

Communities, Economy & Transport – Q3 2023/24

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

Economy and environment

Employability and Skills

Future Skills research was completed in Q3, to identify future local sector skills priorities and needs, focusing on automation and artificial intelligence. The Employment and Skills Team also secured £50,000 in Q3 which was used to develop a retrofit skills strategy for the county. Library services are now delivering a new 6-hour Step into Maths programme as part of the Multiply programme. A Maths and Medication course aimed at care workers is also being delivered, which focuses on medication, counting and measuring.

226 Industry Champions were supporting schools and colleges at the end of Q3. 882 pupils attended Open Doors workplace visits in Q3, supported by Industry Champions to gain experience of a real workplace.

Apprenticeships

At the end of Q3 100 new and existing staff have enrolled on an apprenticeship so far in 2023/24. This is higher than at this stage in previous years. Council schools are now being supported by trusted training providers, and this has allowed the team to focus more on corporate services, and working within departments to use apprenticeships as a tool to address recruitment and retention challenges. In addition, the work of the Pre-Employment Co-ordinator, who joined the team in March 2023, has helped to raise the profile of apprenticeships within the organisation; and to bring the focus to assisting managers in finding new members of staff from sections of the community previously underrepresented within the workforce. So far, this work has seen 15 people offered a role within the Council and its schools, with other candidates who worked with the team finding alternative employment within the county.

The team is also undertaking a mapping exercise to find apprenticeships that match as many individual roles within the Council as possible. This is the first time we have done this since the levy was launched in 2017, when the range of apprenticeships was very limited. Once we have mapped out the apprenticeships available to a specific department or team, we will then meet with those teams to present the options available. The first of these sessions will be happening in Q4 in Children's Services. In addition, the Council has spent over £1m on apprenticeship training in the calendar year and over a quarter of this spend was passed onto small and medium sized businesses within East Sussex to support their apprenticeships.

In November, the Council hosted the East Sussex Apprenticeship Graduation Ceremony. The ceremony celebrated apprentices across the county. It recognised the commitment and contribution of apprentices across all industry sectors. Before the ceremony, employers, colleagues, apprenticeship providers and apprentices made nominations for awards. The awards, presented at the ceremony, celebrated the achievements of all those involved in the apprenticeship journey.

Culture and Tourism investment and recovery

The first phase of the Sussex Story is being reviewed by stakeholders ahead of being published online. An invitation to quote for the second phase of the work where assets will be commissioned, will be shared with creative agencies in Sussex in Q4. VisitSussex has continued to promote Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) opportunities across Sussex in Q3, including hosting a Berg Hansen familiarisation trip, with 8 Norwegian members, and exhibiting at IBTM (Incentives, Business Travel and Meetings) in Barcelona in November. As a result, 284 new travel trade clients received a follow up on Sussex. Work will now include analysing where these clients are from and identifying potential future markets. There have been 750 MICE visitors to Sussex in Q3 equating to 2,250 nights of accommodation, with visitors coming from Norway,

Finland and the USA. Nine further MICE events are confirmed. The Turner Prize was awarded in a broadcast event on 5 December 2023, hosted across the Devonshire Quarter (the Towner, the Congress and the Winter Gardens) in Eastbourne.

Broadband

The Broadband Project has now completed its final build and is moving towards contract closure. The Broadband Team is continuing to engage with Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) on its centrally run Project Gigabit programme. The contract for East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove has been let and an announcement is expected in Q4. We understand that the Gigabit Voucher scheme, for which the Council provides a “top up”, is undergoing a review by BDUK. 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.

Job creation

East Sussex Invest provides loans and grants to local businesses to help create local jobs and support businesses to become environmentally responsible. The independent Strategic and Operational Review of the scheme is due to be complete in Q4, and it is anticipated that the fund will now re-open in Q1 2024/25.

Environment and climate change

Teams in Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) have continued to work together with partners to develop and deliver carbon reduction and climate change adaptation work. In Q3 this has included:

- securing £245,000 from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to develop a plan to provide people with the skills to enable the retrofit of domestic properties to reduce their carbon emissions. The plan is due to be developed by the end of March 2025
- completing stakeholder mapping for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and engaging with key stakeholders, such as landowners and farmers
- holding the second annual climate change town hall event for staff

Planning

100% of County Matter applications were determined within the statutory determination period in Q3. 100% of County Council development applications were also determined within eight weeks or within an agreed extension of time during Q3.

Highways, transport and waste

Highways improvements and road condition

Work continued in Q3 using the additional funding for highways approved by the Council. 132 patches across 62 sites have been completed. Around 100 signs had been replaced at the end of Q3, with further signs scheduled to be replaced in Q4 and 2024/25. Further resources have been commissioned to focus on the repair and replacement of damaged or missing signs, as well as cleaning signs and clearing vegetation or obstructions where necessary. The focus for the additional drainage spend has been on delivering those schemes which are quick and simple to design and will address the most urgent drainage issues. Around 150 minor schemes have been completed. This includes replacing gully covers and clearing significant blockages. 50 larger schemes have been identified and will be delivered in Q4 2023/24 and 2024/25. The remaining budget for the refresh of road markings has now been fully allocated and will include renewing the lining along the A22 Hailsham bypass and around 600 further sites across the county. However due to recent weather conditions and the likelihood of continuing wet weather these works will not be delivered until the spring.

The road condition outturns (where a lower figure indicates better road condition), have now been published. These figures are only available at one point each year and are based on specialist laser surveys undertaken in summer 2023. The surveys identify roads that should be considered for maintenance, based on the Department for Transport's criteria. The percentage of Principal roads requiring maintenance was 4%, meeting the target for the year. This is also an improvement on the 2022/23 outturn of 5%. The percentage of Non-Principal roads requiring maintenance was 5%, above the target of 4% (**ref i**). However, this is also an improvement from 2022/23 when the outturn was 6%. The percentage of Unclassified roads requiring maintenance was 17%, above the target of 14%, and also increasing from the 2022/23 outturn which was 13% (**ref ii**).

The road condition survey was undertaken before the additional road funding provided by Council, so the effect of these projects on road condition would not be reflected in the results. 2022/23 saw a wet winter and this has continued with a generally cool and wet summer and a wet start to winter 2023/24. The wet weather had a particular impact on Unclassified rural roads which generally don't have kerbing and often lack positive drainage systems. The survey results for unclassified roads reflected this with a noticeable increase in edge of carriageway defects identified. Road condition is influenced by a number of factors, including the make-up of the road, the volume of traffic, weather conditions and the level of investment in maintenance. The condition of our roads will vary from year to year depending on those factors. Our targets are based on modelling which tries to predict the rate of deterioration and therefore expected road condition. The targets are aligned to the Council's 10-year investment programme.

22 road improvement schemes were completed in Q3 to improve the condition of the roads. 5,194 potholes were repaired with 4,236 of these being carriageway potholes, the remainder were primarily footway potholes.

The Council has been allocated £4.4m through the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund. The funding will support the delivery of on street electric vehicle chargepoints in the county. The funding is due to be released upon approval of a business plan and draft contract. The business plan was submitted on 23 November 2023, and this is currently under consideration by the Government's Office for Zero Emission Vehicles. Pending approval of the business case, it is expected that procurement of the contract will begin in Q4. Initial work to deliver the new chargepoints is scheduled to begin in late Q1 or early Q2 2024/25.

Road safety

10 road safety infrastructure schemes had been completed at the end of Q3. Balfour Beatty Living Places have scheduled a further 14 schemes to be completed by the end of Q4.

We delivered 160 Bikeability Courses to 1,196 individuals at participating Schools and the Cycle Centre at Eastbourne Sports Park during Q3. We have also delivered 99 'Wheels for All' sessions to 973 attendees at the sports park.

Transport and parking

A number of projects have continued to progress in Q3 as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP):

- Improvements have been made to the FlexiBus service which now covers nearly 90% of East Sussex. The FlexiBus app has been improved to make it easier for users. Several of the FlexiBus zones have also been merged, providing greater travel opportunities for residents. Details of the amended services have been [published](#) online. The improvements, together with promotion and marketing of the service, has helped there to be continued growth in passenger numbers during Q3.

- Improvements to bus stops in the county has also continued in Q3, with all bus stops now having QR plates, which enable people to scan the plate and receive information about the next bus due at that stop.

The recommended changes to parking restrictions as part of the Hastings Parking review were approved by the planning committee in Q3. The changes are expected to take effect in Q4 2023/24 and in early 2024/25.

Waste

The Government has amended the law, to allow small amounts of DIY waste to be deposited at Household Waste and Recycling Sites for free. Following this change, from 31 December 2023, residents of East Sussex now have an allowance of DIY waste they can dispose of free of charge. Charges for waste above these allowances have been increased.

The projected 2023/24 outturn for the amount of waste re-used, recycled or composted or used beneficially is 56.1% based on the outturn to the end of October 2023 (reported in arrears). There was more garden waste collected than expected due to the good growing conditions and high levels of rainfall.

Rights of Way (RoW) and Countryside Sites

We completed 95% of high priority maintenance work on schedule in Q3. Due to the wet weather, rangers undertook both reactive and planned work, where access was possible.

Communities

Trading Standards

214 businesses and individuals received training and advice from Trading Standards in Q2. Trading Standards carried out a proactive project into second hand electrical goods, with over 100 businesses provided with bespoke advice.

Trading Standards made 854 positive interventions to protect vulnerable people in Q3. 805 of these were as part of support sessions and training delivered to vulnerable groups. 49 were direct interventions to protect vulnerable people which included installing call blockers to protect vulnerable people from scammers.

Libraries

The libraries team have worked with colleagues across the Council and schools to reintroduce work experience placements at libraries across the county. 49 young people have started work experience placements in libraries in Q1 – Q3. Feedback from the pupils and the employees supporting them has been very positive.

507 people enrolled on Family Learning Programmes at East Sussex libraries in Q3. 269 of these were in Family Learning, English, Maths and Language programmes. 238 were in Wider Family Learning programmes.

28 people passed online learning courses, including in IT, English and Maths in our libraries in Q3.

Revenue Budget Summary

The CET revenue budget is £73.191m and is currently forecast to underspend by £1.335m. The largest underspend is in Transport and Operations where current market prices mean that electricity and recycling income is exceeding budget in the Waste Service and the budgeted draw down of £2.335m is not required (**ref vi**). The underspend in Communities is mostly due to staff vacancies in Trading Standards and Road Safety with additional income from Emergency Planning training (**ref v**). The largest overspend is in Highways and is due to the estimated increased cost of electricity for streetlighting (**ref vii**). The overspend in Planning and Environment is mostly within the Transport Development Control budget and 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 ix**). The overspend in Economy is mostly due the cost of consultants engaged to help transition SELEP funded projects back into Council control (**ref viii**). The Parking saving will not be achieved this year and is covered by a one-year budget increase (**ref iii**). The Environmental Services saving will not be achieved and will be addressed going forward (**ref iv**).

Capital Programme Summary

The CET capital programme has a gross budget of £56.714m and there is slippage of £5.386m, overspend of £711k, and spend in advance of £308k. The slippage is mostly in the Highways Structural Maintenance programme where design work must be completed on larger drainage schemes before construction which will now take place in 2024/25 (**ref xiv**). There have been delays in progressing project briefs which has delayed construction on Other Integrated Transport Schemes (**ref xiii**). Slippage in the Bridge Strengthening programme is due to wet weather and delays in getting Environment Agency permits (**ref xvi**). The prioritisation of gangs onto carriageway patching works along with some wet weather has caused slippage in road signage and marking schemes (**ref xv**). The slippage in Climate Emergency Works is mostly due to the delay in installing solar PV as a supplier went into administration and a few schools will not allow installations to take place in term time (**ref xi**). Following the Bus Service Improvement Plan bus service public consultation, a number of schemes will require changes of scope before work can commence (**ref xii**). The Bexhill to Hastings Link Road overspend is due to the outstanding archaeology, ecology, and Part 1 compensation claims (**ref x**). There are a number of schemes with smaller variations to budget.

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

Priority – Driving sustainable economic growth

Performance measure	Outturn 22/23	Target 23/24	RAG Q1 23/24	RAG Q2 23/24	RAG Q3 23/24	RAG Q4 23/24	Q3 23/24 outturn	Note ref
Percentage of Non-Principal roads requiring maintenance	6%	4%	G	G	R		2023/24 road indicator result: 5%	i
Percentage of Unclassified roads requiring maintenance	13%	14%	G	G	R		2023/24 road indicator result: 17%	ii

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	-	iii
Libraries	105	105	105	-	-	
Environmental Services	-	60	-	-	60	iv
	-	-	-	-	-	
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	7,597	(4,714)	2,883	7,675	(4,776)	2,899	(78)	62	(16)	
Customer, Library and Registration	9,958	(4,501)	5,457	9,688	(4,277)	5,411	270	(224)	46	
Communities	3,256	(877)	2,379	3,503	(1,433)	2,070	(247)	556	309	v
Transport & Operational Services	111,496	(69,356)	42,140	110,431	(70,283)	40,148	1,065	927	1,992	vi
Highways	21,087	(3,578)	17,509	21,831	(3,750)	18,081	(744)	172	(572)	vii
Economy	3,224	(1,512)	1,712	3,763	(1,902)	1,861	(539)	390	(149)	viii
Planning and Environment	4,351	(3,240)	1,111	5,613	(4,227)	1,386	(1,262)	987	(275)	ix
Total CET	160,969	(87,778)	73,191	162,504	(90,648)	71,856	(1,535)	2,870	1,335	

Capital programme 2023/24 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget Q3	Actual to date Q3	Projected 2023/24	Variation (Over) / under Q3 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	-	49	179	-	179	-	
Peacehaven Refurbishment and Conversion	70	70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Libraries	5,139	5,139	580	685	564	16	-	16	-	
Broadband	33,800	33,800	160	(1,092)	160	-	-	-	-	
Bexhill and Hastings Link Road	126,247	128,347	-	472	538	(538)	(538)	-	-	x
BHLR Complementary Measures	1,800	1,800	100	48	82	18	-	18	-	
Economic Intervention Fund	8,884	8,884	75	59	72	3	-	3	-	
Economic Intervention Fund - Loans	3,000	3,000	80	53	53	27	-	27	-	
Stalled Sites Fund	916	916	13	13	13	-	-	-	-	
EDS Upgrading Empty Commercial Properties	500	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Community Focused Road Safety Interventions	750	750	206	150	206	-	-	-	-	
Climate Emergency Works	9,859	9,859	3,095	2,481	2,659	436	-	436	-	xi
Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme	963	963	905	614	1,003	(98)	-	-	(98)	
Flood Management SuDS	420	420	190	30	250	(60)	-	-	(60)	
SALIX Decarbonisation - Ninfield School	145	145	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	
SALIX Decarbonisation	369	369	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	
Newhaven Port Access Road	23,271	23,271	28	(45)	28	-	-	-	-	
Real Time Passenger Information	2,963	3,136	70	28	243	(173)	(173)	-	-	
Bus Service Improvement Plan	22,315	22,315	2,545	653	2,208	337	-	337	-	xii

APPENDIX 6

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget Q3	Actual to date Q3	Projected 2023/24	Variation (Over) / under Q3 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
Replacement Lewes Road Bus Station	100	100	4	(2)	4	-	-	-	-	
PAX Software System	37	37	26	21	26	-	-	-	-	
Hastings and Bexhill Movement & Access Package	9,583	9,583	(79)	(131)	(103)	24	-	24	-	
Eastbourne/South Wealden Walking & Cycling Package	6,936	6,936	79	84	136	(57)	-	-	(57)	
Hailsham /Polegate/ Eastbourne Movement & Access Corridor	2,251	2,251	350	248	286	64	-	64	-	
Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package A	6,936	6,936	800	464	800	-	-	-	-	
Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package B	5,454	5,454	100	82	100	-	-	-	-	
Other Integrated Transport Schemes	66,753	66,753	2,802	1,036	1,851	951	-	951	-	xiii
A22 Corridor Package	1,143	1,143	100	202	100	-	-	-	-	
Community Match Fund	780	780	95	15	17	78	-	78	-	
Area-wide traffic management scheme – Schools Streets	200	200	64	116	56	8	-	8	-	
ATF Eastbourne Liveable Town Centre	274	274	37	-	37	-	-	-	-	
Exceat Bridge	10,591	10,591	1,259	454	1,259	-	-	-	-	
Queensway Depot Development	1,956	1,956	104	(17)	-	104	-	104	-	
Core Programme - Highways Structural Maintenance	498,675	498,675	35,893	19,584	33,893	2,000	-	2,000	-	xiv
Visibly Better Roads	5,800	5,800	1,293	622	793	500	-	500	-	xv
Core Programme - Bridge Assessment Strengthening	38,785	38,785	2,740	684	2,099	641	-	641	-	xvi
Core Programme - Street Lighting - Life Expired Equipment	39,561	39,561	2,000	1,327	2,093	(93)	-	-	(93)	
Core Programme - Street Lighting - SALIX scheme	2,961	2,961	219	220	219	-	-	-	-	
Core- Rights of Way Surface Repairs and Bridge Replacement Programme	10,417	10,417	552	446	552	-	-	-	-	
Total CET Gross (Planned Programme)	951,700	953,973	56,714	29,616	52,347	4,367	(711)	5,386	(308)	