

## **Communities, Economy & Transport – Q1 2024/25**

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

#### **Economy and environment**

##### **Employability and Skills**

The Council aims to support young people in the county by giving them the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their careers. 185 Industry Champions were supporting schools and colleges at the end of Q1. This is lower than the figure at the end of 2023/24, due to a review of the champions which found that some had left their roles and some unable to commit to engaging with young people on a regular enough basis. Recruitment of new champions has begun, and the number will begin to rise during 2024/25.

165 pupils attended Open Doors visits during Q1, giving them experience of a workplace. The Careers Hub ran training for schools and colleges in June, with over 50 people attending. The training focused on future skills, the visitor economy, health and social care, construction and the green industries.

The Council also helps adults improve their numeracy skills through Multiply, a government-funded programme. Six numeracy interventions started in Q1 as part of the Multiply programme. These interventions have included math for money management courses and libraries offering functional skills maths training.

##### **Apprenticeships**

Q1 has seen a significant uptake of apprenticeships, most notably within Children's Services both for frontline roles and bespoke management apprenticeships for managers. Management apprenticeships continue to grow across all departments, with degree level management apprenticeships proving particularly popular. Following feedback from staff, a new apprenticeship for staff who are currently not in a management role but have an ambition to progress into one has been developed and will be launched in Q2.

Whilst the numbers of apprenticeships are evenly spread across all levels of qualifications, the majority of level 3 apprenticeships, which is traditionally the route into employment for younger people, are mostly located within schools. This raises the potential concern about younger applicants coming through from entry level and progressing their career in corporate services within the Council. We have worked with a number of teams to use level 3 apprenticeships as a means of bringing in entry level staff and now offer roles such as accounts assistant, digital marketing assistant, and pensions apprentice. The new Government is bringing in changes to the apprentice levy which is likely to make entry level qualifications a lot more flexible, shorter in length and not have the requirement to also obtain a functional skills qualification if needed, which has been a barrier to enrolments in the past.

In addition to our internal apprenticeships offer, we can now pass on up to 50% of our annual apprenticeship levy spend onto small and medium businesses within the county to encourage them to take on new apprenticeships. Previously we were able to pass on 25% of the levy in this way and had already allocated the full amount (approximately £300k) for 2024/25. Given the new higher amount, we are working to ensure we maximise this opportunity.

##### **Cultural investment and recovery**

The Local Visitor Economy Partnership was established in Q1, and an interim Board appointed. A consultation has been completed on the draft Strategic Plan for the Local Visitor Economy Partnership. The Strategic Plan is expected to be approved by VisitEngland and published in Q2.

## **Broadband**

The Broadband Project has completed its final build and is moving into formal contract closure which will take up to a year due to the data that needs verifying. The Broadband Team is continuing to engage with Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) on its centrally run Project Gigabit programme and attends virtual meetings with BDUK and the supplier. The contract for East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove has been let by BDUK to CityFibre. We understand that the Gigabit Voucher scheme run by BDUK is currently closed in East Sussex and we have no indication of future plans. 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**

The Newhaven Business Grants Programme (Round 1) has created 10 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs in Q1. It is expected that 21.5 FTE roles will be created by the programme. The Rural Business Grants programme has begun, and the number of jobs created will be reported later in 2024/25.

## **Environment and climate change**

We have continued to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and to work with partners to develop and deliver county-wide carbon reduction and climate change adaptation work. In Q1 this included:

- completing an assessment of county-wide risks and vulnerabilities to climate change, which will be used to inform how adaptation can be integrated into relevant service plans
- implementing a new salary sacrifice scheme to encourage the adoption of electric vehicles by staff
- working with a local farming partnership to secure funding from the Environment Agency's Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund to enable the partnership to begin to develop local carbon offsets

## **Planning**

100% of County Matter applications were determined with the statutory determination period in Q1. 100% of County Council development applications were also determined within 8 weeks or within an agreed extension of time during Q1.

## **Highways, transport and waste**

### **Highways improvements and road condition**

40 patch repairs were completed across 26 sites in Q1. This is out of 119 patches identified so far across 74 sites for 2024/25. This has had an impact on the condition of the network and has enabled us to carry out works above and beyond our usual programmes.

The original programme of 472 sign repairs has been reviewed and a number of issues were identified with the data e.g. the sign identified for replacement had not reached 'end of life'. This programme has been re-evaluated and there are now around 120 signs scheduled for replacement or repair. Unfortunately, due to the issues with the data there has been slow progress made with commencing the programme. This programme will commence at pace in Q2 and as further signs are identified they will be added to the programme. We are also investigating the option of a 'find and fix' gang to speed up the identification and replacement of further damaged or missing signs.

In Q1 196 minor drainage schemes have been delivered, including replacing gully covers and clearing significant blockages. 53 larger schemes were identified for delivery in 2024/25. These schemes will progress in Q2 and Q3.

The remaining budget for the refresh of road markings has now been fully allocated in 2024/25 and around 200 jobs have been completed in Q1.

7,450 potholes were repaired in Q1, with 6,157 of these being carriageway potholes, the remainder were primarily footway potholes. Amongst the carriageway potholes, 73% of these were completed within the required timescales and we are working with our contractor to improve the timeliness of repairs. 68 road improvement schemes were completed in Q1 to improve the condition of the roads.

Our Highways Contractor, Balfour Beatty Living Places, achieved a number of social value commitments during Q1. These included providing work experience opportunities for local people, offering jobs to local long term unemployed people, people with disabilities and ex-offenders, and offering business support and advice to local businesses.

### **Road safety**

24 road safety infrastructure schemes have been prioritised based on analysis of crash information, and initial design works have been completed. We are now working to programme these in for implementation during 2024/25. The Council runs courses aimed at giving children and adults the skills they need for riding their bikes on the road. 193 Bikeability courses were delivered to 1,657 individuals. 132 'Wheels for All' sessions were delivered to 1,642 attendees.

### **Transport and parking**

£18m of capital funds were allocated to bus priority measures as part of the East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan. 5 bus priority schemes in Eastbourne, Newhaven and Peacehaven were identified, and consultation on all schemes took place in summer 2023. During Q1 the Council has progressed the design of 4 of the 5 schemes. Following feedback from the consultation on the proposed Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue scheme in Eastbourne it was decided to re-consult on revised proposals. This consultation will take place in Q2 and the results will be reported in Q3. Construction of all schemes is scheduled to be completed by September 2025.

A review of parking restrictions in Lewes was considered by the Planning Committee in April 2024 and the approved changes to restrictions were implemented in May and June. The formal consultation for the review of parking restrictions in Rother closed in June 2024.

The Council has received 90% of the £4.441m allocated to East Sussex from the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund, to support the delivery of on street electric vehicle charge points in the county. The remaining 10% will be paid once a draft contract has been approved by the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles. In June 2024 Cabinet approved the plan to proceed with the procurement of a contract to deliver the charge points, and this is scheduled to begin in Q2 2024/25. Initial works are then expected to begin in Q4 2024/25.

### **Waste**

The 2023/24 outturn (report a quarter in arrears) for the amount of waste re-used, recycled or composted or used beneficially was 55%. There was a 3.45% increase in total household waste in 2023/24, compared to 2022/23. This is in part due to an increase of 7.5% in waste collected at household waste sites, where residents have been able to dispose of small amounts of chargeable materials for free since the beginning of 2024. Only 0.01% of waste went to landfill in 2023/24.

### **Rights of Way (RoW) and Countryside Sites**

We completed 95% of high priority maintenance work on schedule in Q1. Rangers have concentrated on planned and proactive vegetation clearance during Q1. The relatively dry weather during May and June has also enabled core bridge work to stay on target.

## Communities

### **Trading Standards**

Trading Standards made 123 active interventions in Q1, to protect vulnerable people. These interventions included installing call blockers in the homes of vulnerable people who had been the target of rogue trading or financial abuse. 56 interventions were to new victims identified through support sessions. These victims were offered advice and support. 67 interventions were for people who contacted the service to request assistance after falling victim to financial fraud or rogue trading. 87 businesses received training or advice from Trading Standards in Q1.

### **Libraries**

Promotion work commenced in Q1 to prepare for the Summer Reading Challenge 2024. Promotional materials have been distributed to all libraries and 27 promotional assemblies have been delivered in schools to around 5,900 children. 82 further assemblies are planned in July.

As part of the preparations for the Summer Reading Challenge, the library team have continued to support young people to gain experience in the workplace. During Q1 the team recruited volunteers for the challenge. These volunteers help deliver the reading challenge in libraries between July and September. 69 volunteers have been signed up, of these, 34 were aged under 18 and 13 had previously volunteered with the service.

434 people enrolled on Family Learning Programmes at East Sussex libraries in Q1. 177 of these were in Family Learning, English, Maths and Language programmes. 257 were in Wider Family Learning programmes.

30 people passed online learning courses, including in IT, English and Maths in our libraries in Q1.

### Revenue Budget Summary

The CET revenue budget is £72.503m and is forecast to overspend by £209k. The largest overspend is in Highways where the cost of electricity for streetlighting and depots is much higher than budgeted (**ref iv**). The overspend in Economy reflects the potential cost of closing Adult College for Rural East Sussex that is over and above the current reserve balance (**ref v**). The main underspend is in Waste in Transport and Operational Services. This is because of higher than budgeted recycling income and lower contract prices due to lower inflation. However, this is partly offset by reduced electricity income. The waste risk reserve draw down requirement is reduced to £0.4m from £1.6m, mainly due to slippage in required improvements at transfer stations (**ref iii**). £371k of the planned Parking saving will not be achieved this year due to lower levels of income than was forecast and delays in removing parking machines and therefore the need to continue to pay the costs (**ref i**). The £60k Environmental Services saving will not be achieved and will be addressed going forward (**ref ii**).

### Capital Programme Summary

The CET capital programme has a gross budget of £66.699m and there is slippage of £9.734m, spend in advance of £6.35m, and overspend of £246k. The largest slippage is in the Bridge Assessment programme where works have been delayed. Work on Shinewater Bridge and Cross Levels is expected to commence in 2024/25, however work on Langley Rise Bridges is not expected to start until 2025/26 (**ref xi**). Except Bridge will slip due to objections to compulsory purchase orders (**ref x**). There has been a realignment of works between the phases of the Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package resulting in a net spend in advance of £1.627m. Phase 2b detailed design will be completed by October and so works can start in January 2025 (**ref viii and ix**). There is a large spend in advance on the Hasting and Bexhill Movement and Access scheme. Road Safety reports have now been completed and so works can progress (**ref vii**). The overspend on the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road is due to remaining archaeology costs and some outstanding part 1 claims (**ref vi**). There are a number of smaller variances mainly on transport schemes and reflect the current

programme of works approved by Lead Member in March 2024. Highways Structural Maintenance includes £1m transferred from Climate Emergency Works for patching.

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

**Priority – Driving sustainable economic growth**

Performance measure	Outturn 23/24	Target 24/25	RAG Q1 24/25	RAG Q2 24/25	RAG Q3 24/25	RAG Q4 24/25	Q1 24/25 outturn	Note ref
No exceptions								

**Savings exceptions 2024/25 (£'000)**

Service description	Original Target For 2024/25	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	374	371	-	i
Environmental Services	-	60	-	-	60	ii
<b>Total Savings</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>60</b>	
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
<b>Subtotal Permanent Changes <sup>1</sup></b>			<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>Total Savings and Permanent Changes</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>60</b>	

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding <sup>2</sup>	Part of reported variance <sup>3</sup>	Total	Note Ref
	-	371	371	
	-	60	60	
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>431</b>	

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

<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> 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 2024/25 (£'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	6,027	(4,255)	1,772	7,496	(5,807)	1,689	(1,469)	1,552	83	
Customer and Library Services	9,542	(4,050)	5,492	9,560	(4,100)	5,460	(18)	50	32	
Communities	3,339	(926)	2,413	3,231	(884)	2,347	108	(42)	66	
Transport & Operational Services	114,186	(71,358)	42,828	112,655	(70,154)	42,501	1,531	(1,204)	327	iii
Highways	21,546	(4,941)	16,605	21,856	(4,941)	16,915	(310)	-	(310)	iv
Economy	3,994	(1,829)	2,165	4,697	(2,282)	2,415	(703)	453	(250)	v
Planning and Environment	5,822	(4,594)	1,228	6,184	(4,799)	1,385	(362)	205	(157)	
<b>Total CET</b>	<b>164,456</b>	<b>(91,953)</b>	<b>72,503</b>	<b>165,679</b>	<b>(92,967)</b>	<b>72,712</b>	<b>(1,223)</b>	<b>1,014</b>	<b>(209)</b>	

**Capital programme 2024/25 (£'000)**

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget Q1	Actual to date Q1	Projected 2024/25	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	172	-	172	-	-	-	-	
Gypsy and Traveller Site Refurbishment	700	700	70	-	70	-	-	-	-	
Peacehaven Library	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Libraries	5,139	5,139	773	301	725	48	-	48	-	
Broadband	33,800	33,800	65	36	65	-	-	-	-	
Bexhill and Hastings Link Road	126,247	128,347	-	(5)	246	(246)	(246)	-	-	vi
BHLR Complementary Measures	1,800	1,800	141	2	141	-	-	-	-	
Economic Intervention Fund	8,884	8,884	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Economic Intervention Fund - Loans	3,000	3,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Stalled Sites Fund	916	916	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
EDS Upgrading Empty Commercial Properties	500	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Community Focused Road Safety Interventions	750	750	547	-	108	439	-	439	-	
Climate Emergency Works	9,859	9,859	3,336	435	3,011	325	-	325	-	
Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme	963	963	758	89	1,000	(242)	-	-	(242)	
Flood Management SuDS	420	420	218	11	298	(80)	-	-	(80)	
SALIX Decarbonisation - Ninfield School	145	161	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
SALIX Decarbonisation	369	369	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Newhaven Port Access Road	23,271	23,271	135	19	135	-	-	-	-	
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	4,541	4,541	400	-	400	-	-	-	-	



**APPENDIX 6**

<b>Approved project</b>	<b>Budget: total project all years</b>	<b>Projected: total project all years</b>	<b>Budget Q1</b>	<b>Actual to date Q1</b>	<b>Projected 2024/25</b>	<b>Variation (Over) / under Q1 budget</b>	<b>Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend</b>	<b>Variation analysis: Slippage to future year</b>	<b>Variation analysis: Spend in advance</b>	<b>Note ref</b>
Core Programme - Rights of Way Surface Repairs and Bridge Replacement Programme	10,417	10,417	588	93	588	-	-	-	-	
<b>Total CET Gross (Planned Programme)</b>	<b>966,775</b>	<b>968,771</b>	<b>66,699</b>	<b>5,884</b>	<b>63,561</b>	<b>3,138</b>	<b>(246)</b>	<b>9,734</b>	<b>(6,350)</b>	