

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

1. Question from Councillor Anne Cross to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

During 2023, the Office of the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner (OSPCC) conducted a public survey. The survey asked what types of issues/ crimes the respondent had experienced in the last two years; which one issue made them feel least safe in the community; what measures would make them feel safer.

There were 1,299 respondents in East Sussex: The most common issue experienced was road safety/speeding, with 71% of respondents stating they had experienced this issue in the last two years.

The issue of traffic speed is more prevalent in my inbox than potholes. Several small, narrow lanes around my division are National Speed Limit making them dangerous to use except with the protection of a metal vehicle, thereby excluding pedestrians, cyclists or horse riders. This is particularly distressing for residents who may have lived in their house for many years and have seen gradual erosion of their freedom to enjoy their rural environment.

LTP4 states at 1.5 - from a transport planning perspective, there has been an increased emphasis on the need to move away from 'planning for vehicles' towards planning for 'people and places'.

In a time of budget cuts, it should be noted that speed is expensive. Expensive to our health services, expensive to our rescue services and expensive to our road maintenance. Half of all pollutant from motor vehicles is particulate matter discharged by friction from the brakes, the gear box and from tyres against the road surface. Whether petrol, diesel or electric, vehicles contribute to pollution. And the higher the speed they travel the higher the pollutants they discharge.

A. What is ESCC doing to move away from planning for vehicles towards planning for people and places, practically and culturally?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

As Councillor Cross will have heard at Cabinet on 26 September, the draft Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) 2024 – 2050 which was considered at that meeting has been developed using a vision led approach.

This has meant that we worked collaboratively with our stakeholder representative groups (councillors through a reference group of Place Scrutiny Committee members, officers, and local stakeholder representatives) to explore how different political, economic, social, technological, and environmental trends might evolve to create different versions of the future in 2050.

The consideration of different future scenarios in developing the draft LTP4, and the potential uncertainties that may arise under each, enables us to move away from the previously applied 'predict and provide' approach to transport planning, which often

favoured the maintenance of the status quo resulting in an emphasis on road based schemes – planning for vehicles - towards considering how we would like the world to look for people and places.

The draft LTP4 preferred future, referred to as ‘Completely Connected Communities’, sets out our future direction for planning for people and places. This preferred future considers the transport infrastructure, services and policy framework that is needed to achieve net zero targets, create healthy places and support for a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable economy within our coastal towns, local centres and villages in more rural areas.

Practically and culturally, the LTP4 and its accompanying Investment Plan, provides the framework for improving people’s transport choices, with a greater emphasis on sustainable transport (walking, wheeling, cycling and use of public transport) for use as part of short or longer journeys, alongside changing people’s travel behaviours. The achievement of this, by the County Council and other partners who will help to deliver the LTP4 strategy, will be funding dependent.

Planning for people and places will also cascade in the modal strategies – local cycling and walking infrastructure plan, bus service improvement plan for example – as they are reviewed and updated. The draft LTP4 planning for people and places approach is also being used by officers in advising the district and boroughs on the direction of the transport policies associated with the development of their local plans.

Therefore, there are already several actions – both practically and culturally - taking place to move towards planning for people and places, with the adoption of our draft LTP4 being the catalyst for us and other partners to achieve this.

B. Does Lead Member for Transport agree that allowing vehicles to drive to the national speed limit on small country roads leaves ESCC open to the charge of irresponsibility?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The vast majority of the rural road network in England, including in East Sussex, are subject to the national speed limit of 60mph for single carriageway roads.

Speed limits should be seen by drivers as the maximum rather than target speed. It is up to the driver to determine the safe and appropriate speed for the conditions of the road. Whilst rural roads are subject to the national speed limit, very often the road conditions will mean that most drivers are travelling at speed significantly less than the speed limit.

ESCC’s speed limit policy PS05/02 aligns to Department of Transport guidance on setting local speed limits. The Department for Transport (DfT) Circular 01/2013 Guidance Setting local speed limits was revised in March 2024, and states, the ‘guidance retains and builds upon many of the underlying principles of DfT Circular 01/2006, but provides additional evidence of the safety and wider benefits of setting

appropriate speed limits.’ Following this revision by the DfT, a review was undertaken of the relevant national guidance issued by the DfT (including the March 2024 revision of Circular 01/2013 and the January 2022 revisions to the Highway Code) and this concluded that adopted Policy PS05/02 continues to reflect national guidance and best practice.

C. Will the Lead Member for Transport commit to consulting with residents on the desire for 20 mph zones in built up areas across the county?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) supports 20mph speed limits where appropriate. Adopted Policy PS05/02 allows for 20mph zones or speed limits to be considered where they are likely to be self-enforcing. An effective and self-enforcing 20mph speed limit can be achieved with signs alone on roads where the mean (average) speed of traffic is below 24mph. On roads where mean speeds are higher, appropriate traffic management/calming measures would need to be introduced.

All road safety concerns that are raised by Members and residents are assessed by a member of the Road Safety Team and where appropriate improvements introduced. When considering how ESCC assesses and prioritises road safety concerns including requests for lower speed limits, it is important to consider not only the Local Speed Limit Policy PS05/02 but also the wider policy and operational context. This includes ESCC’s Local Transport Plan, and the processes and criteria followed when setting the annual Capital Programme for Local Transport Improvements, and the Annual Road Safety, Community Focused Road Safety and Speed Management Programmes.

The Council has a finite amount of funding to develop local transport improvements, and we will continue to ensure that we target our resources to those schemes which will be of greatest benefit to our local communities.

2. Question from Councillor Kathryn Field to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

There is a requirement that footpath maps should be completed by 2030. Is the County Council going to be able to meet this requirement?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The County Council has a duty to maintain and update the Definitive Map and Statement (DMS). The DMS is the legal record of all officially recognised Public Rights of Way (PROWs) in the County. (PROWs are Public Footpaths, Public Bridleways, Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic.)

Any individual can apply to the County Council to have an alleged PROW added to the DMS. That application process is known as a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO). DMMO applications are an evidence-based legal process. Applications are either based on user-based evidence, or historical ‘documentary’ evidence. (Applications can sometimes also fall into both categories.)

- A user-based 'contemporary' DMMO application relies on an applicant demonstrating a period of at least 20-years of public use. Due to the nature of this evidence, these applications rely on living witnesses and are within recent history.
- A documentary-based 'historical' DMMO application relies on documentary archive evidence to prove that a public right of way existed prior to 1949. (The legislation creating the DMS dates from 1949.) Therefore, these applications generally always rely on historical evidence to prove that a public highway existed.

Almost all PROWs run over private land. To give increased certainty to landowners, as of the 1st January 2031, the Government is proposing to 'close' the DMS to 'historical' DMMO applications that rely on pre-1949 evidence. User-based 'contemporary' applications will not be affected by this cut-off date.

As a result, PROW user groups are currently submitting a large number of historical DMMO applications nationally, and ESCC now has a caseload of around 100 to process. Each case is complex and often needs a public inquiry to resolve. Therefore, it can take several years for an individual case to be completed. However, as long as user groups properly submit their historic applications prior to 1st January 2031, then ESCC is obliged to investigate and determine those cases.

Finally, the DMS is a constantly evolving record of PROW, so will never, technically speaking, be complete. Even after 2031, it will still be possible for new PROWs to be recorded and for path diversions to be carried out, for example, to enable planning developments.

3. Question from Councillor Kathryn Field to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

In order to help minimise disruption to communities and businesses, is there a system in place to consult local members and those with local knowledge before road schemes are authorised?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

You will be aware that the law allows utility companies and developers to carry out works on the public highway in order to install new apparatus or to maintain existing apparatus. In emergencies, such as a water or gas main leak or a fault on an electricity or broadband supply, utility companies are allowed by law to start work immediately and to simply notify the Council. For planned maintenance the Council's Network Management Team have a difficult job coordinating over 20,000 Permit applications each year for works on the highway; juggling competing works, diversion routes that impact on other works, avoiding works in close proximity to schools during term times, and trying to accommodate access for residents, businesses and public bus services. They also have to be mindful of the safety of the travelling public and the workforce when agreeing road closures versus traffic light controls, and what the law requires for each. In Councillor Field's own Division, the picture is further complicated by the A21 and the need to consult with National Highways about diversion routes that use the trunk road, and also to accommodate road closures on the A21 where traffic is diverted on to local roads. Taking all of this into consideration, along with the tight timescales to agree and issue Permits, it simply isn't possible to consult with local

Members. Local Members are of course kept informed of all major road works in their Division and can sign up to alerts for all work in their Division on the One. Network website: [Roadworks – live.eastsussexhighways.com](https://www.eastsussexhighways.com)

4. Question from Councillor Carolyn Lambert to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Many residents are frustrated when they see maintenance teams mending potholes but leaving others alongside untouched. They cannot understand why roads are left to continue to deteriorate in this way when early intervention would save money.

Will the Lead Member authorise pothole maintenance teams to mend adjacent potholes when these meet the current criteria for repair, rather than waiting for them to deteriorate further and then having to return, sometimes within days?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Thank you for your question, Cllr Lambert. Whilst I don't get involved in operational matters, I do know that the Highway Stewards are authorised to both use their expertise and judgement on a risk-based approach when determining whether a pothole meet the Council's intervention criteria. This enables the Stewards to call for repairs in particular situations, such as in parts of the road where cycles might ride or on pedestrian crossings where pedestrian cross the road. In all other situations the Highway Stewards are able to call for a pothole (that meets our intervention criteria) to be dealt with alongside any surrounding potholes (that might not be at intervention level) as a larger patch repair. You will recall the Council recently added a further £1.0m to this year's patching programme for precisely that purpose.

5. Question from Councillor Carolyn Lambert to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

A number of roads in the county consist of a tarmac skim over a concrete road. The concrete road maintenance programme is intended to address the fragility of these roads where the tarmac skim quickly wears off leaving damage that does not necessarily meet the pothole repair criteria. This causes frustration for residents who see damaged road surfaces that are simply left unrepaired.

One such area is Hawth Hill in Seaford. Residents regularly complain about potholes in this area although the Highway Steward is aware that this is an area of concern and regularly monitors the estate. It is not only a bus route but home to a large number of older people who rely on public transport.

It appears that the concrete road maintenance programme will not even be available to councillors until later in 2025 so residents and local councillors have no re-assurance that these repairs will be carried out in timely manner.

Will the Lead Member ensure that the concrete road maintenance programme is published alongside the budget papers so that members can be assured that the council is taking the concerns of residents seriously?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The Council has a limited budget for the repair of concrete roads, and the annual programme is published on the East Sussex Highways website: [Planned Maintenance Programme 2024-25 | live.eastsussexhighways.com](https://live.eastsussexhighways.com)

6. Question from Councillor Carolyn Lambert to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

A number of Seaford residents have raised the question of what they describe as a footpath along the A259 from Seaford to the Cuckmere Inn. The path runs along a bank which is now very overgrown although apparently it has been cleared in the past.

Will the Lead Member arrange for this area to be cleared so that pedestrians can walk safely in this area as has clearly been the custom and practice?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

There is no footpath alongside the A259 Eastbourne Road between Seaford and the Cuckmere Inn. The formal route is via a licensed public footpath / cycleway across the fields from (mid-way along) Chyngton Lane down to the footpath that runs between the Cuckmere Inn and the Coastguard Cottages.

7. Question from Councillor Carolyn Lambert to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

The Lead Member will be well aware of the various concerns about the A259. East Sussex County Council has submitted a business plan to the Department for Transport some months ago.

Will the Lead Member provide a progress update?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

As Councillor Lambert will be aware, the County Council commissioned a multi-modal corridor study in autumn 2021 focussed on the section of the A259 Major Road Network (MRN) between Eastbourne and Brighton.

A series of stakeholder workshops were held in October 2021 and January 2022, which firstly considered the evidence base of issues, challenges and opportunities along the corridor and secondly the potential long list of schemes that could be considered for inclusion through the study. Following assessment of the long list of potential schemes including modelling and initial concept designs, the proposed shortlist of walking, cycling, traffic management schemes was presented to stakeholders in July 2023.

In the intervening period between the second and third workshops, the County Council had been successful in securing Bus Service Improvement Plan capital funding to deliver the bus priority measures in the county, with a focus on the A259 corridor. A number of those schemes were identified through the work undertaken during the emerging study. As a consequence, officers also needed to ensure that these bus priority measures and the other walking, cycling and safety interventions identified within the A259 MRN South Coast Corridor study complemented each other.

A Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) related to the proposed shortlist of schemes for the A259 South Coast Corridor was submitted to the Department for Transport in October 2023.

Since the SOBC submission, the Department of Transport, National Highways and Active Travel England have submitted a series of clarification questions through to officers on, for example, the strategic case for the package, the proposed measures themselves, as well as the modelling and economic appraisal underpinning the business case. This reiterative process of clarification questions being asked and officers responding is similar to our experience on other business cases we have submitted to the Department for MRN or large local major scheme funding, with Government decisions from submission taking sometimes up to 12 to 18 months to come through.

If the SOBC is approved, it will then progress to the Outline Business Case stage where the A259 MRN South Coast Corridor package will be subject to further development and assessment as well as stakeholder engagement and public consultation on the detail of the proposed schemes.

It is anticipated that should funding be secured following approval of a Final Business Case, scheme delivery will take place in 2026/27 at the earliest.

8. Question from Councillor Carolyn Lambert to the Leader

Local government has endured central government funding cuts of more than 50% since 2010. Between 2010 and 2020, councils lost 60p out of every £1 they have received from central government. Research by UNISON has shown that councils across England, Wales and Scotland are facing a collective funding shortfall of more than £4bn by the financial year 2024/25 and a cumulative funding gap of £8bn by 2025/26. The last Government's 'levelling up' pots of money did little to help.

Council and school workers kept our communities safe through the pandemic, often putting themselves at considerable risk as they work to protect public health, provide quality housing, ensure our children continue to be educated, and look after older and vulnerable people.

Since 2010, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing at least 25 per cent of their value since 2009/10. Staff have endured the worst cost of living crisis in a generation.

At the same time, workers have experienced ever-increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity. Across the UK, 900,000 jobs have been lost in local government since June 2010 – a reduction of more than 30 per cent. Local government has arguably been hit by more severe job losses than any other part of the public sector. There has been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three-quarters of the local government workforce.

Recent research shows that if the Government were to fully fund the unions' 2024 pay claim, around half of the money would be recouped thanks to increased tax revenue, reduced expenditure on benefits and tax credits, and increased consumer spending in the local economy.

Will the Leader of the Council:

- support the pay claim submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite on behalf of council and school workers for an increase of £3,000 or 10%, whichever is the greater.
- call on the Local Government Association to make urgent representations to central government to fully fund the NJC pay claim.
- write to the Chancellor and Secretary of State to call for a pay increase for local government workers to be funded with new money from central government.

Answer by the Leader

The hard work and dedication of our staff in delivering essential services to our residents is valued by this Council.

The current pay bill for the staff covered by the local government pay award ('Green Book') is approximately £147M for Council employees and approximately £50M for School staff.

The cost of implementing the national Employer's pay offer is £7.1M to Council staff and £2.6M to School staff.

The cost of implementing the pay claim submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite would be an additional £13.1M for Council staff and £3.5M for School staff.

Unlike other public sector pay awards, historically, the pay award for local government staff has not been funded nationally. Any increase to the pay award needs to be considered within the context of the significant financial challenges in relation to the services delivered by local government. Ongoing growth and increasing complexity of demand, along with demographic change and national market conditions have led to significantly increased costs for all Councils, a position which is not sustainable for local government finances. At ESCC in particular, we would simply not be able to bear the cost of the UNISON, GMB and Unite claim in our challenging financial situation.

Nationally, we await details of the new Government's approach to local government funding. The national Budget statement has been set for 30 October and the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in December. We will continue our lobbying work to ensure that Government is fully aware of the financial challenges, as well as making the case for a sustainable funding regime for local government which is appropriately reflective of local need.

9. Question from Councillor Georgia Taylor to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

I am aware that the deadline for organisations to respond to the Local Nature Recover Strategy (LNRS) is in October, so there is still time for local organisations to respond. Please could you tell us how other local strategies that might impact negatively on nature and local eco-systems will be considered, and how the organisations that are developing these are being engaged through this process (e.g. TFSE, Local Transport plan, Local Plans, waste and minerals etc)? How does the Sussex LNRS interact with these other development facing actions (particularly road and buildings development, mining and waste) and ensure that nature and eco-systems, as well as emissions reductions, are prioritised?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

East Sussex County Council has been appointed as the Responsible Authority to develop the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

The deadline you referred to relates to a survey aimed at organisations and community groups (notably those active in nature's recovery) to tell us what their current activities and actions are. This is so that their work and priorities can feed into the development of the LNRS. In particular, the responses to the survey are helping us to establish the priorities for nature recovery in the Strategy area and to inform the types of measures (actions for the delivery of nature recovery) that could be captured in the LNRS, and where these measures could best be targeted to achieve the maximum benefits. The survey opened in February 2024 and is due to close in mid-October. To date we have had responses from 94 organisations and groups to this particular survey. A snapshot of the responses was created in July 2024, at which time we had 85 responses.

The Strategy itself is still in development and will go out to full public consultation prior to final publication, as per the statutory Regulations and Guidance, giving organisations a chance to see how the information they provided has been reflected in the LNRS, and to respond (as well as others who didn't reply to the survey). It is currently anticipated that public consultation will start in Summer 2025. This is due to the need for Supporting Authorities (i.e. all Local Planning Authorities in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove + Natural England) to sign off the draft strategy for consultation (currently programmed for late January, with a minimum statutory 28 days for response). The pre-election period for the County Council elections will then prevent us from going out to consultation until around July.

As part of the development of the Strategy, and again in accordance with the statutory Regulations and Guidance for developing LNRSs, we have undertaken a comprehensive review of published plans, policies and strategies across the LNRS area. This review is also being used to inform the development of the Strategy through, for example, the identification of existing priorities and potential measures.

ESCC is supported by the Supporting Authorities, as above, and a Working Group which comprises representatives from the key sectors and organisations involved in nature's recovery in the County.

The Statutory Guidance recognises that some priorities may be beyond the scope of the LNRS, for example because they are managed by other regulatory frameworks. However, these pressures can still be flagged within the LNRS and we have had a strong steer from our delivery partners that we should do this. In terms of how the LNRS will interact with factors such as Transport Planning etc, under the Environment Act 2021 all public authorities

must “*have regard to*” the LNRS as part of complying with their duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Government is required to provide guidance for local planning authorities on what this means by 01/01/25. Separately, the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 requires Neighbourhood Plans, joint spatial development strategies, Local Plans, Minerals & Waste Plans and supplementary plans to “*take account of any LNRS*”. The relevant sections of the LURA have not yet been commenced (Note: the commencement of a piece of legislation may be determined by a provision of the legislation itself, or it may be determined by a Commencement Order, as is the case here) and form part of wider reforms to the planning system, so this requirement is not yet in force.

We understand that the current Government has stated that they do intend to proceed with these reforms, but timelines are currently uncertain.

10. Question from Councillor Georgia Taylor to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

This question relates to the recently published Grenfell Tower Inquiry Report, which highlighted serious failings in the response of the local authority to the tragic and heartbreaking disaster. While this is about a different council, I believe that there might be important lessons for emergency planning to be learned by all local authorities. For East Sussex there have already been flooding as well as water supply and electricity cuts that have impacted vulnerable people, and we expect these kinds of instances to increase. And we are in the process of cutting the fire service and other services for vulnerable people.

Grenfell Inquiry Panel statement extract - *“Once again, we have found that those who lost their homes as a result of the fire were badly let down by the organisations that should have provided the support they desperately needed. The primary responsibility for that lay with the Council, which, as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act, should have had plans in place to enable it to respond effectively to the emergency. In the event, however, it had failed to put in place suitable plans or provide the training to its staff that was required to enable it to respond effectively to the situation it faced. In addition, its chief executive was ill-suited to taking control of what was undoubtedly a very serious challenge. The Council did not have the capacity to identify those who needed accommodation and other important forms of assistance; nor did it have arrangements in place for communicating with those affected by the disaster or the wider public. As a result, it was not capable of meeting the immediate needs of those who had been displaced from their homes for food and shelter. In the end it was local voluntary and community organisations that filled the gap by providing rest centres and temporary shelter.”* See below for extract from the executive summary and link to the full report.

Question: How will ESCC learn from the deficiencies of RBKC Council emergency planning and structures as well as the wider context and failures of emergency planning that have been detailed in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report to strengthen ESCC emergency planning?

GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY: PHASE 2 REPORT OVERVIEW REPORT of the PUBLIC INQUIRY into the FIRE at GRENFELL TOWER on 14 JUNE 2017

Executive Summary extract.

Full document available here: [Phase 2 report | Grenfell Tower Inquiry](#)

Part 10 Response and recovery (Chapters 98 – 107)

2.103 In the first week after the fire at Grenfell Tower the response of the government and RBKC was muddled, slow, indecisive and piecemeal. RBKC's systems and leadership were wholly inadequate to the task of handling an incident of such magnitude and gravity, involving, as it did, mass homelessness and mass fatalities. The resilience machinery in London and within central government was not flexible enough and took too long to move into action.

2.104 Certain aspects of the response demonstrated a marked lack of respect for human decency and dignity and left many of those immediately affected feeling abandoned by authority and utterly helpless. RBKC should have done more to cater for those from diverse backgrounds, in particular those many residents of the Muslim faith who were observing Ramadan at the time. They were left feeling that the council had no regard for their cultural and religious needs. For many, their only source of support was local voluntary organisations, which moved in to help and provide for basic needs where those in authority had failed. Many who had particular religious, cultural or social needs suffered a significant degree of discrimination in ways that could and would have been prevented if the guidance had been properly followed.

2.105 The response to the disaster was inadequate principally because RBKC did not have an effective plan to deal with the displacement of a large number of people from their homes and such plan as it did have did not make effective use of the TMO. It had made no contingency arrangements for obtaining a large amount of emergency accommodation at short notice and had no arrangements for identifying those who had been forced to leave their homes or for communicating with them. Arrangements for obtaining and disseminating reliable information were also lacking.

2.106 One reason for the lack of effective plans was that RBKC had failed to train its staff adequately. They did not have a sufficient understanding of the importance of resilience or sufficient commitment to it. Exercises had not been held regularly and staff had not been required to attend the training sessions run by the London Resilience Group. Deficiencies that were well known to senior management had not been corrected.

2.107 Over a number of years, RBKC had allowed the capacity of its staff to respond to major emergencies to decline. There had been clear warnings to senior management that it did not have enough trained staff to enable it to carry out its responsibilities as a Category 1 responder and that contingency plans had not been practised enough. As a consequence, RBKC lacked the people it needed to respond to the fire effectively, both for the purposes of staffing the borough emergency communication centre and to deal with those who needed help. It was therefore ill-equipped to deal with a serious emergency. None of that was due to any lack of financial resources.

2.108 RBKC's chief executive, Nicholas Holgate, was not capable of taking effective control of the situation and mobilising support of the right kind without delay. He had no clear plan and did not receive all the information he needed. He was not well

suited to dealing with the crisis that was unfolding in front of him and lacked a strong group of officers to whom he could delegate responsibility for some aspects of the response. He was reluctant to take advice from those with greater experience and was unduly concerned for RBKC's reputation.

2.109 RBKC had failed to integrate the TMO into its emergency planning. It should have realised that the TMO's knowledge of its buildings and their occupants could play an important part in the response to any disaster affecting any part of its housing stock.

2.110 The arrangements designed to promote the resilience of London as a whole did not provide for an experienced leader to take over the direction of the response to a disaster that had occurred within the confines of a single borough except by agreement with the chief executive of that borough. In the event, Nicholas Holgate was persuaded under pressure from a senior government official to hand over control to John Barradell, but not until two days after the fire.

2.111 The training of resilience personnel in London was piecemeal and not co-ordinated; it was also voluntary and not subject to any external assessment or validation. That contributed to a situation in which the capacity of individual local authorities to respond to emergencies varied between boroughs.

2.112 The government began monitoring the response to the fire at an early stage, but its ability to take effective steps to provide practical assistance was undermined by a shortage of reliable information and by the restricted nature of its powers to intervene. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 did not give it the power to take control of the response without invoking the powers under sections 5 or 7. Those powers are far-reaching but cumbersome in operation and not well suited to taking control of the response when a local authority is failing.

2.113 The TMO attracted criticism from many quarters, but in relation to its response to the fire much of it was unfair. Although its staff should have received more training in how to respond to an emergency, they threw themselves into the response and helped to provide support, insofar as they were equipped to do so. Some of those within government who criticised the TMO did not properly understand its position or the scope of its powers, and it was unfairly tainted by association with RBKC. Many of the difficulties encountered in returning residents to flats in the Walkways were not of its making. The TMO teams that went to some of the rest centres on 14 June 2017 to give what help they could are to be commended for their willingness to become directly involved and for the efforts they made at what was a very difficult time.

2.114 Those who emerge from the events with the greatest credit, and whose contribution only emphasised the inadequacies of the official response, are the members of the local community. With the support of local voluntary organisations, they provided support in the hours immediately following the fire when the authorities were conspicuous by their absence. Indeed, one of RBKC's failings was to make too little use of the local voluntary organisations and to fail to have adequate standing arrangements to enable them to be called on in the event of a major emergency.

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Local Authorities have clearly defined responsibilities with regards to civil emergencies which are set out in the Civil Contingencies Act, these include a responsibility to assess the risk of emergencies occurring, put in place emergency plans and arrangements to advise the public in the case of an emergency. In East Sussex, we have the East Sussex Resilience and Emergency Partnership, a partnership arrangement between East Sussex County Council, the five District and Borough Councils and East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service. Member organisations fund a central emergency planning team to support each organisation to meet their statutory requirements under the Civil Contingencies Act. In three tier authority areas, such as in East Sussex, the responsibility for opening and managing temporary shelters, such as rest centres, sits with the District and Borough Councils. Each District and Borough Council have Rest Centre Plans in place and through the ESREP partnership, we work closely together with our partners to regularly review, train and test these plans. This includes ensuring that the data we hold on vulnerable people is shared in the most effective and efficient way.

The County Council is also a member of the Sussex Resilience Forum and contributes to the Forum as a Category 1 Responder under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004). The Sussex Resilience Forum maintains various plans, including an Evacuation Plan, Incident Communications Plan and Identifying Vulnerable People Plan, in order to co-ordinate multi-agency support to a major incident. These plans are reviewed and exercised regularly. For example, East and West Sussex Councils are leading a multi-agency, Sussex wide evacuation and shelter exercise, which is scheduled for this coming Winter.

We will of course keep all learning from the Grenfell Inquiry under review and will work with our Partners to update plans where needed in light of this learning.