Adult Social Care precept) increase on the previous year;
- (4) advise the District and Borough Councils of the relevant amounts payable and council tax in other bands in line with the regulations and to issue precepts accordingly in accordance with the agreed schedule of instalments as set out at Appendix 5;
- (5) note that the Council has written to Government to request Exceptional Financial Support in the form of a £70m capitalisation direction to support the budget in 2026/27;
- (6) amend the Treasury Management Strategy, as set out later in this report, to allow borrowing to fund the revenue budget;
- (7) note the comments of the Chief Finance Officer on budget risks and robustness, as set out in Appendix 6;
- (8) agree the Reserves Policy set out in Appendix 6;
- (9) approve the Capital Strategy and Programme at Appendix 8;
- (10) note progress with the Council Plan and Budget 2025/26 since quarter 2 set out in paragraphs 1.29 to 1.33;
- (11) note the Medium Term Financial Plan forecast for 2026/27 to 2028/29, set out in Appendix 2;
- (12) note the comments from engagement exercises set out in Appendix 7; and
- (13) note the schedule of fees and charges that have increased above 4% at Appendix 9.

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

### FOR THE MOTION

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

## MINUTES

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### AGAINST THE MOTION

There were no votes against.

### ABSENCES

Councillors Cross, Denis, Field, Hilton, Holt, Lambert, MacCleary, Maples, Murphy, Osborne, Robinson, Rodohan, Scott, Daniel Shing, Stephen Shing, Shuttleworth, Swansborough, Taylor, Tutt, Webb and Wright.

### Paragraph 3 – Annual Report of Looked After Children

58.5 Councillor Bowdler introduced the reserved paragraph in the Cabinet's report.

58.6 The paragraph was noted after the debate.

## 59. Notice of Motion - Speed limits in new developments

59.1 With agreement from Council, Councillor Field moved an altered motion, which was seconded by Councillor Wright.

*Evidence shows that 20mph limits:*

- increases a pedestrian's chance of survival if hit by a car
- improves the quality of life for those living in a 20mph zone
- leads to calmer streets and improved community cohesion
- reduces pollution

*This Council requests the (delete the following wording) Cabinet [replace with the following wording] Executive to consider implementing a maximum speed limit of 20mph when adopting roads in new developments [add the following wording] by:*

- 1. Reviewing the approach to setting local speed limits in new developments once the government issues the updated guidance to 'Setting Local Speed Limits' and 'Manual for Streets'; and**
- 2. Seeking to influence the content of the emerging Local Plans throughout the county, so that the policies of Planning Authorities for new developments support the principles around low speed zones (including 20mph) as in Manual for Streets.**

59.2 The motion was CARRIED after debate.

## 60. Notice of Motion

60.1 The following motion was moved by Councillor Taylor and seconded by Councillor Cross.

*This Council calls on the Leader to:*

## MINUTES

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- *Publicly condemn all forms of political discourse that inflame hatred and encourage racism in our communities.*
- *Publicly condemn misinformation or inflammation of hate against any resident, business owner, local official or elected representatives across East Sussex.*
- *Remind Councillors that they must abide by the spirit and the letter of the Code of Conduct and Nolan principles to which we subscribe.*
- *Encourage officers and relevant Councillors to collaborate and work together to ensure safety and security for all residents within the area.*

60.2 The following amendment was moved by Councillor Maynard and seconded by Councillor Fox.

*This Council calls upon the Leader to:*

- *(delete the following wording) Publicly condemn all forms of political discourse that inflame hatred and encourage racism in our communities. [replace with the following wording] Publicly support freedom of speech within the law and the right of peaceful protest so long as the same does not encourage or condone violence or inflame racial hatred of any kind whether against one racial, ethnic or religious group or another.*
- *(delete the following wording) Publicly condemn misinformation or inflammation of hate against any resident, business owner, local official or elected representatives across East Sussex [replace with the following wording] Condemn all misinformation and statements whether by elected representatives, residents or others calculated to encourage or condone violence or inflame racial hatred of any kind whether against one racial, ethnic or religious group or another including anti-semitic or Islamophobic statements.*
- *Remind (delete the following wording) Councillors [replace with the following wording] elected representatives that they must abide by the spirit and the letter of the Code of Conduct and Nolan principles (delete the following wording) to which we subscribe.*
- *(delete the following wording) Encourage officers and relevant Councillors to collaborate and work together to ensure safety and security for all residents within the area. [replace with the following wording] Encourage officers and elected representatives to listen to and consider the fears and concerns of all local residents and work together to ensure their safety and security.*

60.3 The following motion was CARRIED after debate.

This Council calls upon the Leader to:

- Publicly support freedom of speech within the law and the right of peaceful protest so long as the same does not encourage or condone violence or inflame racial hatred of any kind whether against one racial, ethnic or religious group or another.
- Condemn all misinformation and statements whether by elected representatives, residents or others calculated to encourage or condone violence or inflame racial hatred of

## MINUTES

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any kind whether against one racial, ethnic or religious group or another including anti-semitic or Islamophobic statements.

- Remind elected representatives that they must abide by the spirit and the letter of the Code of Conduct and Nolan principles.
- Encourage officers and elected representatives to listen to and consider the fears and concerns of all local residents and work together to ensure their safety and security.

### 61. Questions from County Councillors

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

Questioner	Responded	Subject
Councillor Rodohan	Councillor Claire Dowling	Impact of waste disposal booking scheme on local charities.
Councillor Tutt	Councillor Glazier	Parking concerns due to increased tourism.
Councillor Lambert	Councillor Claire Dowling	Parking issues in areas surrounding schools.
Councillor Maples	Councillor Claire Dowling	Pavement parking enforcement.
Councillor Maples	Councillor Claire Dowling	School streets programme.
Councillor Robinson	Councillor Claire Dowling	BSIP funding for Telscombe.
Councillor Stephen Shing	Councillor Claire Dowling	Highways repairs.
Councillor Scott	Councillor Claire Dowling	Highways repairs.

61.2 Five written questions were received from Councillors Hilton and Taylor to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment and the Lead Member for Economy. The Lead Members responded to supplementary questions.

## MINUTES

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THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 1.14 pm

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The reports referred to are included in the minute book

\_\_\_\_\_

### COUNTY COUNCIL – 10 FEBRUARY 2026

#### QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

##### 1) Zofia Page - Forest Row, East Sussex

Please could East Sussex County Council explain clearly who has responsibility for what in terms of water outages, and what the Council's role is if a water company (in this case South East Water) fails to make adequate provisions in the case of water outages.

##### **Response by Lead Member for Transport and Environment**

During a water supply interruption, water companies in England and Wales have a statutory duty to ensure continued access to essential water and to support customers until normal service is restored.

Under the Water Industry Act 1991, water companies have must ensure continuation of their water distribution functions during an emergency and are required to plan to provide alternative supplies in the event of a loss of normal supply. As set out in Security and Emergency Measures Direction (SEMD) 2022, in the event of an unavoidable failure of piped supply, water companies must ensure that a minimum supply is provided by alternative means.

If the supply fails, water companies must continue providing alternative water (e.g. bottled water, bowsers) until normal supply is restored.

Water companies must prioritise vulnerable and at-risk customers by ensuring they receive appropriate alternative supplies. Local Authorities support this through sharing vulnerable people data with water companies.

Additionally, during an outage, water companies must inform those affected that the supply has been interrupted, where to get an alternative supply, and the time by when the supply will be restored.

East Sussex County Council is a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. We have duties to assess risk, maintain emergency plans, warn and inform the public and cooperate with responder organisations. Additionally, in this context the County Council has the responsibility of coordinating data relating to vulnerable people.

##### 2) Monika Koncz-Mackenzie - Forest Row, East Sussex

We understand that the council may provide staff to help with the distribution of water and support for management of distribution lists of vulnerable people who will need water deliveries. If the council had/has to use its own resources to make up for inadequacies in the provisions of alternative water supplies made by commercial water companies, what processes are in place to seek redress and compensation from the water companies?

It is not good use of public funds if councils are in effect having to "bail out" corporations who fail in their statutory obligations.

##### **Response by Lead Member for Transport and Environment**

South East Water used their own extensive network of staff and contractors to ensure bottled water was delivered to bottled water stations and vulnerable people.

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Whilst during a major incident involving water supplies, Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) partner support can include providing staff to help manage bottled water stations or assisting with deliveries to vulnerable customers, on this occasion South East Water did not request any support to deliver bottled water to vulnerable people. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) provided a list of vulnerable people, in accordance with the Sussex Resilience Forum Vulnerable Person plan, to help ensure that all known vulnerable customers received doorstep deliveries of bottled water during the outage.

### **3) Ffion Thomas – Wych Cross, East Sussex**

During the recent water outages it was very difficult for residents without access to cars to obtain sufficient water from the bottled water locations in East Grinstead. What steps can and are East Sussex County Council taking to ensure that South East Water makes adequate provision of water to all affected residents (including those without their own transport) should such outages occur again (this is the second time in 3 years that such outages have occurred, so it is not an uncommon occurrence)?

#### **Response by Lead Member for Transport and Environment**

It is the statutory responsibility of water providers to ensure appropriate provision of water by alternative means should the piped water supply fail.

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

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

**Now we have timed booking slots for the recycling sites, what provision will you be making for people to arrive on foot or by cargo bike to drop items off?**

#### **Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment**

At the moment there is no provision for this, but it should be easier to manage different vehicles and not discriminate against cyclists and walkers who otherwise have to spend money on a bulky waste collection that car drivers don't have to.

The introduction of the booking scheme in November 2025 did not change access arrangements for bicycle and pedestrian users. These have remained the same as they were prior to the scheme starting at each individual site.

All Household Waste Recycling Sites (HWRS) users are now required to book before they visit. People can walk or cycle to the East Sussex recycling sites where it is safe for them to enter. However, not all sites are accessible for pedestrians and cyclists.

Six of our ten sites have dedicated pedestrian access whilst seven sites allow bicycle access.

Hastings HWRS does not have pedestrian or cyclist access. The entrance to the site is a small bridge and this would need to be widened to accommodate a pedestrian walkway. There is no pedestrian walkway along the site side of Freshfields road on the approach to the site either. There is little ongoing demand for pedestrian or cycle access at this site.

When booking at other sites, walkers and cyclists can select the option to 'Book a slot for bicycle' or 'Book a slot for a pedestrian'. We have had 617 cycle bookings and 529 pedestrian bookings across the network of sites out of a total of 113,000 bookings since the system was launched in November 2025.

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

In recent meetings with the bus users' group in Hastings, a senior Stagecoach employee mentioned that expenditure on repairing damaged bus suspension systems are three times higher at the Hastings depot compared to any other of their depots across the south east due to the appalling state of the roads in Hastings. Taking buses off the road for repairs also affects the reliability of the bus network.

**I understand funding is tight, but can you give me assurances that bus routes will be prioritised for repairs and resurfacing given how important this method of transport is to Hastings residents?**

#### **Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment**

Thank you for sharing the concerns raised by Stagecoach regarding the impact of road condition on their fleet in Hastings. From the outset, please be reassured we recognise the importance of a reliable bus network to residents who rely on public transport. We know that some parts of the network in Hastings are under significant pressure, and we fully appreciate that road condition may contribute to increased vehicle maintenance costs and affect service reliability. As part of our asset management approach, bus routes already form a key

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consideration when we assess and prioritise maintenance schemes. Routes with high usage, including those that serve major bus corridors, are more regularly inspected and form part of our programme for both routine safety repairs, planned resurfacing and winter gritting.

However, as you note, funding remains extremely challenging and we must balance needs across the entire county. Within those constraints, I can give assurance that we will continue to prioritise roads that demonstrate the greatest investment return and support essential services such as public transport. We will continue to work closely with Stagecoach and other operators to ensure that areas of concern are flagged promptly and fed into our maintenance planning.

In addition, we are exploring opportunities through targeted investment, government funding streams and our ongoing work with the Bus Service Improvement Plan to identify where improvements to physical bus infrastructure can best support the network's reliability.

We will continue to work with operators to monitor the condition of bus routes in Hastings and ensure they receive appropriate priority within the resources available. In the meantime, if there are any specific concerns, please ensure these are reported to East Sussex Highways through the usual channels.

### **3) Question from Councillor Taylor to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment.**

Last month there was an extended water outage in Forest Row, Hartfield, Nutley and some of the neighbouring areas. It also extended to West Sussex (East Grinstead), and a different but possibly related cut was going on in Tunbridge Wells, including Frant. The water was off for about 6 days in the East Sussex areas. Water distribution sites were not appropriate, nor locally informed. Whilst an East Sussex County Council (ESCC) officer, who was attending the Sussex Resilience Forum meetings, was updating me and other local councillors, there was no mechanism for me or the Parish Councils to communicate directly with Southeast Water (SEW) or the Resilience Forum. The mechanism just seems too remote. A list of the vulnerable residents who were to receive deliveries of water bottles was held by SEW, and there was also one held by ESCC and I believe, Wealden District Council. But this list was not available for local councillors nor the Parish Council, who could have been checking to see whether people were ok. I had to pass on repeated reports that vulnerable people were not receiving their water deliveries, but not having a list to check on, I could not verify, nor visit the residents myself.

I have since looked at the online information about the Sussex Resilience Forum and find there is no useful or easily accessible information that could have been used by the local community. I have also asked in audit committee why Councillors are not more involved in the emergency response but received an answer which did not help to clarify the situation. On the one hand it states Councillors provide civic and community leadership, and will be kept informed, then in the next sentence the statement contradicts this somewhat, stating it is not advisable for councillors to become directly involved (Sounds like Councillors should simply be mouthpieces and ignore the chaotic response of SEW).

**Please could you let me know what ESCC can do to make sure ESCC emergency planning structure, mechanism and processes could better include local councillors and parish councils, as well as residents more directly and that roles be clarified?**

### **Response by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment**

The water outages affecting Forest Row, Nutley and Frant last month had a significant impact on residents and businesses in these areas. This situation understandably caused considerable concern and anxiety for many people, who were left without a reliable water supply for many days.

It may be helpful to firstly clarify responsibilities regarding civil emergencies:

- Local authorities have clearly defined duties under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA 04). The Council is defined as a Category 1 responder under the CCA. Category 1 responders have primary duties for emergency preparedness and response. As such, Councils are required to assess local risks, develop emergency plans, maintain business continuity plans, warn and inform the public, share information and cooperate with other responder organisations.
- East Sussex County Council is an active member of the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF), fulfilling its role as a Category 1 Responder under the CCA. The SRF is a collaborative, multi-agency partnership that brings together a range of agencies to deliver a coordinated approach to emergency planning, response, and recovery across Sussex. Members include core emergency services, local authorities, NHS bodies, the Environment Agency and utility companies.
- The SRF maintains various plans, including a multi-agency Emergency Response and Recovery Plan and a Vulnerable People Data Sharing Plan, to coordinate multi-agency support during major incidents. These are reviewed, tested and exercised on a regular basis.
- The SRF applies a risk-based approach using the National Risk Register and local assessments to prioritize threats, facilitates information sharing between agencies, and coordinates multi-agency support during major incidents.
- In East Sussex, we also have a partnership arrangement between East Sussex County Council, Lewes and Eastbourne Councils, Wealden District Council, Rother District Council, Hastings Borough Council, and East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, called ESREP. Member organisations fund a central emergency planning team to support each organisation in meeting its statutory requirements under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- In two-tier authority areas such as East Sussex, County and District or Borough Councils have different responsibilities in terms of response, but both work closely together to ensure affected communities are kept informed with relevant and timely information.
- Our County emergency response plans are developed in a multi-agency environment to ensure effective coordination of response and recovery. These plans are regularly tested, exercised, and supported through training among officers and responders.

Councillors play a vital role in emergencies as trusted voices in their communities. Senior councillors with Executive responsibilities provide political leadership and ensure their Council meet obligations under the Act, both in preparation for and response to emergencies.

More widely, Councillors also provide civic and community leadership, acting as a focal point for the local area during an emergency and helping to increase community resilience and supporting their ability to recover.

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During an incident, we will always keep affected councillors informed and updated. While it is not advisable for councillors to become directly involved in the operational response, they provide a valuable and trusted source of information to the communities they serve.

The Emergency Planning team have delivered Member training previously, and the presentation is available to view on the Councillor training pages on the intranet. The Emergency Planning team would be happy to provide this training again if Members would find it useful.

The ESCC website has a range of useful information for residents and local communities on how to prepare for an [emergency incident](#). It also links to further information on the [Sussex Resilience Forum website](#). The [SRF Preparing for an Emergency booklet](#) contains information on what to do before, during and after a loss of a utility service.

During a water supply interruption, water companies in England and Wales have a statutory duty to ensure continued access to essential water and to support customers until normal service is restored.

Under the Water Industry Act 1991, water companies must ensure continuation of their water distribution functions during an emergency and are required to plan to provide alternative supplies in the event of a loss of normal supply. As set out in Security and Emergency Measures Direction (SEMD) 2022, in the event of an unavoidable failure of piped supply, water companies must ensure that a minimum supply is provided by alternative means.

If the supply fails, water companies must continue providing alternative water (e.g. bottled water, bowsers) until normal supply is restored.

Water companies must prioritise vulnerable and at-risk customers by ensuring they receive appropriate alternative supplies. Local Authorities support this through sharing vulnerable people data with water companies.

Additionally, during an outage, water companies must inform those affected that the supply has been interrupted, where to get an alternative supply, and the time by when the supply will be restored.

The Sussex Resilience Forum maintains a Water Disruption Plan and a Vulnerable People Data Sharing Plan to coordinate multi-agency support during a major incident involving water supplies. During a major incident involving water supplies, SRF partner support can include providing staff to help manage bottled water stations or assisting with deliveries to customers requiring special assistance.

During the recent South East Water incidents, Councillors were kept informed after each multi agency meeting, with concerns raised fed back to South East Water. As you will recall from the updates you received, Officers attending the SRF multi agency meetings with South East Water raised concerns on the first day of the outage that the bottled water stations they had set up were not accessible to the communities in Forest Row or Nutley, and asked South East Water to set up further bottled water stations in these areas, which they did.

With regards to your request to receive lists of vulnerable customers, this is not possible as it would breach GDPR. All personal data shared between ESCC and the water companies is done so securely and in line with data protection requirements. During this incident vulnerable customers were asked to contact South East Water directly if they had not received a delivery.

You will recall that South East Water also provided councillors with a priority email address so that councillors could contact them directly with any urgent concerns.

#### 4) Question from Councillor Taylor to the Lead Member for Economy.

Local businesses and organisations, particularly in the hospitality sector, have lost thousands of pounds due to the water outage. Hotels have had to cancel events and customer stays, restaurants, cafes and pubs have had to shut due to hygiene issues, the doctor's surgery had to restrict appointments, and I know of at least one case that could have led to hospitalisation. For businesses, SEW does not appear to have to pay for damages, and if businesses claim on their insurance, they will likely incur higher costs in the future.

ESCC aim to enhance economic growth (which I would prefer to say "a thriving sustainable economy and resident wellbeing") is now in jeopardy, now and in the future. If this region gets known as an area where you cannot rely on water supplies, businesses and local services will suffer. Clients will not book here; customers will go elsewhere. Business will fail, jobs will be lost and we will be sliding backwards.

**Please could you tell me how ESCC will work with others to make sure the image of this part of East Sussex does not suffer from further economic damage due to water, and how the damaged image will be healed?**

#### **Response by the Lead Member for Economy**

We recognise how difficult the recent water supply disruption in parts of East Sussex has been for our communities. Being without water is highly disruptive, and we know the situation has caused significant challenges for residents, businesses and visitors.

Ofwat has now opened an investigation into South East Water following repeated supply failures. We welcome this scrutiny and await the regulator's findings.

Regarding compensation, South East Water operates a Guaranteed Standards of Service scheme. We encourage any eligible residents or businesses to make a claim through the South East Water website or by calling 0333 000 0001.

South East Water's Business Plan for 2025–2030, published in August 2024, sets out measures intended to improve the resilience of the local network. This includes around £80m of investment in East Sussex, such as upgrades to Bewl Water Treatment Works, the new pipeline from Bewl to Rotherfield, and replacement of mains between Heathfield and Rushlake Green. It will be important for the County Council, partners, businesses and residents to see these commitments delivered in full.

Looking ahead, the County Council is focused on supporting local economic resilience and helping communities recover from the disruption. Through Experience Sussex, we continue to promote the county and support tourism businesses with marketing, training, product development and campaigns to increase visitor numbers. Experience Sussex is also working with other South Coast destinations to raise concerns about water-related impacts on the visitor economy.

Alongside this, we are working in partnership with Brighton & Hove Council and West Sussex through the Local Visitor Economy Partnership to boost sustainable growth and strengthen Sussex's profile nationally and internationally.

Businesses in the visitor economy can access free support from Experience Sussex, including advice, networking and signposting to funding opportunities. More broadly, all East Sussex businesses can use the East Sussex Growth Hub for free, impartial and tailored business support to help them grow and respond to challenges. You can access the service via website at [East Sussex Growth Hub](#)

## MINUTES

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We hope this provides reassurance that the County Council is doing everything within its resources to support local businesses, residents and visitors.

### **5) Question from Councillor Taylor to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment.**

This breakdown of the water situation is probably going to happen again. We have not had a decent account of why the water was suddenly gone. SEW said that the storm (which was not evident here locally) and the cold weather (which happens every year!!) had led to treatment sites being insufficient and cracks in pipes. This just does not ring true. We know that there is an ongoing enquiry into the SEW and we as customers and as Councillors need to know more about why and how their system is breaking down. We also need to know more about how they might innovate now to provide resilience in the future.

**How will ESCC be holding SEW to account? Will ESCC push to get answers to questions about why the outage happened in the first place? Could ESCC push for a better resilience preparation and system in preparation for what the future holds. (e.g. Home water storage facilities including water butts and drinking water containers, compost loos, village bore hole etc.)**

### **Response by Lead Member for Transport and Environment**

The responsibility for ensuring supply lies with the water companies. They are regulated by Ofwat, which has already opened an investigation into South East Water, following repeated outages, to determine whether it has failed to develop and maintain an efficient water supply system. This is ongoing.

East Sussex County Council will continue to work with SRF partners to raise awareness of the risk of emergencies occurring and provide advice in how to prepare for such incidents in future. However, I can confirm that the Council will be formally raising through the SRF our concerns with South East Water's response to this incident through the debrief process.

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## REPORT OF THE CABINET

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The Cabinet met on 10 March 2026.

Attendees: - Councillors Bennett (Chair), di Cara, Claire Dowling, Maynard, and Standley.

### 1. Council Monitoring Report – Q3 2025/26

1.1 The 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 December 2025.

1.2 Broad progress against the Council's four strategic priority outcomes is summarised from paragraph 1.15 and an overview of finance and performance data is provided in the Corporate Summary at Appendix 1. Strategic risks are reported at Appendix 8.

### Council Plan 2025/26 amendments and strategic risks

1.3 The target for one performance measure in Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) (Appendix 6) is recommended for amendment:

- East Sussex Careers Hub – a) support schools to achieve an average of 5 national benchmarks b) 215 Industry Champions support schools and colleges in the county

The Government has implemented significant changes to how the Gatsby benchmarks used to assess careers provision in schools are assessed and reported. These changes came into effect in September 2025. As a result, the Cabinet agreed that the element of the 2025/26 target relating to the benchmarks be deleted.

1.4 The Strategic Risk Register, Appendix 8, was reviewed and updated to reflect the Council's risk profile. Risk 5 (RPPR), Risk 15 (Climate), Risk 4 (Health), and Risk 23 (Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution) have updated risk definitions and updated risk controls. Risk 12 (Cyber Attack), Risk 22 (Oracle), Risk 9 (Workforce), Risk 6 (Local Economic Growth), and Risk 21 (Care Act Reviews) have updated risk controls.

### Budget Outturn

1.5 The detailed revenue projections for each department are set out in the relevant appendices which show a projected overspend of £22.8m by 31 March 2026 (£24.1m at quarter 2).

1.6 The main headlines are:

- Children's Services (CSD) is forecasting a £13.5m overspend for 2025/26 (£14.9m at quarter 2). Whilst the forecast has reduced since quarter 2, the main financial pressure continues to come from the statutory demand-driven areas of Children We Care For, child protection, and Home to School Transport (HTST). There has been a slight improvement in the forecast for Children We Care For, achieved through a focus on commissioning activity and contract negotiations, and strengthened oversight, meaning that providers are held to account for cost, quality and outcomes. Mitigation measures include family support programmes, reunification work, strengthened market management, and increased health funding. The HTST forecast has improved on the previous quarter due to a reduction in the numbers of solo journeys for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), increased route optimisation, and

additional Dedicated School Grant income for eligible SEND pupils requiring transport. Not included in the revenue budget projections due to the statutory accounting override, the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block deficit is projected to be £20.1m by the end of 2025/26. Demand for special school placements is rising, but local maintained schools are at capacity, forcing reliance on Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools at significantly higher costs. Additionally, bespoke out-of-school provisions requested by parents further increase expenditure, with limited mechanisms to control these costs.

- The forecast overspend for Adult Social Care (ASC) is £9.0m (no change from quarter 2) which largely relates to the Independent Sector. This is due to an increase in demand and more people being supported, however it should be noted that support is being provided at a lower average cost than previous years, because the service is managing the market, being prudent with packages of support and reviewing more people.
- Communities, Economy and Transport is showing a forecast overspend of £0.3m (underspend of £0.2m at quarter 2). The largest overspend is in Highways, which reflects the higher than expected cost of damage to the highway primarily due to accidents and oil and fuel spills. In addition, in the absence of additional Council funding for highway maintenance the weather is taking its toll on road conditions, resulting in additional costs arising from larger pothole repairs, additional jet patching, temporary repairs and emergency defects, on top of increased electricity costs for street lighting and contract inflation as reported at quarter 2.

1.7 Within Centrally Held Budgets (CHB), including Treasury Management (TM), and corporate funding there is a forecast underspend of £9.8m (£10.7m at quarter 2), which includes the general contingency:

- There is currently an estimated £1.0m underspend on TM, based on a reduced in-year capital borrowing requirement and greater than anticipated returns on investments. It should be noted that there has been a fall in cash investment balances; whilst above benchmark returns are being achieved, the level of balances has fallen by 50% in one year to £57.1m at the end of December 2025.
- Within CHB the forecast underspend of £8.8m is due to the General Contingency of £5.7m, £1.5m available from not transferring a contribution to the Capital Programme and £3.3m unused provision for budgetary risk, offset by £1.6m debt impairment and other smaller variances.
- Corporate Funding budgets are underspending by £1.1m (no change from quarter 2), due to the additional allocations of Social Care-related grant and New Homes Bonus, plus an increase of forecast Business Rates income offset by a reduction in forecast Council Tax income.

1.8 The net impact of the above is an unplanned draw from reserves of £11.8m in 2025/26. This is in addition to the planned £11.4m draw to present a balanced position in setting the 2025/26 budget. Use of the Capital Reserve has the potential to increase the requirement to borrow, leading into increased costs in the future; use of Collection Fund surplus and Insurance and Local Government Reorganisation Reserves will likely hinder the Council's management of future risk and transformation. To address the projected in-year overspend and reduce the required draw from reserves, the Council continues with several actions introduced last year, including:

- Additional controls on spending, including the requirement for purchase orders above £1,000 to be supported by a business case and approved by a reviewing board.
- An updated recruitment protocol, including Corporate Management Team approval of non-core role recruitment.

1.9 The total savings identified to be delivered in 2025/26, including slippage from previous years, are £14.3m. Departments are reporting that £12.3m will be able to be delivered in 2025/26, with £2.0m slipping to future years, and £0.2m not being able to be achieved but being replaced by other permanent savings. The impact of the slippage has been reflected in the revenue monitoring position. The departmental appendices provide more detail.

1.10 The Capital Programme net expenditure for the year is projected to be £92.768m against a planned programme budget of £92.669m. A slippage risk factor has been applied to the capital programme budget to reflect likely slippage based on a risk assessment of historic levels of actual expenditure and slippage at a project / programme level. The risk factor will be held at a corporate level to enable services / project managers to manage project budgets at a local level, whilst ensuring greater robustness to the planning and monitoring process at a corporate level. The net budget after applying this risk factor is £90.493m. The Capital Programme is currently forecasting a net variation of £2.275m additional expenditure, with the key contributing factors outlined below.

1.11 The Capital Programme is forecasting £5.595m of slippage against the planned programme (a net of £3.419m when adjusted for the slippage risk factor factored into the budget), mainly due to weather-related delays, resource constraints, and project complexities across several departments. The Business Services Department (BSD) reports the largest slippage, particularly at Acre Wood School and Hollington Youth Centre, while CET faces delays on projects including Exceat Bridge, the Emergency Active Travel Fund, and Community Match schemes. Smaller delays are also reported in Children's Services and Adult Social Care, largely due to complex project requirements and construction delays.

1.12 The programme is reporting £0.726m of spend in advance. The majority comes from the CET programme, mainly due to resumed works on the Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2a scheme, which faced earlier delays and unexpected issues such as a sinkhole and an asbestos pipe.

1.13 The programme is reporting a £5.180m overspend, driven mainly by the Queensway Gateway Road, where redesign requirements, unexpected issues (including utility diversions and poor ground conditions), and a decade of construction inflation have significantly increased costs.

1.14 A £0.212m underspend is forecast within the Capital Programme relating to The Keep in CET. Costs originally planned as capital for equipment replacement have been classified as revenue due to the nature and value of the works.

### **Progress against Council Priorities**

#### ***Driving sustainable economic growth***

1.15 The Council has spent £416m with 1,280 local suppliers over the past 12 months. This equates to 62% of our total procurement spend, which is above our target of 60%. 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. 5 contracts, with a value of £13.2m, were agreed in quarter 3 and as part of these we secured £1.7m in social value commitments. This equates to 13% of the contract value, and will include apprenticeship

opportunities, work experience for local students, supporting habitat restoration and tree planting with local schools (Appendix 4).

1.16 Work on our highways has continued, with 4,828 potholes repaired in quarter 3, 3,531 of these were carriageway potholes and the remainder primarily footway potholes. We completed 2 road improvement schemes to improve the condition of the roads (Appendix 6).

1.17 There were several achievements relating to adult skills in quarter 3. The Construction Task Group worked with East Sussex College Group to launch a new roofing apprenticeship. The Health and Social Care Task Group, alongside the University of Brighton and Pharmacy Teams launched the Boosting Skills Pathway project, to promote careers in pharmacy. 12 Bootcamps were delivered with 178 participants. The Bootcamps helped people increase their skills in areas such as digital, horticulture, leadership and health and social care (Appendix 6).

1.18 158 businesses in East Sussex were supported through business support programmes during quarter 3. 156 of these were supported through the Growth Hub and 2 through Rural Business Grants (Appendix 6).

1.19 The percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds taking up some or all their free education has decreased slightly and at 93.3% is just above the national average of 93.1%. This is partly driven by the fact that there are fewer Early Years places available for this age group this year. A low birth year moving through the system also makes the figures more volatile. However, despite these challenges we have seen an increase in the percentage of 3- and 4-year-old children in working families, taking up some or all their free education (Appendix 5).

1.20 Final data for the average Attainment 8 score for pupils at state-funded schools in academic year 2024/25 shows that the average Attainment 8 score in East Sussex was 43.1 compared to a national average of 46.0. This is below our target of 44.0. The average Attainment 8 score for disadvantaged pupils in East Sussex was 30.3 compared to the national average of 34.9. This is just below our target of 30.5. There have been improvements in Key Stage 4 performance this year, but further improvement is needed particularly in some of our coastal academies which account for a high proportion of the secondary pupils in the county. A number of actions are in place to improve attainment for the 2025/26 academic year (Appendix 5).

1.21 The final validated results for the percentage of children achieving a good level of development at the Early Years Foundation Stage were published by the Department for Education in quarter 3. The East Sussex result was 70.4% compared to a national figure of 68.3%. There is an increased gap between the East Sussex and national figure when compared to the 2024/25 outturn (Appendix 5).

### ***Keeping vulnerable people safe***

1.22 The number of children with a Child Protection Plan has increased to 571 at the end of quarter 3, up from 532 at the end of quarter 2. The increase is attributable to a high level of referrals during quarter 3, with 367 Family Assessments started in October alone. The number of Looked After Children (Children We Care For) also increased, to 704 at the end of quarter 3, up from 689 at the end of quarter 2. There has been an increase in the number of care proceedings, emergency orders and children accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act, while the number of discharges from care has decreased (Appendix 5).

1.23 Three of the Council's Residential Children's Homes were inspected in quarter 3. Brodrick House was inspected in October 2025 and received an 'Outstanding' judgement. Hazel Lodge was inspected in October 2025 and Homefield Cottage in November 2025; both homes were found to be 'Good' (Appendix 5).

1.24 We continue to commission and provide services to support adults and older people across the county. There is a greater complexity of need amongst people accessing support, along with an ongoing increase in demand for our services. There has been a 6.3% increase in the number of people receiving residential and nursing care, and a 4.4% increase in the number receiving Long Term Support in a community setting at the end of quarter 3 2025/26, compared to the end of quarter 3 2024/25. There has also been an 8.1% increase in contacts handled by Health and Social Care Connect, and 8.0% increase in the number of assessments completed, and a 35.8% increase in Mental Capacity Assessments completed between April to December 2025, compared to the same period in 2024 (Appendix 3).

1.25 Trading Standards made 51 interventions during quarter 3 to protect vulnerable people who had been the target of rogue trading or financial abuse. The team have investigated and worked alongside Sussex Police on scam interventions which involved over £1.5m of financial risk to the vulnerable people involved, with one scam alone involving £1.2m. 72 businesses received training or advice from Trading Standards during quarter 3 (Appendix 6).

### ***Helping people help themselves***

1.26 There continues to be challenges around the timeliness of issuing new Education, Health and Care Plans caused by late statutory advice from partners and increasingly high demand. Late statutory advice from partners and increasingly high demand has reduced the number of plans that can be issued on time. However, backlogs have started to reduce in quarter 3. The cumulative performance for quarters 1 to 3 is that 32.2% of plans, including exception cases, and 33.5%, excluding exception cases, were issued within the 20-week statutory timescale, significantly below last year's figures which were over 72% (Appendix 5).

1.27 The Council runs courses aimed at giving children and adults the skills they need for riding their bikes on the road. We delivered 92 Bikeability courses to 579 individuals in quarter 3. 74 'Wheels for All' sessions were also delivered to 1,561 attendees. A number of Bikeability sessions were cancelled in December due to the wet weather, with schools aiming to rebook these sessions in the summer, which will make it more challenging to achieve the target of delivering courses to 4,000 individuals this year. Further level 2, balance bike and immersive training sessions are planned for quarter 4 (Appendix 6).

1.28 Alongside the East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, we have established a Regional East Sussex Pulmonary Service smoking cessation pathway, to provide patients with 2 weeks of Nicotine Replacement Therapy and an onward referral to One You East Sussex. We ran a Stoptober campaign in October 2025, which saw 289 people set a quit date through One You East Sussex, compared to a normal monthly average of 218. We have also launched an AI Quit Coach which provides residents with 24/7 smoking cessation support in any language (Appendix 3).

1.29 The Stronger for Life in Hospital scheme, which is funded by Public Health and managed with the ASC Partnership Team, at the Bexhill Irvine Unit won the President's Award at the Community Hospitals Association Innovation and Best Practice Awards during quarter 3. The scheme, which was supported by strong collaboration between the Council, Active Rother, Active Sussex and East Sussex Healthcare Trust, supports hospital patients, particularly those recovering from strokes, to maintain and regain physical conditioning both during their stay and after discharge. The sessions are now being livestreamed to other hospital departments (Appendix 3).

1.30 During quarter 2 (reported a quarter in arrears) 239 people attended at least 2 sessions as part of a One You East Sussex weight management intervention. Of these 239 people, 52 (22.2%) achieved at least 5% weight loss, against a target of 25.0% for the year.

The service continues to monitor weight loss outcomes across its range of programmes and implement relevant actions to maximise ongoing engagement and retention, which should subsequently positively impact on weight loss outcomes (Appendix 3).

1.31 Public Health played a key role in a local authority consortium, led by Lewes District Council, that secured an additional £880,000 in quarter 3 for delivery of the Warm Home Local Grant in 2025/26. This funding is on top of the £3.9m originally awarded for 2025-2028 and doubles the amount for delivery in the first year of the scheme (Appendix 3).

### ***Making best use of resources now and for the future***

1.32 Throughout quarter 3 the Leader, Group Leaders and Chief Executive continued to raise issues and priorities for the county with our local MPs, focused on the stark financial position of the Council. In letters and individual meetings, MPs have been kept regularly updated on financial planning for 2026/27, and the negative impact that the outcome of the Fair Funding Review 2.0 has on the Council's funding, resulting in the Council needing to request Exceptional Financial Support from Government. Lobbying has highlighted the acute need for services in the county due to the older than average population, the nature of the county's economy, and the level of deprivation in parts of the county which are unlike those seen in the wider South East. In doing so, the Council has received the support of MPs in impressing on Ministers the severity of the Council's financial position and the Council's urgent need for additional funding (Appendix 7).

1.33 The Council has continued to work with a range of partners to develop and deliver carbon reduction and climate change adaptation work in quarter 3. We completed 6 energy efficiency schemes which included roof insulation being installed at 4 properties, 1 window replacement programme, and solar panels being installed (Appendix 4). We also published the corporate climate emergency progress report for 2024/25. Work was undertaken in quarter 3 to establish the potential to lease a closed landfill site to a third party for development as a solar farm (Appendix 6).

1.34 The sickness absence figure for the whole authority (excluding schools), for quarters 1 to 3, is 7.10 days lost per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) role, an increase of 3.2% when compared to the same period in 2024/25. The year end estimate for 2025/26 (based on nine month's data) is 9.51 days per FTE, so the target of 9.10 days per FTE is predicted to be missed. Absence levels have increased sharply in quarter 3, with the main reasons being absences for flu-like symptoms, coughs and colds, and a further rise in stress-related absence. Our wellbeing programme is offering targeted workshops and expanding the Mental Health First Aiders network to help support staff. We are also exploring how to use the new occupational health provider to offer a workshop to support staff through organisational change (Appendix 4).

1.35 The Council continued work to ensure its office hubs are used efficiently during quarter 3, with purchasers identified to acquire Sandbanks in Hailsham, and the former swimming pool adjacent to the old Freda Gardham School in Rye. Sales were also concluded for 3 premises at Hye House Crowhurst. New lettings and lease renewals were also agreed at Pacific House in Eastbourne (Appendix 4).

1.36 Alongside our local partners we have worked to ensure that we will be best placed to secure the maximum possible benefits for our residents from the Government's reforms to the structure of local government. We submitted our response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's consultation on the different models for unitary government put forward for the Sussex area during quarter 3, reiterating the strong case for the One East Sussex model. We also encouraged local people and organisations to respond. We have worked with our partners during quarter 3 to support the creation of the Sussex and

## **CABINET**

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Brighton Mayoral County Combined Authority. Together with partners we are working to ensure that the new authority remains in the best possible position to access funding and use its devolved powers to address challenges faced by residents and businesses across Sussex (Appendix 7).

10 March 2026

**NICK BENNETT**  
(Chair)

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### REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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The Governance Committee met on 10 March 2026

Attendance:

Councillors Bennett (Chair), Collier, Denis, di Cara, Standley, and Tutt.

#### **1. Amendments to the Constitution – scrutiny call-in deadline and scheme of delegations to officers**

##### *Scrutiny call-in deadline*

1.1 In October 2025, the Governance Committee considered a report on the scrutiny call-in process, this included detailed guidance and a checklist, following a request for clearer guidance by the Scrutiny and Audit Chairs and Vice-Chairs. The Committee resolved to agree the guidance and checklist, which included a 4pm deadline on the fifth and final day of the call-in period, as specified in the call-in checklist.

1.2 Whilst the call-in checklist refers to the 4pm deadline, this is not reflected in the Constitution presently. It is therefore proposed that Part 4, (5) Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules be updated to explicitly reflect the 4pm deadline on the fifth day of the call-in process, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

1.3 This will ensure transparency and clarity and align the constitution with established guidance.

##### *Scheme of delegations to officers*

1.4 When considering reports, it is standard practice for the Full Council, Committees, and the Executive to delegate particular responsibilities to designated officers in order to facilitate efficient implementation. This delegation framework enables officers to operate within established boundaries, promoting prompt and effective execution of Council policies, services, and initiatives.

1.5 It is therefore proposed to amend Part 3, Table 6 – Scheme of Delegation to Officers, of the Constitution to include:

*In addition to this scheme, the Full Council, Committees and the Executive may delegate powers to officers, unless their Terms of Reference prohibit further delegation.*

1.6 This proposed amendment is further set out in Appendix 2 of this report.

1.7 The proposed amendments to the Constitution aim to align its provisions with current operational practices and guidelines, thereby supporting strong and transparent decision-making processes.

## GOVERNANCE

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1.8 The Committee recommends the County Council to:

- ❖ approve the amendment to the Constitution as set out in paragraphs 1.2 and 1.6 of the report and the appendices; and
- ❖ agree that the Constitution be amended accordingly.

10 March 2026

NICK BENNETT  
(Chair)

### NOTICE OF MOTION – DIGITAL ID SCHEME

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#### **MOTION WORDING**

The following Notice of Motion has been submitted by Councillor Tutt and seconded by Councillor Field.

Council notes the recent announcement by Keir Starmer's Labour Government of plans to introduce a Digital ID scheme for UK residents.

Council further notes that the Government's plan whilst no longer intended to be mandatory would be a key channel for residents to obtain access to public services and entitlements.

This could risk disenfranchising millions of people, particularly older people, those on lower incomes, or those without access to digital technology.

This raises significant privacy and civil liberties concerns.

This could result in billions of pounds of taxpayers' money being wasted on a massive IT project, (current cost estimates are £1.8bn) with no clear benefit or safeguards.

Council believes that Labour's scheme:

- Represents an expensive measure that will undermine public trust;
- Will do nothing to address the real priorities facing communities such as the lack of economic growth that our country is facing, the cost-of-living crisis that residents in East Sussex are experiencing, or the problems within public services that have been refused the investment that they need to deliver;
- Fails to protect our core British values of liberty, privacy and fairness.

Council welcomes the Liberal Democrats' consistent national opposition to Labour's ID cards, having previously defeated Labour's original plans for ID cards in 2010, and opposes Labour's renewed attempt to introduce them in digital form.

This Council resolves:

1. To formally oppose the Labour Government's Digital ID plans;
2. To request the Leader of the Council writes to:
  - The Secretary of State for the Home Office and the Minister for Digital Infrastructure expressing this council's firm opposition to Labour's Digital ID system and calling for the plans to be scrapped.
  - Members of Parliament across East Sussex asking for their firm commitment to oppose Labour's Digital ID system and ask them to confirm that they will instead advocate for the cost to be diverted in to settling SEND deficits nationally.
3. To work with local voluntary, digital inclusion and civil liberties groups to ensure that no resident in East Sussex is penalised or excluded as a result of any national identification scheme.

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### NOTICE OF MOTION – HIGHWAYS

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#### MOTION WORDING

The following Notice of Motion has been submitted by Councillor Taylor and seconded by Councillor Wright.

The quality of the ESCC footways and roads is deteriorating, not just because of the impact of climate change and the extreme weather, but also because of years of underinvestment in the roads and poor services by the highways contractor. Accountability for the quality of repairs and resurfacing is low, and preventative work, like drain repair and gully clearance, is insufficient, so roads are continuously being eroded. Residents suffer from flooded homes, blown tyres, dangerous driving and cycling as they avoid potholes and many more issues.

We believe that the roads would be better off, and the council could reinvest annual profits of around £1.24 million back into further highways improvements if the highways services was brought back into public hands.

#### Motion:

##### This council notes:

1. That the national trend in local government is shifting towards insourcing, with upper-tier authorities like **Gloucestershire, Norfolk, and Liverpool** reclaiming control of key infrastructure services.
2. That the **Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE)** finds that insourcing can improve service quality by 75% while providing better value for money.
3. That long-term outsourcing often results in "Data Poverty," and loss of institutional memory eg in Highways services, where private firms own the vital information regarding our local road assets.

##### This Council Believes:

1. That public money should be spent on better service delivery for users of our services and fair wages for local workers, not diverted into private shareholder dividends.
2. That the **Highways Service** is a critical worked example where direct delivery allows for faster, more flexible responses to potholes and weather emergencies without the friction of contract variation.

##### This Council Resolves to:

**Request the Cabinet to bring the highways service back into council ownership and control by 2030.**

This will likely involve:

- Adopting an **"In-house by Default" and Intelligent Client Policy**, making direct delivery the baseline against which all future outsourcing proposals are measured.
- Mandating a formal **Insourcing and Council Ownership Feasibility Study** for the Highways Term Maintenance Contract (TMC) no later than 18 months before its expiry.
- Developing a **"Public Interest Test"** for all major contracts, assessing:
  - **Financial Transparency:** Removal of contractor profit margins.
  - **Social Value:** Ensuring the Real Living Wage and local apprenticeships.
  - **Agility:** The ability to redirect resources instantly without contractual penalty.

**NOTICE OF MOTION**

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**Background**

Balfour Beatty is a UK corporation, working internationally, with a turnover of £10 billion. In 2024 they realised a profit of £289 million (around 3% of the turnover). Their main business is construction and large engineering projects. This includes roads, rail, airports, energy transition projects (wind, carbon capture etc.), nuclear power stations (e.g. Hinkley Point and Sizewell C), as well as defence and nuclear weapons related construction. The roads of East Sussex are clearly not going to be their priority and are a small part of their business (0.4% of their turnover annually).

The Balfour Beatty contract is due to end in May 2030, which gives time for ESCC (or the new Unitary) to explore the best model for council ownership and control. In financial year 2026/2027 Balfour Beatty have to put forward a business case for getting a 7 year contract extension (which would run to 2037), so this is really good timing for considering a new model of Highways management.

**Examples of different models of council owned services:**

**Corserv in Cornwall** is a company owned by Cornwall Council. From their website: Their brands are [Cormac](#) (highways), [Cornwall Airport Newquay](#), [Corserv Care](#) and [Jobline](#). These are all brought together under the Corserv banner, where Corserv itself provides shared back office functions such as human resources, legal and finance. The group operates with [Cornwall Council](#) as their major shareholder. As a result, any profits made by the group are returned to the council as a dividend, which they can then reinvest in frontline services.

**Cormac**, part of Corserv, manages and maintains approximately 7500km of Cornwall's highways as well as delivering major construction, civil engineering and highway schemes. They provide a wide range of specialist civil engineering and highway services in Cornwall and beyond.

Other examples:

Authority	Service(s)	Impact / Savings Reported	Strategic Improvement
<b>Peterborough City Council</b>	Infrastructure & Back Office	<b>£1.8m saved</b> (2024/25)	Unified management; removed Serco overheads.
<b>Hackney Council</b>	Waste, IT, Parking	<b>£600k/yr saved</b> (Waste alone)	132 staff moved to Living Wage; increased reliability.
<b>Islington Council</b>	Repairs & Cleaning	<b>£14m+ cumulative savings</b>	Direct control over tenant satisfaction and quality.
<b>Gloucestershire CC</b>	<b>Highways (Strategic)</b>	Improved "First-Time" repair rates	Reclaimed the "brain" (inspections) from Amey.
<b>Norfolk County Council</b>	<b>Highways (Norse)</b>	<b>£2.97m in absorbed costs</b>	Collaborative model allowing more local schemes.

**NOTICE OF MOTION**

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<b>Liverpool City Council</b>	<b>Highways (Direct)</b>	Restored Financial Oversight	Ended "contract failure" risks identified in BV report.
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