



PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2026

10.30 am COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, LEWES

MEMBERSHIP - Councillor 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

A G E N D A

1. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 November 2025 (*Pages 3 - 16*)
2. Apologies for absence
3. Disclosures of interests
Disclosures by all members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
4. Urgent items
Notification of items which the Chair considers to be urgent and proposes to take at the appropriate part of the agenda. Any members who wish to raise urgent items are asked, wherever possible, to notify the Chair before the start of the meeting. In so doing, they must state the special circumstances which they consider justify the matter being considered urgent.
5. Work programme (*Pages 17 - 42*)
6. Southern Water: update
Presentation from Southern Water followed by a Q&A session.
7. Scrutiny Review of Local Speed Limit Policy: 12-month update (*Pages 43 - 48*)
8. Scrutiny Review of Street Works (*Pages 49 - 78*)
9. Any other items previously notified under agenda item 4

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11 March 2026

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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>*

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)

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Report to: Place Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 19 March 2026

By: Deputy Chief Executive

Title: Place Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Purpose: To review and discuss the Place Scrutiny Committee's future work programme

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) review the current work programme at Appendix 1 and identify any key areas that should be highlighted for consideration by the incoming Place Scrutiny Committee to inform its early work programming and RPPR engagement;
 - 2) review the suggested approach to ongoing work and areas of focus for the Committee;
 - 3) review the Committee's input to the RPPR process and identify any additional information which may be required to inform future scrutiny engagement;
 - 4) review upcoming items on East Sussex County Council's Forward Plan as set out at Appendix 3 to identify any issues that may require more detailed scrutiny; and
 - 5) identify any priority topics it would be helpful to incorporate within the induction and training programme for new members and the new committee.
-

1. Background

1.1 The work programme is an important tool in ensuring a Committee led approach and that the Committee's time is used scrutinising topics that the Committee considers are of importance.

1.2 In the context of the forthcoming election, Members are recommended to consider which areas of work can now be concluded, and which areas should be highlighted for early consideration by the incoming committee from May 2026 onwards.

1.3 In setting and reviewing the work programme, Members should also consider the Committee's input into the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process and identify any information which may be needed for the incoming committee to provide effective challenge on key issues and areas of work impacting on the Council's future planning.

2. Supporting information

2.1 The March meeting provides a final opportunity for this committee to consider its current work programme, including the status of reviews, reference group work and RPPR engagement, and to identify any suggested areas of focus that may be helpful for an incoming committee to consider as part of its early work programming. Current and planned work of the Committee is outlined below.

Committee meetings

2.2 The next meeting of the Committee is on 22 July 2026 and will be the first meeting of the committee following the local elections. There are five substantive reports currently scheduled for that meeting. It is usual for the first meeting of a new committee to have a shorter agenda, to allow time for induction, meaning some items currently scheduled would need to be deferred. The Committee is invited to note the reports currently listed, and to note that flexibility in scheduling of items will be required so that the agenda is manageable and takes account of the Member induction programme.

Scrutiny Reviews

Street Works

2.3 The review of Street Works has concluded and the report of the Review Board is included on this meeting agenda. In light of the timing of the election, the incoming committee will have the opportunity to consider the report and recommendations ahead of reporting to Cabinet and Council.

Reference Groups

Devolution and LGR

2.4 The Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Reference Group, made up of Members of both Place and People Scrutiny Committees, last met on 17 February 2026. The Reference Group reviewed and provided comments for consideration to the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development on his response to the Government's request for views regarding any Structural Change Order required for Local Government Reorganisation. The Reference Group also considered and commented on the latest position on the imminent establishment of the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority. The Reference Group agreed that it would not meet again prior to local elections in May 2026, and that future scrutiny engagement on these issues should be reviewed following the Government's decision on LGR and the local elections.

Exceat Bridge

2.5 The Exceat Bridge Reference Group met for the first time on 16 January 2026 and received a presentation from officers that provided background and overview of the project. The Group will next meet on 20 April, which will include representatives from Jackson Civil Engineering Group, the contractor appointed to construct the new bridge. Given that the Exceat Bridge replacement is an ongoing project, it is proposed to retain this on the work programme to enable the incoming committee to continue scrutiny in this area.

Asset Management Strategy

2.6 The Asset Management Strategy Working Group was established to provide scrutiny input into the update of the corporate Asset Management Strategy, however this work was paused in light of LGR, and the Group has not met since March 2025. It is proposed that this issue be retained on the work programme, enabling the incoming committee to consider whether to resume this work, either via a Reference Group or through LGR scrutiny arrangements.

Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)

2.7 The LTP4 Reference Group provided scrutiny input between 2022-24 into the creation of the Local Transport Plan, which was adopted by the Council in October 2024. Since then, the Group has met on an ad hoc basis to comment on additional supporting documents of the LTP4, drawing on the existing knowledge of the committee. In light of a new committee being established after local elections, and the likely impact of the creation of the Sussex and Brighton Combined County Authority on the Council's current transport planning functions, it is proposed that this is removed from the work programme.

Carbon Reduction Target

2.8 Following a recommendation from Cabinet in December 2025 that scrutiny considers the target for the carbon emissions arising from County Council operations measure within the Council Plan, Place and People Scrutiny Committees confirmed that they would undertake this work through a joint Reference Group. The Group will review evidence and consider whether the current carbon reduction target remains realistic and achievable within existing resources. Meetings will take place in March and April 2026 with a view to benefiting from the knowledge and experience of existing members prior to consideration by the incoming scrutiny committees.

Scrutiny engagement in RPPR planning

2.9 This committee has provided key input into the RPPR process, both through consideration of specific RPPR reports and through more detailed scrutiny of specific issues through the wider work programme.

2.10 At the **November** meeting the Committee discussed the latest update to Cabinet on planning for 2026/27, including the latest financial position and national policy reforms.

2.11 The Committee's **RPPR Board** met on 16 December 2025 to consider the draft 2026/27 Portfolio Plans and the latest financial position. The Board:

- considered the emerging financial outlook based on Government announcements during the autumn;
- considered the draft Portfolio Plans and how priorities were reflected against the proposed key areas of budget spend for the coming year; and
- discussed savings proposals for service areas within the committee's remit contained in the December report to Cabinet.

2.12 **Appendix 2** summarises the comments and recommendations made by the Place Scrutiny Committee RPPR Board to Cabinet.

2.13 Members will be very familiar with the Council's budget setting process, having scrutinised and collectively set a number of budgets over the last 5 year electoral term. This accumulated knowledge forms an important basis for the Committee's contribution to the RPPR process and its ability to provide constructive challenge.

2.14 As Members will know, one element of the annual budget development process is identifying potential areas of search for savings, efficiencies, or income generation. At the present time, no further areas of search have been identified beyond those already presented to Members through

the RPPR process and previous Cabinet reports. This reflects both the significant work undertaken in recent years to find efficiencies and the limited remaining scope for further reductions.

2.15 Members may wish to reflect on any learning from the 2025/26 RPPR cycle that would assist a new committee in engaging effectively with the RPPR process in 2026/27 and beyond.

2.16 The committee is invited at this meeting to identify any additional information which may be required to inform future scrutiny engagement, and:

- identify any further areas for potential savings, efficiencies, or income generation which should be considered as part of the future RPPR process;
- consider any issues arising from recent RPPR discussions that should be recommended to include in the future work programme; and
- review the Committee's input to the RPPR process and consider any improvements to the process from a scrutiny perspective.

2.17 Scrutiny's input to planning, through RPPR, for 2027/28 will begin at the **July** meeting with consideration of relevant parts of the quarter 4 2025/26 (end of year) monitoring report and the 2026 State of the County report.

Briefings and training

2.18 The incoming committee will receive induction and Member development support following the elections. Members are invited to identify any priority topics it would be helpful to incorporate within the programme.

Forward Plan

2.19 A copy of the Council's Forward Plan of executive decisions for the period 1 March to 30 June 2026 is included at **Appendix 3**. The Committee is requested to review the forthcoming items on the Forward Plan to identify any issues within the remit of this committee that may require more detailed scrutiny. The Forward Plan is revised and published on a monthly basis and committee members should regularly review the Forward Plan.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 An important part of managing the work of the Place Scrutiny Committee, including its input into the RPPR process, is regularly reviewing the future work programme. This involves the Committee assessing its priorities, ensuring reviews are completed in a timely fashion, and identifying new areas for scrutiny.

3.2 This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to review the current work programme at the end of the 2025/26 municipal year, to note progress made and any ongoing activity, and to identify any matters that it would be helpful to draw to the attention of the incoming Place Scrutiny Committee following the May 2026 elections, including in relation to early work programming and engagement in the RPPR process.

PHILIP BAKER
Deputy Chief Executive

Contact Officer: Patrick Major, Policy and Scrutiny Adviser
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Email: patrick.major@eastsussex.gov.uk

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Place Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme

Current Scrutiny Reviews		
Title of Review	Detail	Proposed Completion Date
Street Works	The Committee has agreed to carry out a review of street works. The review will focus on network management and how the Council works with utility companies to minimise the impact of street works. The board agreed to undertake further scoping in November to refine the terms of reference of the review to ensure it is focused on the main areas where there are concerns about the approach to street works taken by utility companies. Membership: Councillors Hilton, Hollidge, Lunn, Murphy (Chair) and Redstone.	To report to March 2026 and July 2026 Committees
Initial Scoping Reviews		
Subject area for initial scoping	Detail	Proposed Dates
To be agreed		
List of Suggested Potential Future Scrutiny Review or Reference Group Topics		
Suggested Topic	Detail	
Footway (Pavement) Maintenance	This topic was discussed as part of the Scrutiny Review of Pothole Management and the Review Board has suggested that the Committee may wish to carry out a scrutiny review on this topic. Some of the issues regarding additional investment in pavement maintenance may be similar to those examined as part of the pothole review. Scoping may also explore verge cutting policy due to the impact on footway maintenance.	
Climate Change	The Committee has agreed to consider scoping a review to examine the Council's countywide work on climate change, which could look at countywide actions and how the Council works with other organisations (e.g. District and Borough councils) on this issue.	

Local Speed Limit Policy – Part 2	Part 2 of the Scrutiny Review of Local Speed Limit Policy including: the work undertaken to review speed limits, their funding and cost; the role of speed limits in the context of the LTP4; the LTP4 prioritisation process and available resources; and the policy framework and budget allocation for 20mph limits and zones of other local authorities and the approaches they have taken to 20mph limits.	
Queensway Gateway Road	The Committee have agreed to explore a scrutiny review to examine the construction of the Queensway Gateway Road in Hastings, to focus on issues since the point at which the Council took on responsibility for the completion of the scheme. Timing subject to the completion of works.	
Scrutiny of major projects	A potential review topic to explore, understand and take forward learning of the role that scrutiny can play in the evaluation and assessment of major schemes and projects taking place in the county.	
Scrutiny Reference and Working Groups		
Reference Group Title	Subject Area	Meetings Dates
Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Reference Group	The Committee has established a Reference Group, together with members of the People Scrutiny Committee, to provide scrutiny input into the work related to Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Membership of the Reference Group consists of all Place Scrutiny Committee members and People Scrutiny Committee members Cllr Cross, Cllr Geary, and Cllr Howell.	TBC
Exceat Bridge Reference Group	The committee is currently exploring the establishment of a Reference Group to scrutinise and provide input to the planning and oversight of the bridge replacement project before and during construction. Membership of the Reference Group consists of Cllr Murphy, Cllr Redstone (Chair), Cllr Stephen Shing, and Cllr Wright.	20 April 2026
Asset Management Strategy Working Group	The Committee has established a Working Group to provide scrutiny input into the update of the corporate Asset Management Strategy. Future work subject to LGR developments. Membership of the Working Group consists of Cllr Hilton, Cllr Hollidge, Cllr Lunn, Cllr Murphy (Chair) and Cllr Redstone.	TBC Summer 2026
Local Transport Plan 4 Reference Group	The Committee established a Reference Group to provide input into the development of the revised Local Transport Plan (LTP4) which was adopted by the Council in October 2024. The Committee agreed to re-form the Reference Group as relevant support documents and strategies of LTP4 were developed. Membership of the Reference Group consists of Cllr Beaver, Cllr Collier, Cllr Hilton, Cllr Hollidge, Cllr Lunn, Cllr Redstone (Chair), Cllr Shing and Cllr Tutt.	TBC

Corporate Carbon Reduction target	The Committee has agreed to establish a Reference Group (joint with People Scrutiny) to consider the target and what it would take in terms of cost to meet it, as well as what impact resource constraints, local government reorganisation and the establishment of the Mayoral Combined County Authority would have on it. Membership of the Reference Group consists of Place Scrutiny Committee members Cllr Hilton, Cllr Redstone, Cllr Tutt and Cllr Wright and People Scrutiny Committee members Cllr Cross and Cllr Field.	19 March 2026, 9 April 2026
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Reports for Information

Subject	Detail	Proposed Date
Verge cutting	To receive a report for information on the Council's verge cutting policy and to understand opportunities for increasing verge cutting levels in areas of the county that do not have town or parish councils.	To be agreed.

Briefings, Training and Development

Title of Training/Briefing	Detail	Proposed Date
Government Road Safety Strategy	For the Committee to receive a briefing on the Government's New Road Safety Strategy due to be published in autumn, and any implications this may have for ESCC policies.	To be agreed
Trading Standards	A briefing on the work undertaken by the trading standards team to combat illicit trading of cigarettes and vapes, including through the use of recently acquired powers.	To be agreed
The Keep	A briefing on The Keep including information on who uses it, how the service works, what are the costs of the service and how it generates income, together with a site visit for committee members.	To be agreed
Approach to consultation and engagement	A briefing on the Council's approach to public consultation and engagement and the process involved.	To be agreed

Future Committee Agenda Items		Author/Witnesses
22 July 2026		
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	To commence the Committee's involvement with the RPPR process for 2027/28 by reviewing the information in the Quarter 4, end of financial year (2025/26) Council Monitoring report and the State of the County report.	Chief Executive / Scrutiny and Policy Adviser
Scrutiny Review of Street Works	To receive the report of the Review Board on the Scrutiny Review of Street Works for approval and submission to Cabinet for comment and Full Council for agreement.	Chair of the Review Board / Review Board members
SPACES Programme and property asset disposal	To receive an update report on the work of the SPACES programme last reported to the Committee in March 2024, to include information on the Council's approach to property asset disposals, and an update on the proposed development on the LGR interim Asset Management Strategy.	Assistant Director Property / Chief Operating Officer
Highways maintenance contract	To receive an update report on the key performance indicators of the Highways Maintenance Contract.	Director of Communities Economy and Transport / Assistant Director Operations
Parking policies	A report covering a number of areas related to parking and parking policies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the Council uses any parking revenue surplus; • pavement parking; and • the rationale for pricing and could it be revised (e.g. can parking policy influence or encourage to more Active Travel) 	Director of Communities, Economy and Transport/ Assistant Director Operations
Work Programme	To consider items for inclusion in the Committee's work programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports for future meetings • Scrutiny reviews and potential scrutiny reviews • Items from the Forward Plan 	Scrutiny and Policy Adviser
23 September 2026		
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	The Committee will examine any additional information requested at the July meeting and consider any updated RPPR information for 2027/28.	Chief Executive / Scrutiny and Policy Adviser

Strategic Highway Policies and Asset Management Plans, including highway drainage	For the Committee to receive a progress report on the updated strategic highways policies and asset management plans adopted following the Lead Member for Transport and Environment meeting on 8 September 2025. In particular to include an update on the Drainage Asset Management Plan and any identified issues or challenges.	Director of Communities Economy and Transport / Assistant Director Operations
Work Programme	To consider items for inclusion in the Committee's work programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports for future meetings • Scrutiny reviews and potential scrutiny reviews • Items from the Forward Plan 	Scrutiny and Policy Adviser
30 November 2026		
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	The Committee will examine any additional information requested at the September meeting and consider any updated RPPR information for 2027/28.	Chief Executive / Scrutiny and Policy Adviser
Work Programme	To consider items for inclusion in the Committee's work programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports for future meetings • Scrutiny reviews and potential scrutiny reviews • Items from the Forward Plan 	Scrutiny and Policy Adviser
16 March 2027		
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	The Committee will examine any additional information requested at the September meeting and consider any updated RPPR information for 2027/28.	Chief Executive / Scrutiny and Policy Adviser
Work Programme	To consider items for inclusion in the Committee's work programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports for future meetings • Scrutiny reviews and potential scrutiny reviews • Items from the Forward Plan 	Scrutiny and Policy Adviser
Future Items – to be scheduled		Witnesses
Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) Road Collisions	The Committee requested an update report on the effectiveness of the interventions that have been put in place to try and reduce the number of KSI collisions on the County's roads and have an outline of the measures that other local authorities have put in place to tackle this issue.	Director of Communities Economy and Transport / Assistant Director Communities

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Summary comments for Cabinet – Place Scrutiny RPPR Board (16.12.25)

Present: Councillors Matthew Beaver (Chair), Chris Collier, Ian Hollidge, Philip Lunn, Steve Murphy, Paul Redstone, Stephen Shing, David Tutt and Brett Wright.

1.1. The Place Scrutiny RPPR Board met on the 16 December 2025 and agreed comments to be put to Cabinet, on behalf of the parent Committee, for its consideration in January 2026. The information supplied to the Board to support its discussions comprised of:

- December RPPR Update report to Cabinet
- CIPFA local authority efficiency toolkit; and
- the draft portfolio plans for the Business Services (BSD), Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) and Governance Services (GS) departments

1.2. The Board met before the provisional local government finance settlement 2026-2027 was published and therefore the Board was not able to comment in detail on the Council's budgetary position.

1.3. The comments of the Place Scrutiny RPPR Board are set out below:

Approach to savings

1.4 The Board explored the approach taken to identifying savings for 2026/27, and acknowledged the difficulty in identifying new savings given the amount the Council has made historically. The Board recognised that the savings proposals for 2026/27 would not be enough to close the deficit, and therefore it understood the need for the Council to explore the possibility of applying for Exceptional Financial Support from government.

1.5 The Board received assurance on a number of areas of spend to ensure that the Council has explored savings in all possible areas. This included considering whether the Council was able to exit contracts early where possible, avoiding the use of consultants wherever capability to deliver work may exist in-house, and reducing street lighting levels where safe to do so.

1.6 The Board received assurance that the proposed winter gritting saving would not see the percentage of the county's network treated become out of line with similar shire county areas, and there would still be gritting on key routes.

Income maximisation

1.7 The Board discussed the importance of the Council seeking to maximise its income to reduce the deficit, including through raising fees and charges for services where possible. The Board acknowledged there are issues related to increasing parking charges, in that if they rise too much it can result in a fall in revenue, as well as the statutory limitations on the generation and use of parking surpluses.

1.8 The Board received assurance that Trading Standards services would be able to continue to generate income through the Proceeds of Crime Act.

1.9 The Board noted that Active Travel England (ATE) had rated ESCC's active travel grade as Level 1 due to its perception of challenges with delivering schemes in East Sussex. The Board felt this was disappointing and noted the importance of the

Council seeking to improve its ATE rating as it would help leverage greater amounts of national funding into the county for active travel schemes.

Working with others

1.10 The Board discussed the possibility of town and parish councils taking on responsibility for services where the Council was no longer able to fund them, noting that there is no cap on their ability to precept. The Board suggested that the Council should explore where town and parish councils could take on responsibility for services where the community wishes to see services to continue, but ESCC is unable to continue to deliver them.

1.11 The Board discussed local government reorganisation and suggested that, presuming the One East Sussex proposal is taken forward, conversations begin as early as possible between ESCC and district and borough councils on opportunities for collaboration and joint working between teams to deliver cost savings prior to vesting day of the new unitary in 2028.

Portfolio Plans

1.12 The Board reviewed draft departmental Portfolio Plans and noted the key challenges and developments services would be responding to in the coming year.

1.13 The Board discussed the approach to reducing carbon emissions from the Council's own operations and what it was possible to fund given the financial position. The Board welcomed that the Council would explore where it could reduce emissions through business as usual work, but recognised the context in which the Council was operating. In this context, the Board understood the reasoning why more could not be done given financial constraints, but felt that this was regrettable.

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN

The Leader of the County Council is required to publish a forward plan setting out matters which the Leader believes will be the subject of a key decision by the Cabinet, individual Cabinet member or officer in the period covered by the Plan (the subsequent four months). The Council's Constitution states that a key decision is one that involves

- (a) expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the County Council's budget, namely above £500,000 per annum; or
- (b) is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions.

As a matter of good practice, the Council's Forward Plan includes other items in addition to key decisions that are to be considered by the Cabinet/individual members. This additional information is provided to inform local residents of all matters to be considered, with the exception of issues which are dealt with under the urgency provisions. Only key decisions to be taken by officers are included.

For each decision included on the Plan the following information is provided:

- Page 31
- the name of the individual or body that is to make the decision and the date of the meeting or relevant time period for an officer decision
 - the title of the report and decision to be considered
 - groups that will be consulted prior to the decision being taken
 - a list of documents that will be considered when making the decision
 - the name and telephone number of the contact officer for each item.

The Plan is updated and published every month on the Council's website two weeks before the start of the period to be covered.

Meetings of the Cabinet/individual members are open to the public (with the exception of discussion regarding reports which contain exempt/confidential information). Copies of agenda and reports for meetings are available on the website in advance of meetings. Key decisions taken by officers will not be taken at a meeting – documents listed can be made available on request to the contact officer, with the exception of those which contain exempt/confidential information.

For further details on the time of meetings and general information about the Plan please contact Hannah Matthews at County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE, or telephone 01273 335138 or send an e-mail to hannah.matthews@eastsussex.gov.uk. For further detailed information regarding specific issues to be considered by the Cabinet, individual Member or officer please contact the named contact officer for the item concerned.

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE

For copies of reports or other documents please contact the officer listed on the Plan or phone 01273 335089.

FORWARD PLAN – EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (including Key Decisions) – 1 March 2026 to 30 June 2026

Additional notices in relation to Key Decisions and/or private decisions are available on the [Council's website](#).

Cabinet membership:

- Councillor Keith Glazier - Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development
- Councillor Nick Bennett – Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change
- Councillor Penny di Cara – Lead Member for Economy
- Councillor Claire Dowling – Lead Member for Transport and Environment
- Councillor Carl Maynard – Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health
- Councillor Bob Bowdler – Lead Member for Children and Families
- Councillor Bob Standley – Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability

Date for Decision	Decision Taker	Decision/Key Issue	Decision to be taken wholly or partly in private (P) or Key Decision (KD)	Consultation	List of Documents to be submitted to decision maker	Contact Officer
2 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Playing field adjacent to the Tilling Green Community Centre - Decision regarding disposal of the freehold interest On 25 September 2025, the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change considered the outcome of the responses from members of the public concerning the intention to dispose of the site. Approval was given to market the site on the open market. Following a marketing period, the Lead Member will consider offers made and the analysis. A decision will be made regarding the organisation that is to purchase the site.	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Rebecca Lewis 07955 312371

2 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Award of contract for school meals catering Approve the award of the school meals catering contract to the successful bidder following a competitive tender process. This contract award will be for a period of 5 years plus an option for an additional 2 years. The 2-year extension will be subject to contract performance.	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Johnny Parish 07849 303899
9 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development	Eastbourne Fisherman's Quayside and infrastructure development project - reprofiling finances To consider proposals to reprofile the Growing Places Fund and East Sussex Invest loans for the Eastbourne Fisherman's Quayside and infrastructure development project.	P		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Alex Colbran 07729 108123
9 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act ('RIPA') and Investigative Powers Act ('IPA') update Set the policy for the year ahead as required by the Policy in relation to the use of covert investigative techniques.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Robert Freeman 01273 336715
10 Mar 2026	Cabinet	Council Monitoring Quarter 3 To consider the Council Monitoring report for the third quarter of the financial year 2025/26 as part of the Council's Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) budget monitoring process.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Victoria Beard 07894 708914

16 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office Collections Policies Approval of updated 2025 collections policies for the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office, as required to maintain The National Archives' Accredited Archive status.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Anna Goddard 07734 301730
16 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements 2026/27 and allocation of Bus Service Improvement Plan Capital Grant for 2026/27 to 2029/30 To seek Lead Member approval, following consultation with local members, on the local transport schemes and associated expenditure included in the capital programme for design and/or delivery in 2026/27 and the allocation of the bus service improvement plan capital grant for the period up to 2029/30.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Andrew Keer 01273 336682
16 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Experimental Traffic Regulation Order for Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package Phase 2a Terminus Road (Cornfield Road to Langney Road) Further to the Lead Member approval for Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package Phase 2a to progress to detailed design and construction, a further decision is required on the proposal to implement an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) on Phase 2a. This would facilitate a trial of the operating hours for the local traders and/or residents and pedestrians to identify the most suitable hours.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Emma Oakman 01273 481170

17 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Economy	Adult Skills Fund: 2026/27 Grant allocation and delivery Arrangements The Department for Work and Pensions is inviting East Sussex County Council to oversee an additional allocation of Adult Skills Fund (ASF) to commission training in the academic year 2026/27. The Lead Member for Economy will consider approval to delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to take any actions necessary in relation to the implementation of the additional ASF funds.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Holly Aquilina 01323 463538
20 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Crisis Resilience Fund To consider the proposed spend of the Crisis Resilience Fund in East Sussex, including services for adults.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Mark Hendriks 07701 394501
20 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Extension of specialist sexual health services contract Consideration of a 2-year extension of specialist sexual health services contract as agreed at award. Current contract commenced 1 October 2024 on a 2+2+1 agreement. This represents the first extension of 2 years.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Tony Proom 01273 335252
20 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Contract for the Circle Room young person's sexual health clinic service Award of contract to provide the Circle Room young person's clinic for 2 years, commencing on 1 April 2026.	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Tony Proom 01273 335252

20 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Contract for the Online sexual health service The current Online sexual health services contract ends on 31 October 2026. A decision is required to award a new contract which will be a 2+2 year contract ending on 31 October 2030. This means that an extension may be needed in 2028.	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ross Boseley 07872 014434
23 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability	East Sussex Childcare Sufficiency Duty 2026/2027 To seek Lead Member approval to publish a Childcare Sufficiency Duty report for 2026/27. The childcare sufficiency duty is a legal requirement for local authorities in England, under the Childcare Act 2006. Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare places "so far as is reasonably practicable".	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Jane Spice 01323 747425
23 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Children and Families	Crisis Resilience Fund To consider the proposed spend of the Crisis Resilience Fund in East Sussex, including services for Children and Families	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Mark Hendriks 07701 394501
31 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Write-off of Debts 2025/26 To seek Lead Member approval for writing off certain debts in excess of £10,000.	P		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Alina Dunn 01273 481250
31 Mar 2026	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Dilapidations Settlement - St Marks, Eastbourne East Sussex County Council's lease of St Mark's, Eastbourne terminated in August	P		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Rebecca Lewis 07955 312371

		2024. A schedule of dilapidations was subsequently served by the Landlord. The Lead Member will consider the approach to negotiations, and the delegation of authority to the Chief Operating Officer for the final terms of settlement.				
March 2026	Chief Operating Officer	Oracle Programme Resources Modification of existing contract to incorporate the 2026/27 resource envelope, required to deliver the Oracle Programme.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ros Parker 01273 481412
March 2026	Director of Adult Social Care and Health	Contract for the provision of a county-wide Welfare Benefits and Money Advice Service To consider the use of a direct award to the current provider of the Welfare Benefits and Money Advice Service which would ensure the continuation of the service for a further 12 months following the end of the current contract so that a full tender process can be undertaken to meet the agreed objectives of the co-design and co-commissioning groups.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Tamsin Peart 07881 282732
March 2026	Director of Adult Social Care and Health	Allocation of Government Funding for Substance Misuse Services 2026/27 The Council has received government funding for local substance misuse services. This decision will agree how that funding will be allocated so that specialist commissioned services can meet the aims of the Government's drug strategy, reduce drug and alcohol-related deaths in East Sussex, and support people affected by substance misuse to achieve positive outcomes.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Caz Kearton-Evans 07879 117579

<p>Between 20 Mar 2026 and 31 Mar 2026</p>	<p>Director of Adult Social Care and Health</p>	<p>Modification to contract for the provision of the East Sussex Mental Health Support Service (MHSS) A national five year programme to expand and invest in Individual Placement and Support (IPS). IPS funding is increasing, but other Mental Health Support Service (MHSS) areas' funding is flat. With no uplift investment, commissioners have negotiated with the provider to adjust delivery within the same financial envelope. This modification is recording adjusted staffing levels (Full Time Equivalent), adjusting delivery arrangements and setting lower performance targets.</p>	<p>KD</p>		<p>Report, other documents may also be submitted</p>	<p>Mandi Edwards 07725 478260</p>
<p>9 April 2026</p>	<p>Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability</p>	<p>Post-16 Transport Policy Statement 2026-2027 Approve the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for the 2026-27 academic year following the required consultation.</p>	<p>KD</p>	<p>Public consultation between 27/2//26 – 30/3/26 Areas - All Areas Audiences – Any interested parties Interests - Children and young people, Learning disability or difficulty, Support for parents, carers and young people, Public Transport</p>	<p>Report, other documents may also be submitted</p>	<p>Ian Crudge 03003 309472</p>

April 2026	Director of Communities, Economy and Transport	Award of the Services Agreement contract for the processing and disposal of dry mixed recyclables The current Services Agreement for the processing and disposal of dry mixed recyclables expires on 28 June 2026. The decision is to award the contract to the successful bidder following a competitive open tender process under the Procurement Regulations 2023 for a 10 year contract (5 plus 3 plus 2).	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Laura Tafa 07919 298462
April 2026 Page 39	Director of Communities, Economy and Transport	Modification of the Integrated Waste Management Services Contract (IWMSC) with Veolia to include tipping point services for the handling of dry mixed recyclables (DMR) The current contractual arrangement for the tipping and handling of DMR at local tipping points in East Sussex expires on 28 June 2026. A deed of variation is being drafted to continue to provide this service through the Integrated Waste Management Services Contract (IWMSC). The decision is to consider modification of the IWMCS with Veolia to include tipping point services for the handling of DMR.	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Laura Tafa 07919 298462
May 2026	Director of Communities, Economy and Transport	Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections Construction Procurement To award the contract for the construction of Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections following a competitive tender process. The tender will be	P KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ellie McDaniel 01273 335464

		advertised via the Hampshire Gen 5 Framework early 2026. This decision was delegated by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport at a decision-making meeting on 10 November 2025.				
12 Jun 2026	Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Changes to the process for disability-related expenditure within non-residential financial assessments To approve changes to the East Sussex County Council's disability-related expenditure process, to ensure all adults have an appropriate allowance for disability-related expenditure and allow the Council to reduce risk and comply with legal advice. If agreed, the changes would apply in new assessments from August 2026 and be applied to existing financial assessments as part of the annual review process, planned to begin in summer 2026.	KD		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ben Baker 07923 382464
22 Jun 2026	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	East Sussex Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2026-36: Public Consultation To consider the draft East Sussex Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2026 – 2036 and authorise public consultation on the draft strategy to commence.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Natalie Jamfield 01273 481409

<p>30 Jun 2026</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 41</p>	<p>Cabinet</p>	<p>A22 Major Road Network Corridor Package - Full business case and construction contract procurement To seek Cabinet approval to delegate to the Director for Communities, Economy and Transport, in discussion with the County's Section 151 Officer, to submit the full business case to the Department for Transport in relation to the A22 Major Road Network Corridor Package to secure Government funding towards the delivery of the scheme. In addition, Cabinet will consider whether to delegate approval to the Director for Communities, Economy and Transport, to contract the construction of the scheme following Department for Transport approval of the full business case.</p>	<p>KD</p>		<p>Report, other documents may also be submitted</p>	<p>Jon Wheeler, Rebecca Newby 01273 482212, 01273 336434</p>
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Report to: **Place Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **19 March 2026**

By: **Director of Communities, Economy and Transport**

Title: **Scrutiny Review of ESCC's Local Speed Limit policy**

Purpose: **To provide an update on the action plan from the Scrutiny Review of Local Speed Limit Policy report dated November 2024**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is recommended to note the updates to the recommendations and action plan set out in Appendix 1

1. Background

1.1 The Place Scrutiny Committee at the meeting on 12 July 2024 agreed to establish a Review Board to undertake a Scrutiny Review of ESCC's Local Speed Limit Policy. The scope of the review included:

- Consideration of the purpose of a local speed limit policy and examining how local speed limits are reviewed, assessed and delivered by East Sussex County Council (ESCC).
- Examining whether the ESCC local speed limit policy PS05/02 is in line with national Department for Transport (DfT) guidance.
- Reviewing examples of other local authority speed limit policies (e.g. our nearest neighbours and those with similar road networks to ESCC).
- Reviewing national and local evidence on the impact and effectiveness of lower speed limits and zones (including 20mph limits).
- Exploring other measures local authorities and developments are bringing forward to deliver low speed environments in both urban and rural areas.
- Exploring how ESCC currently communicates the local speed limit policy and wider policy context to residents and considers potential improvements.
- Reviewing the amount of officer time spent carrying out assessments of road safety concerns and preparing petition reports.

1.2 The recommendations of the Scrutiny Review were presented to Cabinet for comment on 28 January 2025 and were accepted at Full Council on 11 February 2025. A copy of the full scrutiny review report can be found on the Council's website with the [agenda for Full Council on 11 February](#). The version reported to Full Council included an amendment that was not included in the version reported to Cabinet.

1.3 The Committee received a 6-month update report on the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review [at its meeting in September 2025, and can be found here](#).

2. Supporting information

2.1 The Scrutiny Review of Local Speed Limit Policy was welcomed by the Department and the opportunity afforded by the review to examine improvements in how the service communicates the process for reviewing speed limits to the community.

2.2 The Department's response to the Review's recommendations and an update to the action plan are set out in Appendix 1.

New Government Road Safety Strategy

2.3 The Place Scrutiny Committee will be aware that on 7 January 2026, the Government published its first comprehensive Road Safety Strategy in over a decade. The strategy adopts the Safe System approach which recognises that while human error is inevitable, death and serious injuries are not; the road and vehicle environment should be designed to protect people as far as practicable.

2.4 The Strategy states that the DfT will develop new guidance to support local authorities, and this will include a new edition of the best practice guidance, 'Setting Local Speed Limits, and an updated Manual for Streets, which provides principles for planning and designing new and existing residential streets. Once this guidance is published, a review will be undertaken of ESCC policies to assess whether these require updating.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Scrutiny Review highlighted several areas of focus for the department regarding the Local Speed Limit Policy. Progress has been made against each of the recommendations as highlighted in Appendix 1.

3.2 The Place Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the updates to the action plan, with all recommendations having been embedded into the department's working practices as standard.

RUPERT CLUBB
Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Ismina Harvey
Email: ismina.harvey@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS
ALL

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, SCRUTINY REVIEW OF LOCAL SPEED LIMIT POLICY – ACTION PLAN				
SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION		DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN	TIMESCALE	12 MONTH UPDATE
R1.	The Board recommends that the Council regularly reviews Policy PS05/02 Local Speed Limits when there is a change in national guidance.	The Department recognises the importance of Policy PS05/02 aligning with national guidance. The department already reviews the Policy when there is a change in guidance and will continue to do so.	Ongoing - following a change in guidance	<u>Ongoing</u> - There have been no changes in relevant government guidance over the past 6 months. The new Government Road Safety Strategy was published in January. This includes a commitment to review the DfT guidance on Setting Speed limits, and the Manual for Streets. Once this is published, the policy and any associated guidance will be reviewed to consider whether amendments are required.
R2.	The Board recommends that the ESCC website pages are updated to provide clearer information on the purpose of local, county wide speed limits and the wider policy context they are applied in.	The Department welcomes this recommendation and will review existing webpages to include clear information on the purpose of speed limits and policy context. In doing so, it is hoped that this will help local communities to gain a better understanding of how requests for changes to speed limits are considered, and the likelihood of any such requests being successful.	6 months	The web pages have been updated to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The purpose of speed limits (R2) 2) A step-by-step process of how we assess requests for new speed limits, including the length of time it can take (R4, R5) 3) Case studies with images of different speed limits (R5) 4) Speed limit enquiry page (R6) 5) Information on Community Speed Watch (R7) <p>This incorporates recommendations R 2,4,5, and 7. A Speed limit enquiry page has been developed and will be added to the ESCC website by the end of March.</p>
R3.	The Board recommends that officers review the speed limit assessment process and criteria	The Department receives a high number of requests from communities who wish to see lower speed limits in their area. Due to finite	12 months	Completed

	<p>that other local authorities have introduced to manage demand to identify any potential efficiencies in officer time.</p>	<p>funding, these requests need to be prioritised so that we continue to deliver the schemes that are of the greatest benefit to the community.</p> <p>The Department agrees with this recommendation and will undertake a review of the current assessment process to identify potential efficiencies in officer time.</p>		<p>Officers recognise that requests received from our communities are a high priority to them.</p> <p>The updated webpages provide greater clarity to communities on the process for assessing speed limits and the criteria with which speed limits are assessed.</p> <p>The development and delivery of small to medium scale local transport and road safety schemes will be assessed against the outcomes that support the six objectives of LTP4. These objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Deliver safer and accessible journeys.</i> • <i>Support healthier lifestyles and communities.</i> • <i>Decarbonise transport.</i> • <i>Conserve and enhance our local environment.</i> • <i>Support sustainable economic growth.</i> • <i>Strengthen the resilience of our transport networks.</i> <p>Teams across ESCC, including the Road Safety team have contributed to the development of LTP4 assessment process, including requests for lower speed limits, which was approved in September.</p>
R4.	<p>The Board recommends that the Council introduces a step-by-step process and guide for changes to local speed limits.</p>	<p>The Department agrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>The review of the website being undertaken under R2 will include a step-by-step process guide.</p> <p>In doing so, it is hoped that this will help local communities to gain a better understanding of how requests for changes to speed limits are considered, and the likelihood of any requests being successful.</p>	6 months	<p><u>Completed</u> As R2 – this was undertaken as part of the web page review</p>

R5.	<p>The Board recommends:</p> <p>1) A review is undertaken on the information provided to local communities, including Parish Councils; and</p> <p>2) Information is provided on the Road Safety section on the ESCC website, including case studies, on the potential cost of designing and implementing signed only speed limits and also speed limit schemes where traffic calming is required. In addition, information is provided on the length of time it can take to deliver speed limit schemes.</p>	<p>Whilst the Community Match pages of the ESCC website already contains detailed case studies on the costs of schemes, the Department agrees that it would be beneficial to set out case studies relating to speed limit requests.</p> <p>The review of the website being undertaken under R2 will include a case studies, costs and information on the length of time it takes to deliver speed limit schemes.</p>	6 months	<p><u>Completed</u></p> <p>Regarding 1)</p> <p>A new Parish Council toolkit has been developed and circulated to Parish Councils.</p> <p>Regarding 2)</p> <p>As R2 - incorporated into web page review</p>
R6.	<p>The Board recommends that officers refresh the information on speed limits on the ESCC website pages and create a speed limit change enquiry page.</p>	<p>The Department agrees with this recommendation.</p> <p>The review of the website being undertaken under R2 will include a dedicated speed limit enquiry page.</p>	6 months	<p><u>Completed</u></p> <p>As R2- this was incorporated into the new road safety webpages.</p>
R7.	<p>The Board recommends that the Council considers whether additional communication materials are required that:</p> <p>1) Outline the Council's approach to assessing local speed limits and the prioritisation process to help local communities understand the types of speed reduction measures that might be possible;</p> <p>2) Explain that potential schemes that meet our policy, but are not currently a priority for the County Council, may be implemented if externally funded and delivered through the</p>	<p>The Department acknowledges the Board's concern that not everyone is able to access the ESCC website to find information and will carry out a review of whether additional communications are required.</p> <p>The Department also notes the Board's view on the importance of Community Speed Watch and notes the challenges Sussex Police face in recruiting volunteers for this scheme.</p> <p>The Department will review whether additional communications are required to assist the Police in recruiting volunteers to the Community Speed Watch initiative.</p>	6 months	<p><u>Completed</u></p> <p>Regarding 1)</p> <p>The Cllr Road Safety Toolkit has been updated and a new a Parish Council toolkit has been shared with all Parish Councils.</p> <p>Regarding 2)</p> <p>The updated Cllr toolkit provides information on how to access funding, including S278.</p> <p>Regarding 3)</p> <p>Where the team receive concerns from the community regarding speeding issues, our</p>

	<p>Community Match programme or a Section 278 agreement; and 3) Assist with the recruitment of volunteers to local Community Speed Watch groups (e.g. through Parish and Town Councils).</p>			<p>responses now include further details to promote Community Speed Watch, including details of how to get involved. This information is also included in the Councillor and Parish Council Toolkit.</p>
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Report to:	Place Scrutiny Committee
Date:	19 March 2026
By:	Chair of the Review Board
Title:	Scrutiny Review of Street Works
Purpose:	To present the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review and make recommendations

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the report of the Review Board.

1. Background

1.1 The former Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee conducted a scrutiny review of street works in 2013, resulting in 13 recommendations which were adopted by the Council in July 2013. The Place Scrutiny Committee review of Pothole Management, conducted in 2023, found that utility company excavations and street works have a significant impact on the overall condition of the public road network. The management and condition of the road network continues to be one of the most important issues for residents and so in September 2025 the committee agreed to establish a scoping board to explore the issue of street works.

1.2 The Scoping Board met on 20 October 2025 and heard that since the 2013 review there have been no substantial changes to the legislative and regulatory frameworks for street works. However, the overall volume of street works that take place on East Sussex roads has increased significantly in that time, and practices in the management of street works have since evolved, including with the commencement of the new highways maintenance contract in May 2023, and most recently with the adoption of the East Sussex Lane Rental Scheme on 1 April 2025. The committee agreed therefore to establish a Review Board to undertake a Scrutiny Review of Street Works at its meeting held on 27 November 2025.

1.3 The scope of the review was agreed to include:

- The planning and coordination of street works, with and between the Council and utility companies, and the use of the permit scheme.
- Minimising disruption of works, through the planning of diversion routes, avoiding disruptions for pedestrians (especially wheelchair users and those with visual impairments), cyclists, and public transport users.
- Utility company reinstatements.
- Incentives for improved management and collaboration by utility companies.
- Learning from other areas and national best practice.

1.4 The East Sussex Lane Rental Scheme was not within the scope of the review. Due to only having started in April 2025, the Board considered that it needed more time to bed in before its impacts and effectiveness could be well understood and subject to scrutiny.

2. Supporting information

2.1 The Scrutiny Review Board was comprised of Councillors Hilton, Hollidge, Lunn, Murphy (Chair) and Redstone.

2.2 The attached report (Appendix 1) contains the findings and recommendations of the Review Board. Copies of evidence papers listed in the report and other support documentation are available on request from the contact officer.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the Review Board's report. In light of the timing of the election, the incoming committee will have the opportunity to consider the report and recommendations ahead of reporting to Cabinet and Council.

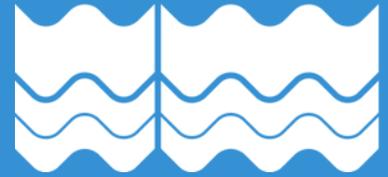
COUNCILLOR STEVE MURPHY

Chair of the Review Board

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Scrutiny Review of Street Works

Report by the Review Board

Councillor Julia Hilton

Councillor Ian Hollidge

Councillor Philip Lunn

Councillor Steve Murphy (Chair)

Councillor Paul Redstone

March 2026

Place Scrutiny Committee - 19 March 2026

The Report of the Scrutiny Review of Street Works

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Recommendations

Recommendation		Page
1	The Board recommends the Council develops a prosecution and enforcement policy in the next 12 months, for use where there are repeated significant failures or breaches of permit conditions, particularly should there be instances of utility companies failing to adhere to accessibility obligations.	11
2	The Board recommends that the Council develops agreements with utility companies on how to coordinate on “planned immediate” works, with the aim of providing greater prior notice to the Council.	13
3	The Board recommends that access to the licensed version of One.Network be extended to ESCC councillors, alongside appropriate training.	14
4	The Board recommends that the Council promotes One.Network with town and parish council clerks, and provides guidance on its use through existing outreach mechanisms.	14
5	The Board recommends that all ESH field-based staff be asked to collect evidence of signs and equipment being left beyond permit windows to support the issuing of FPNs.	15
6	The Board recommends that the Council works with utility companies to develop communications protocols to directly alert bus operators of immediate works when they begin outside of Council working hours.	16
7	The Board recommends that the Council supports lobbying of local MPs and Government to make abuse of road workers a standalone criminal offence.	17
8	<p>The Board recommends that the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lobby the DfT to lower the time allowed for utility companies to complete permanent reinstatements and extend the reinstatement guarantee period to 5 years; and • continue to collect evidence that supports lobbying on reinstatements, and encourage other highways authorities to do the same through regional and national partnerships. 	17
9	The Board recommends that ESH consider developing targeted core inspection regimes for poorer performers where inspection data identifies promoters with higher reinstatement failure rates.	19
10	The Board recommends that the Council lobby local MPs and DfT to introduce requirements for utility companies to share their plans for upcoming work by making it mandatory for undertakers to submit Forward Planning Notices through Street Manager 6 months before proposed work start dates.	20
11	The Board recommends that the Council work with UK Power Networks to identify the impact the rollout of the on-street EV charge-point network	20

	will have on their demand and support them in planning for increased EV take up.	
12	The Board recommends that ESH work with utility companies to develop enhanced approaches to collaboration on schemes. Should resourcing be needed to support any identified proposals then the Board recommends that consideration is given to submitting a business case to use Lane Rental surplus funds for this purpose.	21
13	The Board recommends that the Council routinely provides utility companies with information about when and where new developments are coming forward through quarterly planning and coordination meetings.	23
14	The Board recommends that the Council inform all major utility companies when a new connection request for a new development is first received and do what it can to facilitate effective coordination for the installation of new connections.	23

Introduction

1. The former Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee conducted a scrutiny review of street works in 2013. This review produced 13 recommendations which, together with the Cabinet's responses to them, were adopted by the Council in July 2013. Since that review, the Place Scrutiny Committee undertook a review of Pothole Management in 2023. This review highlighted the significant impact that utility company excavations and street works have on the overall condition of the public road network and resulted in two recommendations specifically relating to managing the impact of these activities.

2. The management and condition of the road network continues to be one of the most important issues for residents and has a significant impact on the overall reputation of the Council. Every resident relies on the public highway in some way, and street works that result in delays to journeys and road closures are a common frustration, especially where there appears to be a lack of coordination between them. Although most of these works are not undertaken by the Council, as the Highways Authority it is responsible for the management of the road network. Therefore, in September 2025 the Place Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a scoping board to examine the subject in more detail.

3. The Scoping Board met on 20 October 2025 and heard that since the 2013 review by the predecessor committee, there have been no substantial changes to the legislative and regulatory frameworks for street works that the Highways Authority or utility companies operate within. However, the overall volume of street works that take place on East Sussex roads has increased significantly in that time, and practices in the management of street works have since evolved, including with the commencement of the new highways maintenance contract in May 2023, and most recently with the adoption of the East Sussex Lane Rental Scheme on 1 April 2025. The Scoping Board therefore recommended that the Committee proceed with a scrutiny review focussed on developing recommendations to improve the planning and coordination of street works undertaken by utility companies and minimising the disruption in the context of the increasing number of works taking place.

4. The scope of the review was agreed to include:

- The planning and coordination of street works, with and between the Council and utility companies, and the use of the permit scheme.
- Minimising disruption of works, through the planning of diversion routes, avoiding disruptions for pedestrians (especially wheelchair users and those with visual impairments), cyclists, and public transport users.
- Utility company reinstatements.
- Incentives for improved management and collaboration by utility companies.
- Learning from other areas and national best practice.

5. The Scoping Board agreed not to consider the East Sussex Lane Rental Scheme within the scope of the review, as it is a relatively new scheme that the Board considered needed more time to bed in before its impacts and effectiveness could be well understood and subject to scrutiny.

6. The Review Board gathered a range of evidence throughout its review and held a number of meetings, including with officers of the Council and East Sussex Highways, and

representatives from utility companies that conduct works in the county. The Board also considered national reports and written evidence. The Board would particularly like to thank utility company representatives for their time and openness throughout this review.

7. During this review the Board was reassured to learn of the range of approaches that exist to manage and coordinate street works and recognised the competence and professionalism of the network management team within East Sussex Highways. The Board concluded that it is extremely challenging to manage the competing requirements of utility companies that need to complete works and the travel needs of the public in a way that satisfies everyone.

8. This review highlights that many of the challenges with managing street works relate to existing legislation and, as a result, are outside of the Council's direct control. Nonetheless, the Board identified what it believes are gaps and opportunities within existing systems and processes that, if addressed, could help improve planning and coordination of works. The review also demonstrated the willingness of all parties involved with street works to improve collective working and seek opportunities to collaborate in ways that would minimise disruption, and so the report's findings and recommendations are particularly focused on enhancing these areas.

9. The Board was also mindful of the significant financial constraints that the Council is operating within and consciously considered this when developing its recommendations. While the Lane Rental Scheme was outside the scope of the review, the Board was aware that the scheme generates a surplus, and should any of the Board's recommendations require financial resource to implement, this could be considered for that purpose. The Lane Rental Surplus Group, which consists of senior utility and Council representatives, will determine the use of surplus funds, and it must be spent in line with Department for Transport regulations which set out that:

- 50% of all net proceeds from surplus lane rental funds must be spent on highway maintenance.
- the remaining 50% must be spent on purposes intended to reduce the disruption and other adverse effects caused by street works.

Background

10. 'Street works' is a catch-all term used to refer to works that take place on the public highway, such as the installation of and repairs to vital utility equipment and infrastructure. Gas, water, electricity, broadband, electric vehicle charging and telecoms networks are the main infrastructure services requiring street works, which are usually carried out by the companies that run these services or their sub-contractors. Street works differ from 'road works', which typically refer to repairs to the road itself. Street works are a vital necessity that ensure residents and businesses have and maintain access to the utility services that are required to go about their daily lives.

11. The roles and responsibilities of organisations that undertake street works are set out in legislation. Key pieces of legislation that govern street works include the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and Traffic Management Act 2004. Street works are further governed and managed through a broader set of national guidance, including statutory guidance, design and safety codes of practice, as well as locally implemented schemes such as the permit and lane rental schemes.

12. The New Roads and Street Works Act gives electricity, water, gas and telecommunications utilities the right to undertake street works, and these organisations are referred to as 'statutory undertakers'. Other organisations including housing developers, some electric vehicle infrastructure companies, and private landowners can also apply to the Council for a license giving them the right to undertake street works for a period of time. The term 'work promoters' is used to refer to any organisation that carries out works in the highway.

13. As a Highways Authority, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) holds statutory responsibilities for managing the county's highways network and coordinating street works activities. The network management duty introduced by the Traffic Management Act places a duty on the Council to manage and coordinate works in a way to minimise disruption and congestion, facilitating the "expeditious movement of traffic". These responsibilities are designed to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, to minimise disruption, and maintain the integrity of highway infrastructure. Under the current highways maintenance contract, network management sits within East Sussex Highways (ESH) and is undertaken on behalf the Council by the highways contractor Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP).

Permit scheme

14. In order to coordinate and manage street works the Council operates a permit scheme which requires statutory undertakers (as well as the Council itself) to acquire a permit to book time on the highway for the completion of their works. Undertakers must pay a fee for a permit which is set in line with regulations and statutory guidance published by the Department for Transport (DfT). The scale of the required works determines the length of time prior to starting planned works that undertakers must apply for permits from ESH:

- Major works (which are those lasting 11 working days or more, are identified in an organisation's annual operating programme, or require a temporary traffic regulation order) require a permit application 3 months prior.

- Standard works (works lasting 4-10 working days) require a permit application 10 days prior.
- Minor works (works lasting 3 working days or less) require a permit application 3 days prior.

15. Statutory undertakers also at times need to complete works for unplanned reasons, such as where infrastructure has been damaged or degraded in ways that risk public safety or which result in their customers experiencing a loss of supply. These works are referred to as immediate works and are split into 2 categories:

- Emergency works - where immediate action is needed to prevent danger to people or property. The assessment of danger is made by those responsible for the works.
- Urgent works - where immediate action is needed to prevent a loss or restore the supply of a service provided. This assessment is made by those responsible for the works.

16. Due to the nature of immediate works, legislation does not require promoters to secure the agreement of the highways authority nor apply for a permit prior to starting works. However, a permit application for immediate works must be submitted to ESH within 2 hours of works starting, or by 10.00am the next working day if works begin out of hours. Permits for immediate works must be granted by the Council.

17. There is a separate process set out in legislation for the when street works require a road closure. In these circumstances undertakers must raise and pay a fee for one of the following:

- A Temporary Traffic Regulation Notice (TTRN) for immediate works.
- A Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) for planned works, which must be submitted at least 3 months before works begin.

Review Board Findings

Network management and coordination of works

Permit Scheme Management

18. When the previous scrutiny review of street works took place in 2013, there were approximately 15,000 works across the county on average in a year. The permit scheme has been introduced since that review took place, and there are now approximately 28,000 permit applications for street works a year, of which around 24,000 are granted. Additionally, there are approximately 2,100 road closures a year through the issuing of Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) and Temporary Traffic Regulation Notices (TTRNs). As well as street work permits and licenses, the network management team must process and coordinate a range of other licenses relating to road management, such as skip and scaffolding licenses, which amount to around 2,400 a year, as well as almost 7,500 abnormal loads a year, which further add to the challenge of coordinating works.

19. The Board noted the significant increase in works that need permitting and coordination since the previous review, and heard that the increase in the number of street works is the result of multiple factors including new housing and industrial developments, aging water and gas infrastructure that needs repairing and replacing, as well as new infrastructure such as power cables for EV charging and higher demand for broadband services. The Board explored whether the Council had the necessary resource to manage the amount of works and heard that under the current highways maintenance contract the contractor BBLP meets the cost of resourcing the network management function, and it had increased resource in order to meet the rising demand. By law the permit scheme must be cost-neutral, with the cost of managing the scheme met by incoming permits. Permit fees in East Sussex are already set at the highest that the Department for Transport (DfT) allows.

20. The Board heard that in applying for planned work permits, undertakers are required to provide answers to a set list of 26 questions providing details of the works, traffic management arrangements, timing of works and impacts on other works, stakeholder engagement and communications, and inspections. This checklist of questions ensures consistency across undertakers and acts as an aid for network coordinators when managing a high number of applications for different works. If promoters fail to answer all the questions, a permit will not be granted, although ESH can only base the decision whether to grant a permit on the information they receive from undertakers.

21. When granting a permit application, the Council is able to apply specific conditions where it considers this is appropriate. Examples of permit conditions include requirements for vehicle messaging signs, advance warning signs at specific locations, letter drops in affected areas, and manual coordination of traffic lights. Statutory guidance states that conditions must be pertinent to the reduction of congestion and disruption and recognise the needs of other users of the highway and the integrity of the highway itself. Additionally, any cost implications arising from permit conditions for undertakers should be proportionate and carefully considered. The Traffic and Network Manager explained to the Board that ESH is considerate of this when applying permit conditions, as if the promoter views conditions as excessively stringent or costly they could challenge them via an arbitration process.

Permit Enforcement

22. To ensure that works are being undertaken safely and with a valid permit, as well as to monitor compliance with permit conditions, ESH undertakes around 800 permit condition inspections a month. The Board heard that in the sample month of October 2025, which was broadly representative of the average, 22% of inspections identified failure to comply with permit conditions. Where there are instances of non-compliance with a permit condition or working without a permit a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) will be issued by ESH. The cost of FPNs is set by Government and at the start of the review was set at £120 (or £80 if paid within 28 days). The Board heard that, following lobbying by councils including ESCC, as of January 2026, Government has increased the cost of FPNs which are now £240 (or £160 if paid within 28 days). ESH officers expressed concern that the FPN rate may still be set too low to result in a higher level of compliance with permit conditions. ESH officers informed the Board that in their experience FPNs are often seen as the ‘cost of doing business’ for utility companies, as in many cases the cost of implementing permit conditions which were in place to reduce the likelihood of congestion, such as manual control of temporary traffic lights, may cost the utility company more than the FPN they receive for failing to comply. The Board was concerned about the rate of non-compliance with permit conditions but, given the recent increase in the FPN rate, agreed not to make a recommendation in this area to allow time for impact of the change to be assessed and understood.

23. The Board heard from highways officers that, as an alternative to issuing an FPN, the Council has the option to prosecute undertakers for failure to comply with permit conditions. This is not an option that the Council has regularly pursued, with officers confirming that the last prosecution by ESCC had been in 2013. The Traffic and Network Manager informed the Board that other authorities have taken a more proactive approach in prosecuting utility companies, but at present ESCC does not have a policy for prosecutions. Whilst prosecution is significantly more costly than issuing a FPN and comes with a higher degree of risk should the prosecution be unsuccessful, ESCC and ESH officers expressed an openness to exploring prosecutions in future under the right circumstances. The Board agreed that there may be circumstances when it is appropriate for the Council to prosecute instead of only issuing a FPN but reflected that any prosecution should be pursued in a proportionate and fair way that does not risk undermining effective working relationships between the Council and utility companies. The Board concluded that a successful prosecution could act as a deterrent to future non-compliance.

Accessibility

24. The Board explored how accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists is maintained during street works, in particular for vulnerable road users and pedestrians, including those using wheelchairs or with visual impairments. The Board considered evidence that the New Roads and Street Works Act, and the associated Safety at Street works Code of Practice, set legal duties on utility companies in this respect. The Code specifies that those working on the highway must ensure that street works sites are safe for road users, including pedestrians and cyclists, and that consideration must be given to the accessibility for disabled people and vulnerable groups. All utility companies the Board met with affirmed their commitment to fulfilling their legal duties in relation to maintaining accessibility. While the Board heard no evidence of either specific or systemic failings to comply with these duties, Members agreed that, given the importance of maintaining accessibility for

everyone that uses the public highway (including footways), any instances where there is evidence that a utility company has failed in their legal obligations could be appropriate situations to pursue prosecution. The Board agreed that prosecution in such instances could also help demonstrate to the public that the Council would not willingly allow utility companies to knowingly disregard the needs of vulnerable road users and show that ensuring accessibility for all residents is a priority.

Recommendation 1

The Board recommends the Council develops a prosecution and enforcement policy in the next 12 months, for use where there are repeated significant failures or breaches of permit conditions, particularly should there be instances of utility companies failing to adhere to accessibility obligations.

Work durations

25. The Board explored how the network management team manages the length of time street works take to complete and ensure this is the minimum necessary. The Traffic and Network Manager explained that the team will challenge a permit application which requests a duration period considered excessive and will seek to set the permit for a shorter period. This process of challenge should prevent utility companies requesting an excessive period, however companies will push back if they believe they need longer for works, which ESH has to accept. ESH's understanding is that undertakers usually schedule a small buffer period to account for potential delays to works.

26. The Board commented that there are occasions when road closures are in place, but it appears that no activity is taking place, and sought to understand whether this was an identified issue that could be managed. The Traffic and Network Manager outlined the difficulties in managing this area, as there is no specific penalty for sites appearing inactive, and undertakers have a right to be on site for the duration of the permit. The Board noted that some works promoters put out signs explaining why no one may be present on-site, a practice which ESH encourages, but is unable to enforce under current legislation. Network coordinators try to manage this at the permit application stage by challenging potentially excessive durations as explained above. In addition, if a utility company asked for an extension on works where an inspection had found no work taking place, this would be unlikely to be granted and undertakers would be charged for overrunning, which acts as its own incentive.

27. The Board heard evidence from utility companies that there can sometimes be challenges in delivering works required within the permit window, and that they can feel pressure from the Council to deliver works more quickly than they would like. Throughout the review Council and ESH officers emphasised that ESCC does not aim to be unduly punitive or adversarial with promoters and is driven by the need to fulfil its duty in reducing the inconvenience of works to the travelling public. All witnesses the Board spoke to emphasised the need for effective two-way communication and Members were reassured to hear that all utility company representatives highlighted their strong working relationships with ESH. The Board concluded that the Council has a reasonable and proportionate approach to minimising works durations and reflected that a more relaxed approach could risk promoters taking longer to complete works and lead to greater disruption.

Immediate works

28. The Board heard that one of the most significant challenges in network management is immediate works, adding a layer of complication to the coordination of planned works. Permit requests for immediate works do not need to be submitted until 2 hours after works have started or even longer if they begin outside of working hours. ESH is often not aware of immediate works taking place until they receive a permit request, and it is regularly the case that ESH will be first informed of immediate works by network inspectors or bus drivers encountering them on their routes.

29. The Board accepted that immediate works are a necessary reality that have to be allowed to minimise potential risks or damage where infrastructure needs repairing. When immediate works permits are received, ESH will review the network to identify where these might clash with planned works, and if necessary, permits for planned works will be revoked and rescheduled to avoid multiple disruptions in an area. This can cause delays to planned works and creates a large workload for the network management team to coordinate and facilitate. Consideration is given to the likely length of time immediate works will take to minimise the impact on the planned work schedule by revoking permits.

30. In the sample month of October 2025, 30% of all permits were for immediate works, although the proportion varied significantly between different utility companies. Of the major utilities that undertook a large number of works in East Sussex, South East Water (SEW) and Southern Gas Networks (SGN) had the highest proportion of immediate permits at 69% and 68% respectively, and BT Openreach had the lowest at 6%. The Board noted that it was unsurprising that SEW and SGN undertook a greater number of immediate works due to the risks associated with water and gas leaks.

31. The Review Board explored whether utility companies used immediate works provisions to circumvent appropriate planning of their works or as a pretext for completing planned works. Highways officers agreed this was a risk and one that ESH was aware of, but it was a difficult area to challenge utility companies about. ESH inspectors do visit sites covered by immediate permits, especially when they are on busier roads, to check that the works being undertaken are appropriate, however this does disrupt planned inspections. It is also the case that water companies will be aware of many existing leaks at any given time. If there is a known issue, ESH would expect utilities to address this through planned maintenance, however leaks could easily be cited by water companies as a basis for completing immediate works. It is very difficult for ESH to prove that the immediate work system is being abused however, as it requires evidence that the water company knew of a leak in advance, and even in those circumstances the company could argue that the leak had worsened, requiring immediate work.

32. When asked by the Board, utility company representatives acknowledged the challenges that immediate permits create for the network management team and acknowledged there was potential for them to be used inappropriately. The Board heard from the Highways Manager at SEW, who highlighted a particular challenge with the TTRO/TTRN process for completing works which required road closures. It is often the case that there are works which require road closures that may not meet the threshold for immediate works, but nonetheless cannot wait the 3 months needed for a TTRO application. Some leaks are not of significant enough volume to qualify as an immediate work, but if left

for 3 months could result in more significant damage such as the creation of a sinkhole. In these cases, SEW would undertake these as immediate works and raise a retrospective TTRN.

33. She outlined that because the TTRO process does not work in all situations, SEW had developed approaches with Kent County Council and Surrey County Council to work around this and minimise the level of disruption. Utility companies often know about works that are designated as immediate before the permit is raised, sometimes up to a week before, as they have to plan traffic management and ensure the work force is available to complete a job. SEW had developed agreements with Kent and Surrey where when a job is recognised as requiring a road closure, SEW will contact the relevant network management team, advise them of the situation, request a date when work can take place and agree permit conditions as they would for planned works. SEW and the highways authority are then able to undertake necessary communications with bus companies, emergency services and other relevant stakeholders in advance of the work commencing. An immediate permit would then be raised with the relevant authority on the day of the works commencing as this was required by legislation. This approach ensures that in most cases the highways authority is aware where there will be a road closure in advance.

34. Based on the evidence considered, the Board concluded that an approach that allowed for “planned immediate” works would be a sensible enhancement to existing processes. These workarounds are not designed to circumvent the rules but to deal with practical realities where legislation does not currently provide for these circumstances. While these types of work could not formally be built into the permit scheme due to legislative limits, and would still require immediate work permits being raised, the Board considered that this approach would allow ESH to be less reactive in how it managed some immediate works and would help it to better coordinate planned and urgent works.

Recommendation 2

The Board recommends that the Council develops agreements with utility companies on how to coordinate on “planned immediate” works, with the aim of providing greater prior notice to the Council.

Digital coordination systems

35. The Board received a demonstration of the main digital systems that are used to coordinate street works. Street Manger is a DfT system launched in 2020 which all highways authorities and statutory undertakers are required to use, providing a single central database of all activities taking place on the roads. Permits and TTROs are all submitted and managed digitally via Street Manager, which also includes records of inspections, issuing of FPNs, details of reinstatements, and provides promoters and coordinators with all the necessary information about a road, such as whether it is classed as traffic sensitive or if lane rental applies.

36. The Board heard from multiple witnesses that, as a relatively new system, Street Manager has taken some time to embed, but now generally works well. New features continue to be added, including one recent addition that allows undertakers submitting a permit application to indicate if they were ‘open to collaboration’ on specific schemes. The Board concluded that having all available information in a single, easy-to-use system was

extremely valuable for both network coordinators and works promoters and welcomed that it continues to be developed and improve.

37. One.network is a publicly accessible website that allows people to review planned works by showing where permits have been granted, and to monitor ongoing activities, taking information directly from Street Manager. The Board heard that, while there is a public and freely accessible version of One.Network, the Council has a corporate license which provides enhanced functionality that is helpful for the network management team, including details of stakeholders and businesses that should be consulted before a road closure, and roads that are unsuitable for HGV diversions. The ESH Street Works Performance and Abroad Manager informed the Board that there was good potential to broaden access to the licensed version of One.Network to further users with gov.uk email addresses for no additional cost. This could include town and parish councillors and clerks as the system allows users to receive alerts on works within particular areas, including ward boundaries.

38. The Board discussed the value in both ESCC councillors and town and parish councils having access to the One.Network license. This could encourage more self-service, with councillors able to identify disruption within their area and promote this information via social media and other channels to alert those who might be affected. Encouraging greater self-service would also help to reduce the number of enquiries into the network management team, thereby reducing cost.

Recommendation 3

The Board recommends that access to the licensed version of One.Network be extended to ESCC councillors, alongside appropriate training.

Recommendation 4

The Board recommends that the Council promotes One.Network with town and parish council clerks, and provides guidance on its use through existing outreach mechanisms.

Disruption caused by works

Diversions and signage

39. The Review Board explored the setting of diversion routes for road closures. This is a particular concern where there are instances of multiple road closures in an area, potentially generating overlapping diversion routes leading to significant congestion in specific locations. The Board heard that under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, when utility companies submit a TTRO or TTRN they must propose a diversion route which directs travellers along roads of the same category as the road that is closed. This means that official diversions can be several miles long, a particular challenge in rural areas. ESH uses One.Network to identify the cumulative impact of works and diversion routes and will look to delay works if there will be too big an impact. If there are clashes with other works taking place on diversion routes, ESH may not allow a road closure until after those works are completed. Where diversion routes are set, travellers may still choose to take alternative

routes or 'rat runs' which do not follow the official diversion, however the Board concluded that it was not possible for the highways authority or utility companies to prevent this.

40. The Board reflected that it is very common to see road signs left in roads after works had completed and explored how this was addressed. The Traffic and Network Manager explained that any signage or equipment left in the road beyond the permit period was considered an overrun of works, and the undertaker responsible was therefore subject to a fine; the severity of the overrun determines the level of FPN issued. Issuing of an FPN requires time and date stamped photographs as supporting evidence, and therefore the ability to enforce it depends on the resource available to drive the roads and capture the necessary evidence. This is already a primary objective for ESH permit inspectors, however all field-based staff could be asked to identify and photograph instances of signs and equipment being left out to support the issuing of more FPNs and hopefully reduce instances of it happening.

Recommendation 5

The Board recommends that all ESH field-based staff be asked to collect evidence of signs and equipment being left beyond permit windows to support the issuing of FPNs.

41. The Board also considered road closure signage, noting that often it is unclear to travellers precisely where a road closure is, as well as whether pedestrian access is still available. The Board also reflected that while this was an issue, fewer drivers typically relied on signs for directions, with many satnav and GPS companies using live road closure data to direct drivers. Highways officers explained that current legislation meant that there were only 2 types of road closure signs that could be used, which must read 'Road Closed Ahead' until the actual road closure, at which point the sign must read 'Road Closed'. This was accepted as being unclear, and the Head of Highways explained that ESH looks to put out additional information boards about the location of road closures where possible and encouraged utilities to do the same. This issue has been raised in a report on managing the impact of street works through the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee, which had recommended that road closure signage should be made clearer. Government had agreed to explore the issue further with the Highways Authorities and Utilities Committee (HAUC), the national representative body. The Board welcomed this work at a national level to improve signage and advance warning of road closures and concluded that there would be no added value for the Council to do anything further locally in this area at this point in time.

Impact on passenger transport

42. Street works do not just affect private motorists, but anyone who relies on the roads for their means of transportation, including bus passengers and those entitled to Council provided home to school transport. The Board took evidence from the Passenger Transport Team Manager on how his team manages the impact of street works on public transport. He explained that congestion and street works cause the majority of delays to bus services and are the biggest source of frustration for bus operators. While a single set of two-way traffic lights may only cause a short delay for a bus, cumulative delays can be a significant issue. When a bus encounters multiple works on its route this impacts the overall timetable, even leading to cancellations where a bus has been delayed to the extent that it cannot complete

its return route. While street works can be a nuisance to drivers who face delays, people who rely on passenger transport to get to work, education or appointments often have no alternative transportation when buses are cancelled. Improved collaboration and sharing of traffic management by different works promoters would be beneficial for bus services in reducing the cumulative impact of works. The Board concluded that managing the impact on public transport users often appeared to be a secondary issue for works promoters. Officers noted work to improve communication and increase understanding amongst utility companies about the need to reduce the impact of works on passenger transport.

43. The Board heard that the passenger transport team works directly with the network management team in ESH to mitigate the impact of street works where possible, and that both teams are actively exploring ways to improve information sharing. Passenger transport is consulted before permits are granted for planned works that would affect bus routes. With sufficient notice, timetables can be adjusted to accommodate the likely impact of any road closures or diversions. Undertakers must also make specific bus stop suspension requests where their works prevent the use of a bus stop, and bus operators are then responsible for providing passenger information signposting to where buses can be caught from. Where it exists, Real Time Passenger Information boards at bus stops can alert passengers to delays and most stops have QR codes available to help passengers with the technology required to access this information.

44. Immediate works cause the biggest challenge for bus operators as they receive no prior notice. This can be especially challenging in relation to road closures which could leave buses stranded without an appropriate diversion. If immediate works begin out of hours the Council will not be alerted until the following morning, however late night and early morning bus services may have already been impacted. Bus operators typically have staff working during most hours of the day, and the Board considered that it would be beneficial for bus operator staff working outside of normal Council working hours to be alerted of immediate works directly and as soon as possible when they begin out of hours.

Recommendation 6

The Board recommends that the Council works with utility companies to develop communications protocols to directly alert bus operators of immediate works when they begin outside of Council working hours.

Road worker abuse

45. The Board heard examples from multiple witnesses of unacceptable abuse experienced by road workers, including threats, verbal aggression and physical assaults. Witnesses indicated that unfortunately the problem is getting worse, with abuse becoming increasingly common. Multiple utility company representatives gave examples of initiatives they were implementing in an attempt to reduce abuse and protect their employees, such as signage and CCTV, which the Board welcomed, and the Council's own highways contractor, BBLP, proactively worked with Sussex Police on this issue. The Highways Director of SEW, who is part of a HAUC working group on road worker abuse, noted that recently enacted legislation had created a standalone criminal offence of abusing retail workers in their place of work, and suggested that road workers should be granted the same legal protections, which the Board supported.

Draft Recommendation 7

The Board recommends that the Council supports lobbying of local MPs and Government to make abuse of road workers a standalone criminal offence.

Reinstatements

46. Works promoters are responsible for reinstating roads they dig up, and must do so to the national standards set out in the Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways (SROH Version 4) to ensure the road's life is not shortened or uneven surfaces are created. Without appropriate re-instatement a weakness in the road is created which can lead to potholes and depressions in the road surface forming more quickly. The Board considered evidence which indicated that opening a trench can reduce the lifespan of a road by 17%, meaning the more street works that take place, the more likely a road will need to be repaired by the highways authority.

47. The Council actively encourages first-time reinstatements by utility companies, but the current rules allow them to put temporary reinstatements in place immediately following works, with up to six months to carry out permanent repairs. Permanent reinstatements are subject to a guarantee; 2 years for excavations no deeper than 1.5m, and 3 years for excavations deeper than 1.5m. However, officers reported that it is very common for reinstatements to last only for the guarantee period and to begin to fail shortly after they become the responsibility of the Council to repair.

48. The Board considered that the guarantee period of two years for works is too short and does not provide an incentive for utility companies to provide a long-lasting reinstatement. The Board was supportive of a longer guarantee period for permanent reinstatements, similar to the 6-year guarantee that has been introduced in Scotland, but this would require a change in legislation. The Traffic and Network Manager informed the Board that ESH network inspectors are conducting inspections of reinstatements just over two years old to collect evidence to support lobbying for a longer guarantee period. The Board was supportive of this approach as it was unlikely that the Government would agree to changing the reinstatement period without evidence. The Board concluded that, while there is limited scope for the Council to do more on reinstatements within the current legal framework, lobbying on this issue could lead to changes which could improve the standard of repairs.

Draft Recommendation 8

The Board recommends that the Council:

- lobby the DfT to lower the time allowed for utility companies to complete permanent reinstatements and extend the reinstatement guarantee period to 5 years; and
- continue to collect evidence that supports lobbying on reinstatements, and encourage other highways authorities to do the same through regional and national partnerships.

Reinstatement monitoring

49. The Board explored how the Council monitors reinstatements to ensure they are of sufficient quality and heard that there are multiple ways in which ESH inspects reinstatements. Performance Based Inspections, otherwise referred to as sample inspections, take place at sites determined by random sampling, generated by the DfT, and includes footways and verges as well as carriageways. The percentage of a company's works subject to sample inspections is determined by their previous performance; a 90% or above inspection pass rate reduces the inspection rate by 5% (down to a minimum of 20%), whereas an 85% or lower pass rate raises the inspection rate by 5% (to a maximum of 100%). ESH receives £50 per inspection, paid for by the utility company, which covers the cost. During 2025/26 around 250 sample inspections have been conducted per month. The number of monthly sample inspections in East Sussex has been declining year on year since 2022/23, when 378 inspections a month took place, indicating a lower failure rate by utility companies. The majority of utility companies that undertake street works in East Sussex have the minimum proportion of their reinstatements inspected, indicating consistently high pass rates. The Board welcomed the positive trajectory in this area.

50. ESH is also able to undertake an unlimited number of routine inspections, on any reinstatement, but it must fund these itself. Approximately 1,000 routine inspections are undertaken a month, which are focused more towards reinstatements on the carriageway. Officers have noted that routine inspection results often show a higher failure rate than sample inspections because carriageway reinstatements are more likely to fail, as well as due to ESH being able to be more targeted on particular undertakers and undertake multiple inspections of their works. Despite this, it is not possible to formally measure or manage performance through routine inspections, as only randomly generated sample inspections can be used for this purpose. In the sample month of October 2025, approximately 12.6% of inspections identified a defect.

51. Most inspections are undertaken by eye, but the Council also has the power to carry out investigatory works such as core sampling. ESH undertakes core inspections, taking a sample of a reinstatement up to 4 inches deep, to ensure that sub-base of the road has been reinstated correctly with the right materials and levels of compaction, as this cannot be checked through visual inspections alone. If investigatory work confirms a defect, then the reasonable cost of the inspections may be recovered from the utility company responsible, however if it passes inspection then the cost of undertaking the work is met by the Council. ESH conducts approximately 50 core inspections per month; in the sample month of October 2025 there was a coring failure rate of 22%, which the Board noted was significantly higher than the failure rate for non-core inspections. Under the current legal framework utility companies have to fail coring inspections for three consecutive months before the Council can formally issue them with an improvement notice.

52. The Board reflected that many trenches were significantly deeper than 4 inches, and the whole trench required backfill, so explored whether a top level core was sufficient to measure for defects and for monitoring subsidence or insufficient compaction at a deeper level. They heard that while the Council can undertake a deeper core sample, it generally does not due to the risk of drilling into utility company infrastructure.

53. The Board was particularly concerned about poor coring performance. Despite core inspections showing a higher failure rate, the number undertaken is much lower than other inspections given the cost has to be met by the Council should no defect be found. The Board concluded that many poor reinstatements will therefore not be identified. This would result in the Council inheriting a liability after the reinstatement guarantee period, which it would ultimately have to pay the cost of repairing. The Board discussed further inspection options in this area within the resources available to the Council, and concluded that, given financial constraints, resource must be appropriately targeted. The Board concluded that ESH would be best placed to use the data it has available to identify if there are works promoters with performance issues related to reinstatements. If the data identifies companies with particular performance issues, ESH should work with them to understand the reasons for poorer performance and if necessary, carry out targeted core inspection programmes to encourage improvements.

Recommendation 9

The Board recommends that ESH consider developing targeted core inspection regimes for poorer performers where inspection data identifies promoters with higher reinstatement failure rates.

Planning and collaboration

54. The Council's ability to coordinate street works depends on good communication between the authority and the companies carrying out the street works. This enables effective planning so that the Council can put in place measures to manage the impact, such as notifying affected bus services or asking for works to be completed outside of peak hours where possible. Without planning, the same areas can be subjected to repeating disruption from different utility companies. The Board heard that the Council hosts quarterly coordination and compliance meetings, involving all the main utility companies, as well as ESH, the passenger transport team and National Highways. These provide a forum where ESH and utility companies can share future work plans and are encouraged to outline long term plans and submit Forward Planning Notices. Having this information allows the network management team to coordinate works and minimise disruption by scheduling works together when they are in the same location. Witnesses who had attended these meetings commented that the quarterly meetings were helpful for all parties.

55. Despite the benefits of the quarterly meetings, highways officers also noted that there are currently no requirements on utility companies to share plans for their upcoming work with the Council and the sharing of information on planned works can be variable. Some utility companies are good at communicating early, however others could be reluctant to share long-term planned works programmes despite, for example, industry regulations requiring water companies to work to 5-year maintenance programmes. ESH officers noted that it was particularly helpful for the network management team to have advanced sight of planned works through Street Manager, as it provides a relatively simple facility to proactively identify collaboration opportunities early on. Officers suggested that the best

way to achieve this would be by making it a mandatory requirement for utilities to submit Forward Planning Notices a minimum of 6 months before the proposed start date.

56. Both Southern Water and SEW gave evidence to the Board that they had planned for significantly more investment in water infrastructure over the next 5 years and this would involve an increase in the amount of planned works taking place on East Sussex roads, although this should result in a longer term decrease in the amount of immediate works by both companies. Southern Gas Network (SGN) is in the last 7 years of a long-term gas mains replacement programme that would require a significant amount of planned works. While the amount of planned works undertaken by these companies was due to increase, the Board reflected that in the long term these replacement programmes should reduce the amount of immediate works that these companies need to undertake. The Board also heard from representatives from UK Power Networks (UKPN) who highlighted the potential impact that the increased uptake of electric vehicles (EVs) may have on their network. They expected that they would need to conduct a significant amount of street works to ensure their network is able to meet expected demand from EV charging. The Board noted that the Council had recently procured a contractor to install the public on-street EV charge-point network, which should indicate to UKPN where there may be increased demand for power in future.

57. The Board concluded it would be helpful for utility companies to be required to share their planned works programmes, although this would require Government to change regulations. In the context of a likely increase in volume of planned works across all utility companies that met with the Board, Members suggested there would be mutual benefit in sharing more information with the Council, as better coordination of these works may also help the relevant companies in reducing reputational damage that increased street works volumes might bring.

Recommendation 10

The Board recommends that the Council lobby local MPs and DfT to introduce requirements for utility companies to share their plans for upcoming work by making it mandatory for undertakers to submit Forward Planning Notices through Street Manager 6 months before proposed work start dates.

Recommendation 11

The Board recommends that the Council work with UK Power Networks to identify the impact the rollout of the on-street EV charge-point network will have on their demand and support them in planning for increased EV take up.

On-site collaboration

58. The Board explored how utility companies could collaborate on works sites in ways that prevent multiple works in an area within a small stretch of time. One option is trench sharing, a practice where more than one utility company undertakes works in the same trench, meaning only one excavation is required. Highways officers advised the Board that trench sharing by utility companies very rarely takes place on East Sussex roads. Utility company representatives told the Board that trench sharing was usually very difficult to

implement in practice, due to issues around health and safety regulations, as well as which company is responsible for the reinstatement for the duration of the guarantee period. The Board concluded that an increase in trench sharing was therefore unlikely.

59. The Board heard that it is much more common for there to be collaboration between utility companies by planning their works to be back-to-back with each other, which allowed sharing of traffic management. Representatives from utility companies including UKPN, SEW, and Southern Water all highlighted that they would seek opportunities for traffic management sharing as much as possible, with the Street Works Operations Lead for UKPN explaining that companies often approach each other directly rather than arranging collaboration through the Council. Representatives from SGN noted that when undertaking works on busy roads they try and work with the highways authority to support them to do work, such as tree cutting and sign replacement, at the same time. The Board heard that there can still be challenges even when sharing traffic management, as if one company is unable to work to schedule this delays the works of another company. However, utility company representatives also highlighted that collaboration reduces their own permit and traffic management costs.

60. All the representatives from utility companies commented that, while network managers at ESH already facilitate collaboration very well, further support in this area would be welcome. The Street Works Performance Manager at UKPN highlighted that there is no prescribed approach to collaboration analogous to the permit scheme, but that it would be beneficial to have a clearly defined and prescriptive collaboration process that was supported by the Council, so that utilities can be brought together and facilitated to agree joint approaches.

61. The Board concluded that collaboration on works is important to reducing the amount of disruption on the road network, and it also provides benefits for utility companies in reducing the costs of works. Across its meetings the Board heard a willingness from officers and utility companies to identify more opportunities for collaboration on works and to work collectively on finding solutions. The Board also noted that, in the absence of stricter regulation, it was important that any approach to increasing collaboration had sufficient buy in from utilities, as otherwise it risked being ignored. The Board therefore concluded that those who work at the operational level are best placed to develop appropriate solutions to enhance collaboration practices. The quarterly coordination and compliance meetings and Lane Rental Surplus Group already bring together the Council and utility companies, and the Board concluded further opportunities for collaboration could be explored through these fora.

Recommendation 12

The Board recommends that ESH work with utility companies to develop enhanced approaches to collaboration on schemes. Should resourcing be needed to support any identified proposals then the Board recommends that consideration is given to submitting a business case to use Lane Rental surplus funds for this purpose.

New developments

62. The Board explored utility connections to new housing developments, noting there are significant numbers of new houses being built across the county and that a common frustration for residents near new development sites was repeated excavations of roads adjacent to developments. The installation of new infrastructure often appears to be uncoordinated, as different utility companies do not install their supply infrastructure to new houses at the same time.

63. The Board heard that utility companies are not statutory consultees on planning applications for new developments. While Local Plans could allow utility companies to forecast potential growth in demand, these were strategic documents that did not give companies visibility of individual planning applications, or the specific timing and phasing details of new developments, which were needed for engineering design. It has also been the case that in parts of East Sussex there have not been Local Plans in place for some time. The Board reflected on the County Council's role in the planning process, noting that is a statutory consultee on planning applications for more than five houses, but only for highways matters. The Council is not a consultee on utility capacity or whether new connections will be needed. The Board identified this as a gap in the planning system and, if utilities are not statutory consultees for capacity, no one is formally responsible for consulting them on the utility needs of each development.

64. Utility company representatives recognised this was a challenge. On most developments the major utilities are not responsible for laying the infrastructure for new houses, with independent contractors often employed by developers to install this on newly built roads. The major utility companies are usually only responsible for connecting the entire development to their existing network. As such, the major utility companies are not aware of developments taking place in the county until they receive a new connections request from the developer. Witnesses informed the Board that developers may delay placing orders for new services in order to minimise costs until developments start to be occupied. SEW gave an example where they were forced to conduct a new connection request as an immediate work when they were informed that a new development would begin to be occupied in a matter of days and they had received no prior notice. This approach from some developers undermines strategic planning and coordination, resulting in utility companies submitting permit applications for their works at different times, often resulting in multiple, sequential disruptions on the same road. The Board considered that it would be preferable for there to be a single extended set of works as all utilities installed their infrastructure at the same time, rather than multiple works in the same area by different companies, which causes frustration for residents and appears to show a lack of coordination.

65. The Board discussed the role that the Council could play in facilitating better coordination of new connections to developments, whilst acknowledging that ESCC it is not a local planning authority. Despite this, the Council works closely with all the local planning authorities in the county on a range of matters and should be aware when significant developments are being brought forward and on what timescales. This information should be shared routinely with utility companies to ensure they have visibility of development within the county and are better able to plan both strategic supply and specific connections. Utility company representatives told the Board that it would be helpful to have an individual

within the ESH network management team who was responsible for coordinating new connections to housing developments. The Board concluded that there may also be opportunities to strengthen collaborative working between planning and highways teams as a result of Local Government Reorganisation.

66. The Board also considered that the Council could seek to take a more proactive role in coordinating new connections by utilities. While there may be an identified gap in the planning system which does not clearly fall on any one organisation to address, as the highways authority the Council should seek to take a lead in facilitating effective working that reduces disruption on the roads. In this way, when the first new connection request from a utility company is received for a development, ESH should communicate this to other utility companies that would subsequently also be expected to need to make new connections. With this information utility companies would be in a position to proactively contact developers and encourage them to raise a request to make connections to the development. If possible, the Council could also look to delay the granting of any permits for new connections to developments until multiple requests had been received and coordinated. Although the onus is still on developers to make payments for new connections, enhanced coordination and communication between the highways authority and utility companies could encourage them to more efficiently raise requests and would allow for better coordination of works.

Recommendation 13

The Board recommends that the Council routinely provides utility companies with information about when and where new developments are coming forward through quarterly planning and coordination meetings.

Recommendation 14

The Board recommends that the Council inform all major utility companies when a new connection request for a new development is first received and do what it can to facilitate effective coordination for the installation of new connections.

Conclusions

67. The needs of residents and businesses in the county, for both an efficient highway network and connectivity to key utility services, are often difficult, if not impossible to reconcile. The Board recognised this challenge and the work of East Sussex Highways to manage a road network receiving almost 30,000 permit applications for street works a year. The likely increase in the number of street works in the coming years will only add to this challenge. It was clear to the Board that many of the challenges relating to the management of street works are a result of legislation which is largely unchanged since the last time scrutiny reviewed this topic in 2013. In this context, the Board believes that the Council has a robust and well supported set of processes for managing and coordinating street works within the current framework.

68. Nonetheless, having heard evidence from both Council officers and utility company representatives, the Board found that there are opportunities for better working within the

current legislative and financial constraints. All those the Board met with emphasised the existing strong working relationships between the Council and those undertaking street works in the county, and a willingness to collaborate and work collectively to reduce the level of disruption street works bring. The Board concluded that the Council should seek to capitalise on the willingness of utility companies shown during this review to identify improvements to its ways of working with utility colleagues that lead to better joined-up planning of works and more effective collaborative practices. As the highways authority, the Council should lead by example and assist in planning and facilitating collaboration at every level. While a collaborative and fair approach should be the primary way the Council works, the Board also concluded that it should not be reluctant to use the enforcement options available when standards fall below the level that ought to be expected, in order to ensure the effective use of resources and deliver improved highway conditions.

Appendix:

Scope and Terms of Reference of the review

The Review was established to consider and make recommendations on the following lines of enquiry of the review:

1. Coordination of works
 - Are utility companies sharing their planned works schedules with the Council, and what would encourage them to share more information of planned works?
 - Are different utilities coordinating their works with each other and are there examples of companies digging up the same streets repeatedly in a short period?
 - Is there evidence that utilities are using emergency work categories to bypass the permit process, and if so, what can be done to minimise this?
2. Minimising disruption
 - Are diversion routes being effectively planned and coordinated?
 - Are street works avoiding unnecessary disruption for pedestrians (especially wheelchair users and those with visual impairments), cyclists, and public transport users?
 - Are reinstatements of sufficient quality and durability?
3. Incentives and barriers for better street works
 - Are there incentives the Council could use to encourage better performance and collaboration from utility companies?
 - Is the Council effectively using all the enforcement options at its disposal for permit compliance and reinstatement failures?
 - What are the legislative and regulatory barriers to better street works?
4. Learning from other areas
 - Are there examples of effective approaches taken by other councils or national guidance and best practice to encourage good performance from utilities?

Board Membership and project support

Review Board Members: Councillors Steve Murphy (Chair), Julia Hilton, Ian Hollidge, Philip Lunn, and Paul Redstone.

The Project Manager was Patrick Major, Policy and Scrutiny Adviser, with additional support provided by Rachael Bellew, Scrutiny and Policy Support Officer.

Karl Taylor and Andrew Turner provided ongoing support to the Board throughout the review.

Review Board meeting dates

Scoping meeting - 20 October 2025

Board meetings

27 November 2025

12 January 2026

30 January 2026

11 February 2026

27 February 2026

Witnesses providing evidence

The Board would like to thank all the witnesses who provided evidence in person:

ESCC

Karl Taylor, Assistant Director Operations

Andrew Turner, Head of Highways

Craig Lamberton, Passenger Transport Team Manager

East Sussex Highways

Trevor Merchant, Traffic and Network Manager

Jon Copp, Street works Performance & Abnormal Load Manager

Utility Companies

Richard Boissieux, Street works Manager, UK Power Networks

Anis Dandy, Street works Performance Manager, UK Power Networks

Paul Dooley, Street works Performance Manager and Joint Chair of SEHAUC, UK Power Networks

Michael Harwood, Public Affairs Manager, UK Power Networks

Stephen Saunders, Street works Operations Lead, UK Power Networks

Trudi McLeod, Highways Manager, South East Water

Jason Bovey, Reinstatement Manager, Southern Gas Network

Fern Fisher, South East Regional Manager Construction, Southern Gas Network

Helen Peile, Stakeholder and Community Manager, Southern Gas Network

Lewis Tear, Connections Team Manager, Southern Gas Network

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Background and evidence papers

Item	Date
Scrutiny Review of Street Works in East Sussex, ESCC	March 2013
The East Sussex Permit Scheme, ESCC	September 2017
Scrutiny Review of Pothole Management, ESCC	November 2023
'Reducing the impact of highway works on road users', Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation	September 2025
A Councillor's guide to better street works, Local Government Association	June 2025
Managing the Impact of Street works, UK Parliament	September 2025
Written responses to questions of the Review Board, Southern Water	January 2026

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