

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 27 November 2025.

PRESENT	Councillors Matthew Beaver (Chair) Councillors Julia Hilton (Vice Chair), Chris Collier, Ian Hollidge, Eleanor Kirby-Green, Philip Lunn, Steve Murphy, Paul Redstone, Stephen Shing, David Tutt and Brett Wright
LEAD MEMBERS	Councillors Nick Bennett (via Teams), Penny di Cara, Claire Dowling
ALSO PRESENT	Philip Baker, Deputy Chief Executive Ian Gutsell, Chief Finance Officer Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy and Transport Ros Parker, Chief Operating Officer James Harris, Assistant Director Economy Nick Skelton, Assistant Director Communities Anne Epsom, Assistant Director - Policy and Operations (Orbis Procurement) Michelle Edser, Team Manager Transport Development Planning Ian Glover, Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project Manager Jon Wheeler, Infrastructure, Planning & Place Team Manager Councillor Godfrey Daniel (via Teams) Councillor Anne Cross (via Teams) Councillor Kathryn Field (via Teams) Patrick Major, Scrutiny and Policy Adviser

17. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

17.1 Cllr Hilton requested that the following comments she made about Queensway Gateway Road below be added to the minutes under the work programme item.

- *in her view there had been no proper independent challenge or scrutiny of the whole decision making process, in particular the risk register/assessment and the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process which to her view should have been completed before any further funding was awarded, and asked what lessons there were for future oversight and scrutiny of major projects to ensure rigorous challenge of business cases at an early stage. She suggested that there appeared to have been no proper independent scrutiny of decisions throughout the whole project from 2015 onwards with South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) not providing any serious scrutiny, and asked how the Committee could ensure this for future projects, such as the Exceat Bridge replacement.*
- *whether the Council had demonstrated sufficient duty of care not to be sued for negligence by local businesses who have suffered major financial losses from the ongoing delays.*
- *A shorter scrutiny review should take place, covering the process, timeline, project management, traffic management, communication and engagement plans since ESCC decided to complete the QGR itself and how a project timeline of 16 weeks turned into one covering 52 weeks and still counting.*

17.2 The Committee RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2025 as a correct record, subject to the above change.

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

18.1 There were no apologies for absence.

19. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

19.1 Cllr Hollidge declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under item 23 as he wrote a regular column in a local newspaper which related to active travel, highways infrastructure and electric vehicles.

19.2 Cllr Hilton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under item 24 as Deputy Leader of Hastings Borough Council and Lead Member responsible for assets.

20. URGENT ITEMS

20.1 There were no urgent items.

21. RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR)

21.1 The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the report, and set out that the report provided an opportunity for the Committee to review the November 2025 RPPR report to Cabinet, which included an update on the financial and policy context, updates to the MTFP and capital programme, and the CIPFA Assurance Review report.

21.2 The Chief Finance Officer provided an update on the Council's financial position, explaining that the Council had a projected deficit of £55.8m and it did not have sufficient

reserves to bridge this. Despite this, the CIPFA review had reflected good governance and financial management and the Council having a clear understanding of the financial challenges it faced. In light of the challenges Cabinet had requested further savings options be brought forward but these were not sufficient to address the deficit and the Council was therefore beginning the process for applying for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).

21.3 At the end of November 2025, the financial policy statement and response to the Fair Funding Review 2.0 was announced, which modelling suggested would likely cause a real-terms loss in funding for ESCC, as well as many other county areas. This loss in funding was due to council tax equalisation being set at 100%, the Area Cost Adjustment only being reflected in Adult Social Care (ASC) and the new ASC formulas shifting weighting to working-aged people. In addition the Government was continuing the Recovery Grant, which ESCC did not benefit from. The Government indicated that it expected the number of authorities applying for EFS to increase. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was expected in December 2025, which would provide more detail on the Council's position. The Autumn Budget was also delivered in late November 2025, which included an announcement that the in-year SEND deficit being taken into Government departmental budgets from 2028-29, though this money will be top-sliced from available local government funding. This would also not address the existing accumulated deficit, currently sitting on local authority balance sheets through a statutory override, which was projected to reach £14bn nationally by 2028/29.

21.4 The Committee discussed the report and update on the Council's financial position and that Government had recently published the new Indices of Multiple Deprivation which showed significant deprivation across the county, and in particular in parts of Hastings. Members noted that the reduction in funding the Council would receive would not support addressing the needs of the population of East Sussex.

21.5 The Committee commented that in the report the natural environment was a constraint to economic growth, and requested that this language be reviewed to reflect the benefits of the county's natural environment and that economic growth must work alongside the needs of the environment. The Deputy Chief Executive agreed to review this language in future reports.

21.6 The Committee discussed the areas of greatest spend which were in on ASC and Children's Services and suggested that it would be helpful to understand the level of spending figures for private sector and out-of-county placements, however it was noted that these areas were outside the remit of the Place Scrutiny Committee.

21.7 The Committee asked whether procurement of Home to School Transport, was an area that fell within the remit of the Place Scrutiny Committee and therefore if it was an area that it could review. The Deputy Chief Executive responded that it sat within CET and there was therefore no reason the Committee could not look into it if it chose to.

21.8 The Committee discussed the importance of reviewing contracts to ensure that spend was limited to essential areas and contracts were not renewed as a matter of course.

21.9 The Committee discussed the use of AI in the council and the importance of ensuring clear guidance is in place for the implementation of AI solutions, to ensure data security. They discussed different approaches to implementing AI and the potential benefits of encouraging staff to use AI to innovate solutions and improve efficiency, as well as looking to automate processes where possible, although noted that this may come with higher upfront costs. Some members expressed reservations in additional investment in AI. The Committee also discussed the focus on digital modernisation at part of wider public service reform, and asked if ESCC was taking advantage of all available opportunities, such as from Government or the LGA, to increase modernisations and improvements.

21.10 The Chief Operating Officer commented that ESCC was rolling out the use of AI responsibly, including with a new AI Policy, and that the MTFP included a small amount of investment in AI and digital solutions. Staff were being encouraged to utilise the free version of

MS Copilot: Copilot Chat, which came as part of the Microsoft 365 license with no additional cost. There was also targeted use of AI where there was a clear business case for it, such as using PowerBI, Formflow and Magic Notes in ASC and CS, where the use of these tools freed up caseworker time. Investment in AI relied on data maturity and effective processes, and teams were taking advantage of the LGA's offer in this area. The Council were also examining other authorities' approaches to using AI to develop business cases for future projects.

21.11 Cllr Hollidge expressed his concern about the lack of investment in highways and suggested consideration be given to borrowing to increase investment in highways. The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport responded that ESCC has historically invested over and above the grant funding received from Government, which was possible due to ESCC's ability to borrow funds for this at the time. Borrowing to invest came with an ongoing cost, and given the Council's financial position it was longer able to borrow for this. This meant that highways maintenance spending was now limited to the grant expenditure.

21.12 The Committee discussed the SPACES programme and what barriers existed in delivering asset disposals. The Chief Operating Officer outlined that there were some constraints within property teams and Legal Services due to historic savings in these teams, which limited capacity in this area. The Council was at the tail end of the assets it was looking to dispose of, many of which came with complications that made the process more challenging. This included them not being in a position to take to market, either due to work being needed, legal constraints and planning issues, all of which added complexity.

21.13 The Committee asked if there was more information on the future role of the National Audit Office. The Chief Finance Officer commented that further detail from Government was awaited.

21.14 The Committee discussed whether shared services sat within the remit of Place and was an area it could look into. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that if shared services sat within the Business Services Department (BSD) the Committee could scrutinise them if it wished.

21.15 The Committee noted Recommendation 10 of the CIPFA report relates to renewing partnerships with the NHS and district and borough councils. The Committee discussed setting a protocol for working with local partners through Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), particularly where decisions taken may impact on the future unitary council. The Deputy Chief Executive clarified that ESCC works extensively with the NHS through ASC and will be working closely with Districts and Borough Councils through the LGR process. Scrutiny would be involved significantly in the LGR process once the Government had made its decision on the shape of new councils.

21.16 The Committee discussed the suggestion in the CIPFA review that a fundamental review of fees and charges could take place through benchmarking, and whether this sat within the remit of the committee. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that this would depend on which department fees relate to as the Committee would need to ensure that any fees reviewed fell within the remit of the Place Scrutiny Committee, so that the impact of those fees and charges could be better understood.

21.17 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the information in the attached RPPR Cabinet report of 11 November 2025; and
- (2) identify any further work or information needed to aid the Scrutiny Committee's contribution to the RPPR process for consideration at the RPPR Board, or as part of the committee's ongoing work programme.

22. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PROCUREMENT: SOCIAL VALUE AND BUYING LOCAL

22.1 The Chief Operating Officer introduced the report, which sets out the details of the trial of the qualitative approach to the Social Value (SV) and the proposed new East Sussex SV model, along with the new Model Assessment Criteria (MACs), proposed edits to the SV policy and proposed changes to the associated Council Plan measure. The East Sussex Social Value model had been developed on the recommendation of scrutiny, and had been well-received by Small-Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and officers in procurement. It was therefore proposed that the East Sussex SV model be permanently adopted.

22.2 Anne Epsom elaborated on the benefits of the new model, including improving alignment with the Procurement Act and ensuring that ESCC follows best practice and helping to embed SV into the general ways of working in the Council. The new approach would also increase consistency across the wider public sector, including at Surrey County Council and local NHS organisations, and this consistency would help suppliers to reduce costs in the long-term. The proposed changes to the policy and changes to the Council Plan measure would go to the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change, and taken forward as part of the Council Plan review. This will be followed by updated guidance to officers and suppliers, departmental engagement, training for relevant officers and utilisation of employment and skills networks to embed the methodology. BSD were investigating the integration of reporting into overall contract management approaches, and the changes to the policy would be reviewed as appropriate.

22.3 Cllr Collier who chaired of the Scrutiny Review of Social Value, thanked officers for their work in this area, and welcomed the report and changes to the policy. He raised the changes to SV in the context of LGR and noted that it was important that the positive work in this area be embedded into any changes in services that come with LGR and the bringing together of county council and district and borough council services.

22.4 The Committee asked if BSD had examined the SV policies of district and borough councils, and whether these could be aligned with East Sussex SV model through the LGR process. The Chief Operating Officer responded that discussions with district and boroughs would take place as part of the LGR, where the different authorities' policies could be understood and aligned. The Assistant Director, Policy and Operations (Orbis) added that the methodology of the SV model could be adapted through LGR to be embedded in the new unitary, but as strategic priorities for the new authority are developed then adjustments could be made to the policy without altering the overall methodology. She added that her experience working with Surrey district and boroughs through LGR was that they often don't have SV policies due to the low value of their spend, so it was hoped they could adopt the new policy with relative ease.

22.5 The Committee noted that the trials had been conducted in ASC, and asked if there were any expected challenges in implementing the policy within departments other than ASC, such as CET, as the contracts covered very different services. The Chief Operating Officer clarified that the new methodology had been socialised with CET during the trial period. Conversations with CET revealed they felt there was enough scope in the MACs that individual teams with specific procurement needs would be able to apply them to their circumstances, regardless of the service area. The Assistant Director Economy clarified that CET welcomed the new model and raised that SV was already well embedded into its contracts, such as the highways contract and the new model would provide an opportunity to build on existing good practice.

22.6 The Committee discussed how SV might be tracked and delivered and whether this is more difficult to report through a qualitative approach. The Chief Operating Officer noted that even under the previous model it had been difficult to conduct monitoring due to the Council's limited contract management capacity. Under the new model, progress in SV delivery might actually be more apparent in some areas, as it related more to the nature of organisations and

their inherent SV. The Assistant Director, Policy and Operations (Orbis) clarified that there are proposed KPIs in the detail of the model and will be identified to match the contract.

22.7 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) note the updates to the progress against the further recommendations of this review from Place Scrutiny Committee in September 2024'; and
- 2) endorse the East Sussex Social Value Model and revised draft Social Value Policy, and note the proposed change to the associated Council Plan measure.

23. EAST SUSSEX ON-STREET ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING NETWORK

23.1 Ian Glover, Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project Manager, introduced the report, which provided an update on the procurement of the public electric vehicle (EV) on-street charge points contract and its roll out across the county. ESCC had been awarded £4.44m in Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding from Government, and in 2024 Cabinet had agreed to procure a charge point operator using a concession model. ESCC received four bids from prospective operators and a preferred bidder had been identified, and the contract was expected to be confirmed in December 2025. The preferred bidder planned to deliver approximately 2,400 charge points across 500 locations in East Sussex. The roll-out is expected to take two to two-and-a-half years, and includes a number of rapid-charge points, including a mixed charging hub at County Hall. The bidder has agreed to deliver further funding for the project in addition to the LEVI funding and will operate the network for 15 years, after which it will revert back to the Council. ESCC had taken used an evidence-based approach to identify sites for installing charge points, in conjunction with district and borough councils and other local stakeholders. Mobilisation was due to begin soon, with installation of the points beginning in early 2026.

23.2 The Committee asked whether maintenance will be carried out by the contractor. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project Manager confirmed that the provider would be responsible for maintenance and repair and there would be a specific KPI which requires the contractor to carry out repairs within a specified timeframe.

23.3 The Committee discussed how expected usage of chargers had been modelled in order to determine the locations of chargers and the needs of residents. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project Manager explained that evidence-based modelling had been done to identify both on-street capacity needs of residents who do not have a driveway and cannot charge at home, as well as high-speed charging points around the county that best suited the needs of travellers. Locations had already been identified and this was reflected in the proposals from the bidders.

23.4 The Committee asked if charge points which were not well-used could become a liability when ownership of them reverts to ESCC. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project Manager responded that at the end of the contract the Council had the option to either take ownership of the charge points or reprocur a supplier to manage them on the Council's behalf. At the end of the contract it would be possible to dispose of redundant sites if necessary.

23.5 The Committee asked if charge points would be part of a multi-vendor network, which could show residents the EV charging sites and their availability. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project Manager explained that the operator would only be responsible for the management of the charge points, but they would also be expected to take control of the payment platform initially. They could seek to have another operator be responsible for the payment platform, but the contract required that prices remained competitive, so it would be incumbent on the operator to manage the costs to keep prices down. The Committee suggested

that the Council should seek to facilitate the operator being part of a wider network as this would help increase uptake.

23.6 The Committee discussed the location of charge points and whether the increase of on-street charges might impact accessibility on pavements for pedestrians if it resulted in more street furniture, and asked what the assessment process was for identifying locations to mitigate accessibility issues. The Committee also suggested using pavement build outs for chargers. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project Manager responded that there would likely be additional street furniture as the chargers are rolled-out. The sites had been chosen with consideration to accessibility through looking at pavement width and other infrastructure so as to minimise the impact. However, it could be difficult to manage this and provide the necessary infrastructure within the parameters set by LEVI as charge-point locations were also based on existing network availability as well. It was possible that there could be build-outs, but these would location-specific, to ensure that the infrastructure is as safe and equitable as possible, including for disabled users. ESCC were doing what they could to reduce additional hazards on pedestrian routes.

23.7 The Committee asked how the roll-out of EV charge points were considered alongside the needs of all residents and if consideration was being given to increases cycle storage space, noting that bikes were a more accessible form of transport than EVs for many residents. The Director of Communities, Economy and Transport responded that one of the purposes of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) was to help with the integration of different transport needs of residents. The LTP is supported by many others plans to support delivery of this, including the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) that would help people in taking up active travel modes. £4.4m has been allocated from Government to improve EV charging infrastructure to reflect increasing take-up, and could only be spent for that purpose.

23.8 The Committee discussed trends in uptake of EVs and noted a trend in EV hybrids and newer EV vehicle models that have much longer range and don't need as regular charging, and whether changes in technology had been factored in to planning. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project Manager explained that officers had considered the potential changes of manufactures, but have stuck to the models provided by Cenex and DfT projections, rather than speculation about changes made by the wider motor industry.

23.9 The Committee noted plans for the number of charge points, including rapid charges, had increased, and asked if any of these would be installed on lampposts. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project Manager explained that the number of charge points had increased since previous reports, based on the ambitious bids that had been received from prospective providers which all exceeded the initial estimates. Similarly the number of locations for rapid charge points had increased since previous reports. Lamppost charging would likely not be used as they have a low level of energy output and companies providing LEVI schemes prefer to install charge points with a higher level of output than this as it charge cars quicker.

23.10 The Committee asked if there was a possibility of ESCC profit sharing with the winning company. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project Manager confirmed that all bids have put forward a concession payment that would involve the successful bidder paying an annual fee to the Council for administration costs and to support network operations. Profit sharing was also included in three out of the four bids that have been put forward to support ongoing costs that might be required from the Council.

23.11 The Committee asked what the reasoning behind installing EV charge points in the County Hall car park were, given this may reduce the number of parking spaces and ESCC staff were unlikely to need to charge for their commutes. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project Manager clarified that the County Hall car park is a public car park which residents can use, the charge points would be available for local residents, as well as staff and visitors.

23.12 The Committee RESOLVED to note the procurement process and consider and comment on the approach to the roll out of on-street public electric vehicle charge points.

24. CALL-IN: DECISION MADE BY THE LEAD MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT REGARDING THE PROPOSED RELOCATION OF HASTINGS REGISTER OFFICE

24.1 The Chair introduced the report, which was for the Committee to consider the call-in in relation to the decision by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment regarding the proposed relocation of Hastings Register Office. The decision was called in by Councillors Hilton, Murphy, Tutt and Wright. The Committee considered the call-in and the information contained in the report, a summary of the questions raised and comments made is given below.

24.2 Cllr Daniel, Local Member for the decision, was invited to speak and noted that he supported the original decision taken by the Lead Member. He made the following points in support of the decision:

- Both the Town Hall and the library are grade-II listed, and the library has received £9m recently in financial investment from the County Council to upgrade the facilities and ensure accessibility, while the town hall lacked the same accessible facilities.
- The library has a new, larger, lift and accessible toilets on all floors, whereas the ceremony space on the upper floor of Hastings Town Hall is only accessible by a small lift which is prone to breaking down;
- The proposed plan includes a mitigation for accessing the ceremony rooms in the event that the lift breaks, whereas the town hall does not have similar mitigation plans;
- Other options of the 34 alternative venues in the local area includes Hastings Museum, which is run by Hastings Borough Council;
- Accessible parking is available very close to the library, including the multi-storey car park, and underground parking off Robertson Terrace;
- In the context of LGR, he suggested the space in Hastings Town Hall could be used by a potential Hastings Town Council; and
- Communications with Hastings Borough Council at officer level had shown that staff understood the changes.

EqlA and accessibility concerns

24.3 The Committee discussed the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqlA), which had not been included in the report to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment (LMTE) meeting where the original decision had been taken. Cllr Hilton raised concerns about accessibility at the proposed alternative venues, such as Hastings Library, which did not have a drop-kerb outside the entrance and asked how accessibility would be improved. The Assistant Director Communities reassured the Committee that drop-kerb access at Hastings library was being assessed by officers as part of the co-location plan should the decision go ahead. The library was subject to an extensive refurbishment in 2018 to be converted into an accessible building, and offers a lift, accessible toilets and hearing loops for residents who need them.

24.4 The Committee discussed the importance of EqlAs and the need for them to be presented at decision-making meetings, and asked why it had not been included with the report for the original decision. The Assistant Director Communities explained that the EqlA had not been included with the report as it showed that there were no material equality concerns that could not be mitigated, and accommodations for older people, disabled people and parents were included within the relocation plan, so the assessment did not need to be considered by the Lead Member.

Service provision and ceremony space

24.5 The Committee expressed concerns about the reduction in services available to the community, especially the reduction in room capacity for services from 60 to 10. The Assistant Director Communities highlighted that the registration service provides a wide range of services, including births, deaths and ceremonies. In Hastings in 2024, the registration service had over 1,200 births registered, over 2,100 deaths registered, and 219 ceremonies. Learning from other authorities, including West Sussex and Kent County Councils, where registration and library services had been co-located had shown that colocation was beneficial to residents, as libraries offer a range of other services which residents could be signposted to, such as grief support and parent groups. This results in an improved offer for residents as the full range of services available is advertised on site.

24.6 Some members of the Committee noted concern that a library was not a suitable replacement as a ceremony space for the town hall and that many people may not wish to get married in a library. The Assistant Director Communities explained that careful consideration would be given to the proposed two ceremony spaces provided in the library to provide the required level of dignity needed for undertaking ceremonies. One would be similar to the space available in the Mayor's parlour in Hastings Town Hall, which had capacity for 10 people, and a larger space on the ground floor with capacity for 60. Residents also have a mixed offer within the registration service for ceremonies, the choice of 34 approved marriage venues in the local area. In 2024, there were 219 ceremonies in Hastings Registry Office, but 386 in other approved marriage venues in the area.

24.7 The Committee asked whether moving ceremonies to the second floor of Hastings Library would inhibit access to the computer suite in that room, noting that some residents in Hastings did not have access to the internet in their homes. The Assistant Director Communities responded that the computer suite in the library is no longer networked. These computers had previously been part of the Council's learning offer which had ceased following a review of the service as it was a duplication of services available at local further education colleges in Hastings. The space has been used on an ad-hoc basis since, but would not result in a removal of networked computer space.

Financial Implications

24.8 The Committee discussed the financial context of the Council and the fact that savings were being identified to support reaching a balanced budget. Some members of the committee commented that this was an area in which savings could be made which would have minimal human impact and commented that this was a good opportunity to make a slight saving.

Public Consultation and Decision-Making Process

24.9 Some members of the Committee expressed concerns about the way in which the decision had been taken and the lack of a public consultation, and asked what discussions took place with Hastings Borough Council before the decision was made. In the context of LGR members discussed the importance of working effectively in partnership with district and borough councils and working effectively with them on decisions the Council made that may impact the future unitary.

24.10 The Assistant Director Communities clarified that the Council's 10-year lease with the Town Hall was at its end, and a review of the service took place because of this. This showed that to move the service would lead to an improvement in services for residents, and the Council therefore engaged officers at Hastings Borough Council to explain this intention in early October. There was no need for public consultation as it was a result of the lease coming to an end, and there were no changes to the services currently offered included in the proposal.

24.11 Cllr Murphy moved the motion that the decision be referred back to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment. Cllr Hilton seconded the motion.

24.12 The Chair put the Motion to a vote. The Motion was lost (3 in favour, 6 against and 2 abstentions).

25. NOTICE OF MOTION: 20MPH SPEED LIMITS IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

25.1 The Chair invited Cllr Field to introduce her Notice of Motion, which the Chairman of the Council had referred to Place Scrutiny prior to consideration at Full Council. Cllr Field expressed concern about driving on new estates, and raised evidence that 20mph speed limits reduces risk to pedestrians and increases quality of life for residents. She suggested it was possible to implement 20mph speed limits in new developments, and requested that Place Scrutiny support the Notice of Motion to Full Council. Cllr Wright, who seconded the motion, commented that he thought that introducing 20mph limits in new estates would encourage active travel and improve the sense of place in new developments. Cllr Field and Cllr Wright did not support the amended Notice of Motion as set out in the report.

25.2 The Assistant Director Economy introduced the report responding to the Notice of Motion. He noted that the issue was considered during the Place Scrutiny Review of Speed Limit Policy, which found that the Council's local speed limit policy was consistent with national guidance, but that it would be reviewed should there be any changes to the guidance. The Council's own guidance clearly states that the design speed of streets in new estates should be to a 20mph speed, which could be achieved through the design of street scape to make it difficult to drive at excessive speeds, which the Manual for Streets (MfS) gave guidance on how to do. The role of ESCC in housing developments is that of a statutory consultee; the council examines proposals to ensure that they are in line with guidance and make recommendations on the design but are ultimately not the decision-maker. The aspiration of the Motion was therefore supported by the Department as it was consistent with its own guidance. The setting of speed limits is a separate matter to the design speeds of roads and can only be delivered when a development has been occupied for some time and speed surveys are undertaken, at which point formal speed limits may be set based on the average speeds people are driving at. Any formal limit also needs a separate Traffic Regulation Order process and Police support. The Department had therefore recommended an amendment to the Notice of Motion which better reflected what it was possible for the Council to achieve within legislation.

25.3 The Committee welcomed the ambitions of the Notice of Motion to try and reduce speeds and discussed the potential positive impacts of implementing 20mph design speeds, including encouraging more walking and cycling, making streets safer for people living there and a calmer environment for the local residents. The Committee noted that there had historically been difficulties implementing 20mph speed limits, but that the situation has changed in recent years meaning many areas of the county now had 20mph limits in place. The Assistant Director Economy commented that the MfS outlines that new developments should be designed in a way to encourage active travel, and the Council followed this guidance.

25.4 The Committee discussed the challenges of implementing design speeds within the planning framework, noting that district and borough councils had the final decision on the design of developments, despite the County Council being the Highways Authority. The Committee noted that planning authorities had the ability at the planning stage to design in measures that would reduce driving speeds on new developments, and that the Council supported this through its role as a statutory consultee. The Committee expressed disappointment in the limitations in setting local speed limits and commented that further guidance from the Department for Transport would be welcomed to support councils in achieving this aspiration and to allow 20mph speed limits to be included in design.

24.5 The Committee asked whether the Council could respond to planning applications to require that roads have a 20mph speed limit. The Assistant Director Economy responded that

as a statutory consultee the Council commented on designs of new developments brought forward by developers, and the local planning authority have the final say on what goes forward. The Council did everything it could to have roads in new developments with a 20mph design speed, but the district and borough councils had the final say.

25.6 Some members of the Committee queried why it was not possible to implement a 20mph speed limit at the planning or road adoption stage, as it was the Council that was responsible for setting local speed limits. It was discussed whether the Council could have a policy to recommend 20mph speed limits, even if these could not be implemented at the planning stage. Some members suggested that a lack of policy seemed to not follow the guidelines for a 20mph street design in new developments, and indicated there may be a gap in the Council's policies, and suggested that the Council make a policy to implement these aspirations. The Committee noted that in some parts of the country blanket 20mph speed limits had been implemented and queried why it was therefore not possible in East Sussex.

25.7 The Assistant Director Economy responded that the development of a policy that set speed limits at 20mph at the planning stage would contradict legislation. Sussex Police have to be consulted on the setting of speed limits, and they would not support a blanket 20mph policy without supporting evidence demonstrating that vehicles are travelling at excessive speeds, which is not available. He added that developers are similarly aware of national legislation, and they would likely challenge the Council's proposals if they go against legislation. The Team Manager Transport Development Planning explained that in other areas, blanket 20mph policies only applied to existing public highways, whereas the Notice of Motion referred to roads in new developments where a different process applied.

25.8 The Assistant Director Communities clarified that the Council's speed limit policy is set in line with DfT national guidance. The DfT guidance requires Highway Authorities to monitor speeds that vehicles are actually travelling at on a road in order to determine the appropriate speed limit to set. This monitoring cannot be done until the roads are in use and data can be gathered about average speeds, and emphasised that the Police would require this data before they would consider a speed limit being implemented and a Traffic Regulation Order being taken forward. The Committee recognised that speed limits can only be put in place once evidence has been presented of actual speed measurements.

25.9 The Committee discussed the development of a policy to request districts and boroughs to enforce 20mph design into housing developments, as a statutory consultee on new developments. The Lead Member for Transport and Environment suggested that members raise these issues with district and boroughs to ensure that they take those comments on board when making final decisions on applications.

25.10 The Committee raised that the planning authority does not have the power to amend reports regarding new developments, only to approve or refuse them. However, ESCC as a statutory consultee has the power to make those recommendations, and putting a policy in place to recommend 20mph speed limits in new development applications would be beneficial.

25.11 Cllr Murphy raised that some developments on town outskirts do not have streetlights or bollards, which delayed the adoption of the highways in them, leaving them as unclassified roads without a set speed limit. If it takes some time for the area to be occupied or come under ESCC control, he stressed that ensuring that 20mph speed limits are included in the planning process would ensure that roads are safe as soon as ESCC adopted them. The Committee asked how soon after completion of a development roads could be adopted by the Council and at what the occupancy level a new development had to be in order for average speed measurements to take place.

25.12 The Team Manager Transport Development Planning responded that as developments are built-out, ESCC conduct inspections of the roads and once they reach the approved specification the roads will go on to a 12-month maintenance period, after which it would be adopted by the Council as set out in Section 38 agreements. Full occupancy of the development

is required before speed monitoring can take place. Officers noted the legislative restrictions between planning, highways and road safety laws that relate to different areas of the process, which is why they had proposed an amended motion to lobby Government to review this area and the associated challenges in order to simplify the process and make it easier to achieve the Council's aspirations for 20mph roads.

25.13 The Committee noted that Police capacity was a challenge in enforcing 20mph speed limits on estates, but that 20mph signs would help encourage more drivers to drive at slower speeds.

25.14 Some members of the Committee noted that since the proposer and seconder of the Notice of Motion did not support the amendment that Full Council should consider the original motion.

25.15 Cllr Tutt moved the following motion, which was seconded by Cllr Shing:

"The Place Scrutiny Committee recommends to Full Council that it supports the Notice of Motion as put forward by Cllr Field."

25.16 The Committee RESOLVED by a majority of 7 to 4 to agree the motion put forward by Cllr Tutt.

26. WORK PROGRAMME

26.1 The Chair introduced the report which outlines future items for the Place Scrutiny Committee. The Committee discussed potential areas of interest in addition to the work programme.

26.2 The Committee discussed whether there was the potential to consider the Council role decision-making process in relation to street design and creating streetscapes, noting this was an issue that had come up and 2 previous items on the agenda.

26.3 The Committee discussed the recent incident at Camber Sands, regarding bio-beads washing up on the beach from the Southern Water plant, and asked if Southern Water and could attend the next meeting of the Committee with an update on it and other areas.

26.4 Cllr Murphy provided a briefing on the status of the Scrutiny Review of street works, which held it's initial scoping meeting on 20 October 2025, and was due to meet again in January and February 2026, to take a report to the March 2026 Place Scrutiny Committee meeting.

26.5 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) agree the latest work programme as set out at Appendix 1 to ensure it reflects the correct focus of the committee including in relation to its role in the ongoing RPPR process;
- 2) review upcoming items on East Sussex County Council's Forward Plan as set out at Appendix 2 to identify any issues that may require more detailed scrutiny;
- 3) agree the recommendation of the Scoping Board on Street Works to progress with a scrutiny review, and agree the membership and Chair of that review as set out at paragraph 2.2; and
- 4) agree to form a reference group to scrutinise the Exceat Bridge replacement project, and agree the membership as set out at paragraph 2.7.

27. ANY OTHER ITEMS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 4

27.1 There were none.

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm.

Councillor Matthew Beaver (Chair)