

Communities, Economy & Transport – Q1 2023/24

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

Economy and environment

Employability and Skills

The Careers Hub ran Continuous Professional Development training for schools and colleges in June, with over 38 people attending. 104 pupils attended Open Doors visits in Q1, providing young people with experiences of the workplace. 2,354 young people have been on work experience placements in Q1. 205 Industry Champions were supporting schools and colleges at the end of Q1. An engagement event was held in Q1 to provide networking opportunities and celebrate the successes of the Industry Champions in providing opportunities for pupils to connect with employers.

The Employment and Skills team coordinated a Skills Summit on 25 May. The summit brought together businesses, training providers and stakeholders to look at the key priorities of Skills East Sussex. The event focused on skills for the transition to net zero, the impact of automation and Artificial Intelligence on jobs, upskilling the local workforce and inclusive recruitment practices.

The Multiply programme has continued to deliver courses to improve adults' numeracy skills in Q1. An Adult Learning Network has been established, and met in Q1 to discuss the provision of green skills and digital skills locally. A Tutor Encounters session was held on 5 July to upskill teachers in engineering and construction skills. Led by industry figures, teachers were invited to learn about new skills and technology to share at the event.

Apprenticeships

In previous years, staff have primarily undertaken bespoke professional apprenticeships. To maintain the growth of apprenticeships in the Council, and to address challenges in recruitment and retention, we are now aiming for apprenticeships to be built into career progression for staff at all levels. To highlight the opportunities available to staff, the Apprenticeship Team are holding regular information sessions. The level of interest from members of staff has been encouraging, with the highest number of enrolments ever on forthcoming Team Leader and Operations Manager apprenticeship courses which are due to start in Q2.

We are also running sessions for managers, who are facing recruitment challenges or thinking of taking on an apprentice. At the end of Q1 we had over 100 expressions of interest from staff about undertaking an apprenticeship. The Apprenticeship Team now includes a Pre-Employment Co-ordinator, who is promoting Council vacancies throughout the county and working with referral organisations and jobseekers to offer advice and guidance on applying for a role with the Council. Two people that have been offered a role within the Council through this channel, and the team are gaining a better understanding of the barriers people face when seeking a role within the Council.

Cultural investment and recovery

Work has continued in Q1 on the three priority work packages identified by the Sussex Tourism Leadership Group. MeetSussex held a three day 'best of Sussex' familiarisation trip with Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) planners from Europe. MeetSussex also exhibited, as part of the Visit England stand, at IMEX Frankfurt, generating 60 new contacts.

On 14 June 2023, the local authority-led Sussex Visitor Economy Initiative (which includes the Council) and the business-led marketing body Sussex Modern, launched Sussex Wine Tourism: A Plan for Growth. The launch event, at the Houses of Parliament, was attended by Sussex MP's, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the CEO for Visit Britain / Visit England. The plan is

a blueprint for delivering ambitious growth in the Sussex wine sector. It details how the sector could grow from bringing £25m of value to the economy currently, to nearly £300m by 2040, while also creating over 3,600 jobs. The report, associated appendices and delivery guides are available at www.sussexmodern.org.uk/sussexwinetourism

Broadband

The Broadband Project is completing the connections to the final remaining properties identified as part of the scheme. This includes some very complex sites, e.g., Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The project will move to formal contract closure once all targets have been delivered. This is now expected in Q2, due to unforeseen delivery issues and the lack of availability of specialist equipment. The Broadband Team is continuing to engage with Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) on its centrally run Project Gigabit programme. BDUK has put the Gigabit Voucher scheme, including the East Sussex top up, on hold during the procurement process. We are awaiting confirmation of when BDUK will allow communities to apply for vouchers again. We understand that they plan to issue a contract that covers East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove in Q2. The Broadband Team is continuing to push BDUK for details of how they plan to cover the very hardest to reach properties in the county.

Environment and climate change

Teams in Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) and the Business Services Department (BSD) have worked together with partners to develop and deliver carbon reduction and climate change adaptation work. In Q1 this has included:

- CET and BSD continuing to work together to deliver the actions in the corporate Climate Emergency Plan
- the Climate Emergency Board agreeing to the development of an updated staff travel plan, which will start in Q2
- CET assisting 44 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to measure their carbon footprint and awarding grants to 21 SMEs to improve energy efficiency and install renewable energy systems, which will reduce their energy bills

Planning

100% of County Matter applications were determined within the statutory determination period in Q1. 100% of County Council development applications were also determined within eight weeks or within an agreed extension of time during Q1.

Highways, transport and waste

Highways improvements and road condition

Following the start of the new highways contract with Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) on 1 May 2023 over 4,000 safety defects were handed over by Costain and the majority of these have now been completed. A number of large surfacing schemes have been completed or are underway in Wivelsfield, Uckfield, Hartfield and Hailsham. Preparation works are also underway for the start of the surface dressing programme in Q2.

The Council has recently approved additional funding for highways in recognition of the deterioration of the network following the last prolonged, wet and cold winter. The funding includes an additional one off £2.5m for carriageway patching works, an additional one off £3.1m for drainage works, an additional £5m per year for two years for carriageway repairs, plus a proposed additional £5.1m per year for roads in the capital programme. Additional patching sites have been identified and works instructed using the additional £2.5m. Work also continues to replace worn out road signs and to refresh road markings using the one-off funding carried forward from 2022/23.

16 road improvement schemes were completed in Q1 to improve the condition of the roads. 7,250 potholes were repaired in Q1, with 6,500 of these being carriageway potholes; the remainder were primarily footway potholes.

Road safety

Q1 was a transition process with the old highways contract ending, and the new contractor, BBLP, beginning work at the start of May. As a result, Q1 has been a period of mobilisation for BBLP. 17 road safety infrastructure schemes are in progress and expected to be completed by the end of Q2. Seven further schemes have been submitted to BBLP and these will be implemented by the end of 2023/24

We delivered 184 'Bikeability' courses to 1,577 individuals at participating schools and the Cycle Centre at Eastbourne Sports Park during Q1. We have also delivered 60 'Wheels for All' sessions to 704 attendees at the sports park.

Transport and parking

A number of projects have commenced as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in Q1:

- Digital Demand Responsive Transport services, which offer flexible shared transport, started operating in 10 zones in May
- improvements to conventional bus services will commence in Q2 and run until the end of March 2026
- the second phase of reduced price bus tickets started on 1 April 2023. The second phase included the launch of a £5 multi-operator day ticket (£3.75 for 19 to 29 year olds and £3.20 for under 19s)
- work on improving bus stop infrastructure has commenced with some significant improvements due to be delivered over the summer and autumn. Around a third of all bus stops have QR plates (which provide people with the ability to scan and receive next bus information for that stop) with all bus stops expected to have QR plates by the end of Q2

A review of the parking restrictions in Rother District was carried out in 2022/23. The proposals from the review will be presented to the Planning Committee in Q2. A formal review of parking in Hastings was opened in Q1 and will close in Q2.

Waste

54.3% of household waste was re-used, recycled or composted or used beneficially in 2022/23 (reported a quarter in arrears).

Planned maintenance of the Newhaven Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) took place in Q1. Veolia diverted refuse to other ERFs to avoid sending any waste to landfill during the maintenance period. Recycling of vapes is now being implemented at all East Sussex Household Waste Recycling Sites.

Communities

Trading Standards

142 businesses and individuals received training and advice from Trading Standards in Q1. We received a lot of business requests for advice on food allergens.

Trading Standards also made 117 positive interventions to protect vulnerable people in Q1. 83 of these were as part of support sessions and training delivered to vulnerable groups, while 34 were direct interventions to protect vulnerable people. National Scams Week occurred during Q1, which gave us the opportunity to engage with vulnerable people and try to reduce the likelihood of them falling victim to scammers or becoming repeat victims. 27 of the direct interventions involved fraudulently obtained money being returned to victims.

Rights of Way (RoW) and Countryside Sites

We completed 94% of high priority maintenance work on schedule in Q1. As planned, rangers have concentrated on planned and proactive vegetation clearance in Q1. The relatively dry weather during May and June also enabled us to stay on target with our core bridge work.

Libraries

837 people enrolled on Family Learning Programmes at East Sussex libraries in Q1. 409 of these were in Family Learning, English, Maths and Language programmes, while 428 were in Wider Family Learning programmes. The Family Learning service was inspected by OFSTED in April 2023 and has been rated 'good'. 10 people passed online learning courses, including in IT, English and Maths in our libraries in Q1. In addition to the people who passed courses there were also 34 enrolments during Q1. Libraries also supported 21 enrolments and eight completions of English for Speakers of Other Languages courses during Q1.

Internationally renowned children's author Jacqueline Wilson visited Seaford Library in April 2023. At the fully booked event she talked to children about what it is like to be an author and shared her new book.

Wadhurst library has re-opened after flooding in 2022/23. The team have taken the opportunity to undertake refurbish the library, including updating the furniture, fixtures and equipment.

The Summer Reading Challenge starts in Q2. In preparation for the launch, we delivered 22 promotional assemblies to schools in June. A further 60 assemblies are scheduled to be delivered before the end of the summer term. Additional promotional activity, including a newsletter, online listings and social media posts are also planned.

Revenue Budget Summary

The CET revenue budget is £72.322m and is currently forecast to overspend by £298k. The largest overspend is in Planning and Environment. A significant proportion of the overspend in the Transport Development Control budget can be attributed to the lack of up to date Local Plans in the county, which has led to an increase in speculative planning applications for residential developments, which often have challenging transport issues that need addressing. Consequentially, we have seen a rise in the number of applications that have required specialist input (e.g., transport modelling) and/or have become subject to planning appeals, which are particularly resource intensive and have often required short-term consultancy support (**ref iv**). The underspend in Communities is mostly due to staff vacancies in Trading Standards and additional income from Emergency Planning training (**ref iii**). The Parking saving will not be achieved this year and is covered by a one-year budget increase (**ref i**). The Environmental Services saving will not be achieved and will be addressed next year (**ref ii**).

Capital Programme Summary

The CET capital programme has a gross budget of £73.540m and there was slippage of £4.906m, overspend of £780k, and spend in advance of £98k. The slippage is mostly in the Hasting and Bexhill Movement and Access Package and is due to the requirement to undertake a prioritisation process that requires funder and Lead Member approval. This will mean that progress on the selected schemes will be delayed (**ref vi**). Slippage on the Eastbourne and South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package is mainly due to difficulties with the contractor appointing project managers (**ref vii**). The Bexhill to Hastings Link Road overspend is due to the outstanding archaeology, ecology, and Part 1 compensation claims (**ref v**).

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

Performance measure	Outturn 22/23	Target 23/24	RAG Q1 23/24	RAG Q2 23/24	RAG Q3 23/24	RAG Q4 23/24	Q1 23/24 outturn	Note ref
There are no exceptions								

Savings exceptions 2023/24 (£'000)

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

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

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

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

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

Revenue Budget 2023/24 (£'000)

Divisions	Planned Gross	Planned Income	Planned Net	Projected Gross	Projected Income	Projected Net	(Over)/ under spend Gross	(Over)/ under spend Income	(Over)/ under spend Net	Note ref
Management and Support	7,704	(4,714)	2,990	7,712	(4,722)	2,990	(8)	8	-	
Customer and Library Services	8,127	(3,795)	4,332	8,092	(3,703)	4,389	35	(92)	(57)	
Communities	4,936	(2,066)	2,870	4,936	(2,189)	2,747	-	123	123	iii
Transport & Operational Services	111,485	(69,498)	41,987	112,996	(70,986)	42,010	(1,511)	1,488	(23)	
Highways	21,037	(3,578)	17,459	21,348	(3,889)	17,459	(311)	311	-	
Economy	3,170	(1,512)	1,658	3,324	(1,666)	1,658	(154)	154	-	
Planning and Environment	4,266	(3,240)	1,026	4,978	(3,611)	1,367	(712)	371	(341)	iv
Total CET	160,725	(88,403)	72,322	163,386	(90,766)	72,620	(2,661)	2,363	(298)	

Capital programme 2023/24 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget Q1	Actual to date Q1	Projected 2023/24	Variation (Over) / under Q1 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
The Keep	1,096	1,096	228	-	228	-	-	-	-	
Peacehaven Library	70	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Libraries	5,139	5,139	508	494	508	-	-	-	-	
Broadband	33,800	33,800	160	(1,132)	160	-	-	-	-	
Bexhill and Hastings Link Road	126,247	128,347	-	104	780	(780)	(780)	-	-	v
BHLR Complementary Measures	1,800	1,800	189	-	189	-	-	-	-	
Economic Intervention Fund	8,884	8,884	175	12	175	-	-	-	-	
Economic Intervention Fund - Loans	3,000	3,000	300	53	200	100	-	100	-	
Stalled Sites Fund	916	916	50	-	25	25	-	25	-	
EDS Upgrading Empty Commercial Properties	500	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Community Focused Road Safety Interventions	750	750	485	82	485	-	-	-	-	
Climate Emergency Works	9,859	9,859	3,095	172	3,095	-	-	-	-	
Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme	445	445	943	29	943	-	-	-	-	
SALIX Decarbonisation - Ninfield School	145	145	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
SALIX Decarbonisation	369	369	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	
Newhaven Port Access Road	23,271	23,271	86	-	86	-	-	-	-	
Real Time Passenger Information	2,963	2,963	70	4	70	-	-	-	-	
Bus Service Improvement Plan	22,315	22,315	3,245	112	3,245	-	-	-	-	
Replacement Lewes Road Bus Station	100	100	4	(2)	4	-	-	-	-	
PAX Software System	37	37	26	-	26	-	-	-	-	
Hastings and Bexhill Movement & Access Package	9,534	9,534	4,154	(222)	10	4,144	-	4,144	-	vi
Eastbourne/South Wealden Walking & Cycling Package	6,936	6,936	2,064	5	1,427	637	-	637	-	vii

APPENDIX 6

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget Q1	Actual to date Q1	Projected 2023/24	Variation (Over) / under Q1 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
Hailsham/Polegate/Eastbourne Movement & Access Corridor	2,251	2,251	275	194	288	(13)	-	-	(13)	
Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package A	6,936	6,936	3,296	20	3,296	-	-	-	-	
Other Integrated Transport Schemes	66,753	66,753	3,740	365	3,825	(85)	-	-	(85)	
A22 Corridor Package	1,143	1,143	100	187	100	-	-	-	-	
Community Match Fund	771	771	140	15	140	-	-	-	-	
Exceat Bridge	10,591	10,591	2,320	158	2,320	-	-	-	-	
Queensway Depot Development	1,956	1,956	504	(17)	504	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Highways Structural Maintenance	498,675	498,675	35,893	525	35,893	-	-	-	-	
Visibly Better Roads	5,800	5,800	1,293	(356)	1,293	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Bridge Assessment Strengthening	38,785	38,785	4,740	(42)	4,740	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Street Lighting - Life Expired Equipment	39,561	39,561	4,686	(110)	4,686	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Street Lighting - SALIX scheme	2,961	2,961	219	(82)	219	-	-	-	-	
Core- Rights of Way Surface Repairs and Bridge Replacement Programme	10,417	10,417	552	152	552	-	-	-	-	
Total CET Gross (Planned Programme)	944,776	946,876	73,540	723	69,512	4,028	(780)	4,906	(98)	