

MINUTES

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 24 SEPTEMBER 2025 at 10.00 am

Present Councillors Roy Galley (Chairman), Abul Azad (Vice Chairman), Sam Adeniji, Matthew Beaver, Colin Belsey, Nick Bennett, Bob Bowdler, Charles Clark, Chris Collier, Anne Cross, Godfrey Daniel, Johnny Denis, Penny di Cara, Kathryn Field, Gerard Fox, Nuala Geary, Keith Glazier, OBE, Alan Hay, Julia Hilton, Ian Hollidge, Stephen Holt, Johanna Howell, Eleanor Kirby-Green, Carolyn Lambert, Tom Liddiard, Philip Lunn, James MacCleary, Wendy Maples, Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood, Carl Maynard, Matthew Milligan, Paul Redstone, Christine Robinson, Pat Rodohan, Phil Scott, Daniel Shing, Stephen Shing, Alan Shuttleworth, Bob Standley, Colin Swansborough, Georgia Taylor, David Tutt, John Ungar and Brett Wright

31. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2025

31.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the County Council meeting held on 8 July 2025.

32. Apologies for absence

32.1 Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Claire Dowing, Chris Dowling, Sarah Osborne, Steve Murphy and Trevor Webb.

33. Chairman's business

COUNCILLOR PETER PRAGNELL

33.1 The Chairman began with the sad news of the death of Councillor Peter Pragnell. Councillor Pragnell was first elected to Hastings Borough Council in 2000 where he served until 2023 representing both St Helen's ward and Conquest ward during his time. Councillor Pragnell served as the Leader for Hasting Borough Council between 2006 and 2010. As a County Councillor, Councillor Pragnell was elected to represent the Ashdown and Conquest division in 2009. Councillor Pragnell served as Chairman from 2018 to 2019 and again from 2021 to 2024. He served on multiple outside bodies during his time at the County Council including the East Sussex Fire Authority. The Leader of the Council and the other group leaders offered condolences and shared memories of Councillor Pragnell. The Council stood for a moment's silence as a mark of respect to Councillor Pragnell.

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CHAIRMAN'S ACTIVITIES

33.2 The Chairman reported that he had attended a number of engagements since the last County Council meeting including: a combined visit with the Mayor of Hastings, Dieppe Raid Commemorative event hosted by the Mayor of Newhaven, the Eastbourne and District Samaritans AGM, and Dieppe Commemorations hosted by the Mayor of Dieppe. The Chairman also attended Heathfield Full Fibre Broadband Celebration, Battle of Britain Dinner hosted by the Royal Society of St George (Seahaven Branch), and the East Sussex Healthcare Trust AGM.

33.3 The Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman for his ongoing support, including his attendance at the East Sussex Philippine Festival, Bexhill Day hosted by the Mayor of Bexhill, Grand Opening of Tuk Tuk Hastings hosted by Hastings Pan Asian Takeaway, and the second anniversary celebration at MLC Ltd in Bexhill. The Vice Chairman also attended the 20th anniversary of the Bexhill Classic Car Show hosted by 100 Motoring Club, Civic service in Peacehaven hosted by the Peacehaven mayor, and the Battle of Britain Parade hosted by the Mayor of Bexhill.

PETITIONS

33.4 The following petition were presented before the meeting by Councillor Wright:

Name of Presenting Councillor	Subject of Petition
Councillor Wright	Introduction of traffic calming measures around the village Meads

PRAYERS

33.5 The Chairman thanked Reverend Ben Brown, St Anne's Church, Lewes for leading the prayers before the meeting.

34. Questions from members of the public

34.1 Copies of the question from a member of the public and the answer from Councillor Glazier OBE, Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development, are attached to these minutes. One supplementary question was asked and responded to.

35. Declarations of Interest

35.1 The Chairman stated that all Members have been granted with a dispensation, in relation to their membership of the Council and any membership of a district or borough council under the Localism Act 2011 and the Council's Code of Conduct to enable them to participate and vote on the items on the agenda which relate to devolution and local government reorganisation.

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35.2 The following members declared a personal interest in item 6 on the agenda as follows:

Member	Position giving rise to interest	Whether interest was prejudicial
Councillor Chris Collier	Cabinet Member for Lewes District Council	No
Councillor Johnny Denis	Cabinet Member for Lewes District Council	No
Councillor Johanna Howell	Member of Wealden District Council	No
Councillor Julia Hilton	Deputy Leader of Hastings Borough Council	No
Councillor Wendy Maples	Cabinet Member for Lewes District Council Member of Lewes Town Council	No
Councillor Christine Robinson	Deputy Leader for Lewes District Council	No
Councillor Pat Rodohan	Member of Eastbourne Borough Council	No

35.3 Councillor Ungar declared a personal interest in item 6 as having a member of family who works as a local government officer in the county of East Sussex. He did not consider this to be prejudicial.

36. Reports

36.1 The Chairman of the County Council, having called over the reports set out in the agenda, reserved the following for discussion:

Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development report – paragraph 1 (Local Government Reorganisation: Proposal for a single tier of local government across East Sussex), paragraph 2 (Devolution Update) and paragraph 3 (Update on Lane Rental Scheme following implementation).

NON-RESERVED PARAGRAPHS

36.2 On the motion of the Chairman of the County Council, the Council adopted those paragraphs in the report that had not been reserved for discussion as follows:

Governance report - Paragraph 1 (Amendment to the Constitution – Scheme of Delegation to Officers).

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37. Report of the Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

Paragraph 1 - Local Government Reorganisation: Proposal for a single tier of local government across East Sussex

37.1 Councillor Glazier moved the reserved paragraph.

37.2 The following amendment was moved by Councillor Collier and seconded by Councillor Denis.

(delete the following wording)

~~★ (1) Note the business case setting out the proposal for a single tier of local Government in East Sussex; and~~

~~— (2) Express views on the proposals ahead of consideration by Cabinet.~~

[replace with the following wording]

The County Council agrees to endorse the One East Sussex proposal and recommends that Cabinet agrees to its submission to Government.

37.3 The amendment was CARRIED.

Paragraph 2 – Devolution update

37.4 Councillor Glazier moved the reserved paragraph.

37.5 The following amendment was moved by Councillor Tutt and seconded by Councillor Field.

(delete the following wording)

~~Express the devolution update as set out in the report~~

[replace with the following wording]

This Council recognises the Government's commitment to devolution and calls upon the Government to hold the election using the Supplementary Vote (SV) system.

37.6 The amendment was LOST.

37.7 Council agreed to note the devolution update.

Paragraph 3 – Update on the Lane Rental Scheme following implementation

37.8 Councillor Glazier moved the reserved paragraph.

37.9 The motion, including the recommendations, was CARRIED after debate.

38. Notice of Motion proposing a delay in the Mayor election to 2027

38.1 The following motion was moved by Councillor Taylor and seconded by Councillor Denis:

The Westminster Government has announced its intention to return to the Supplementary Vote (SV) system for mayoral elections, which compared to First Past The Post (FPTP) better reflects the preferences and values of residents particularly when electing a single powerful figure across a large constituency. The government has announced that mayoral elections will revert to the SV system as soon as they can get that change instituted, but this is likely to be too late for the 2026 elections. This would put Sussex among the disadvantaged counties that are in the fast track with our residents electing a mayor under an outdated and problematic electoral system.

When Sussex decided to join the priority programme there was no suggestion that there would be any democratic disadvantage from being at the front of the queue, (notwithstanding some of us were concerned about the haste and doubted that there was anything to gain).

It now appears that there will be distinct disadvantages as the process for Sussex is too hurried for the government to get the necessary statutory instruments properly in place. We should not have to implement a new mayoral authority under a poor and unrepresentative system. We therefore propose that the administration should work with West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council to seek to delay the Mayoral election to the 2027 electoral cycle.

Advantages of delaying the Mayor election to 2027 are:

- It will coincide with the anticipated unitary elections for West and East Sussex, so the combined costs will be lower and there will be a higher turnout for both.*
- It will be more equitable across the country for all coming mayor elections to have the same voting system.*
- It is better for democracy as there will be more certainty for residents and political parties locally, and more time to communicate clarity about what the devolution and government reorganisation mean for the local areas.*

This council therefore requests the Leader:

- 1. to approach West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council to open negotiations on a change to the schedule for implementing devolution in order to better reflect the preferences of residents in electing a Mayor; and*
- 2. to work together with West Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council with a view to approaching the minister for local government to request to revise the timetable and/or withdraw from the priority programme and undertake the Devolution process according to a more appropriate timetable.*

38.2 The motion was LOST after debate.

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39. Questions from County Councillors

39.1 The following members asked questions of the Lead Cabinet Members indicated, and they responded:

Questioner	Respondent	Subject
Councillor Field	Councillor Claire Dowling	Public rights of way.
Councillor Lambert	Councillor Glazier	The raising of flags on ESCC infrastructure
Councillor Swansborough	Councillor Bennett	The CIPFA review of ESCC.
Councillor Adeniji	Councillor Claire Dowling	Fairways Road, Seaford

39.2 There were two oral questions from members to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment. In the absence of the Lead Member, it was agreed that oral questions should be submitted in writing to Councillor Claire Dowling for a response.

39.3 There were no written questions received from Councillors.

THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 12.45pm

The reports referred to are included in the minute book

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COUNTY COUNCIL – 24 SEPTEMBER 2025

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question to the Leader of the Council from Mr. Callan – Etchingham, East Sussex

The Queensway Gateway Road connection is at last, nearing completion. It is known for being years behind schedule. It is also substantially over budget. What many have forgotten is that this was not the original planned junction. This was defined as a temporary solution because Sea Change Sussex were unable to deliver the original budgeted and planned version.

Too many attempts have been made to deny accountability. ESCC has **always** had responsibility for the delivery of this project. It is set out in the contractually binding Service Level Agreement signed by ESCC and Essex County Council as the accountable body holding Central Government funds for SELEP.

I trust there will be no disingenuous denial of these publicly recorded facts.

When responding to a resident at the last Council meeting the Leader refused to give a latest cost estimate for fear of being criticised if it was wrong. Two months on and with all the accounting resources available to ESCC at his disposal he must now have a reliable latest cost forecast he feels confident he can share with the Council Taxpayer. The only reasons for not publishing now must be incompetence or embarrassment.

The disruption, delays and costs to motorists both private and commercial and businesses are enormous. The small town of Battle has suffered huge traffic flows including HGVs with no other choice than to use Battle as a diversion for month after month after month. Travelling to the Conquest from the West has been a logistical nightmare unless the appointment was between 10.30 and 14.30.

It is insufficient for ESCC spokesman to have made bland apologies based on the theme - 'it will all be ok soon, just be patient'.

No one can deny this project has been an unmitigated shambles from start to (almost) finish. The question is, why? Officers stay quiet other than to deny accountability. Councillors of all parties seem to be cowed into silence and claim they are trying to get answers (unsuccessfully) behind the scenes.

This is not good enough and the Leader has enough experience and is big enough person to acknowledge this.

QUESTION

The QGR project has been a shambles. As Local Government Reorganisation approaches and Unitary Authority Status increases, the scope of such projects will increase. It is vital REAL lessons are learned from this shambles to prevent anything similar ever happening again. The only way this can be achieved is by way of public examination by a Scrutiny Committee sitting and hearing all evidence in open session, including the giving and acceptance of witness statements from the public.

The Leader is asked to establish such an inquiry and in the answer to this question define the Terms of Reference and commencement date of the inquiry.

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"Will the Leader establish such an inquiry, and in doing so define the Terms of Reference and commencement date of the inquiry?"

Richard Callan – Etchingham, East Sussex

ESCC responses to both the statements made and the question from Mr Callan

A) On Responsibility for delivery of the project:

East Sussex County Council had contractual responsibilities as the Local Accountable Body to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Fund programme. This included ensuring the completion of projects, whether delivered directly or by third parties, for which government funding had been received. As a result, the County Council had a formal agreement with SELEP and a back-to-back agreement with the delivery sponsor, Sea Change Sussex to complete the works.

As the project was not fully completed by Sea Change Sussex an options appraisal exercise was undertaken, to identify the best way forward to complete the Queensway Gateway Road development and a paper was presented to the Lead Member for approval decision on 14 March 2024. The recommendation was for the County Council to undertake the works for the final phases and instruct its own highways contractor, Balfour Beatty Living Places, to complete the development and open the road to the public. Those works are on public highway land and carried out under the permitted development rights as the Highway Authority.

B) On the Temporary Solution to approved scheme:

The original roundabout design for the final phase and connection to the A21 was replaced with a signalised junction due to land acquisition challenges. The revised scheme uses permitted development rights as the Highway Authority under the Town and Country Planning Act (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 and when the County Council elected to take over responsibility for delivery on 14 March 2024, the decision was taken to complete the project with a signalised junction which has received the approval of National Highways and the County Council. Additional planning permission was granted for a footway/cycleway on Beauharrow Road on 19 March 2025 (Ref: HS/3503/CC).

C) On the costs of the scheme:

Construction of the Queensway Gateway Road project is still ongoing; at this stage, final construction costs are subject to change due to site additional complexity from site discovery, resource changes, and final as-built construction requirements. As such, the County Council cannot provide a final account or provide an ongoing commentary on financial costs but confirms that the project is following its planned expenditure profile. Final project costs will be known after completion and any budget reconciliation work.

D) On costs to motorists and businesses

The Queensway Gateway Road project has required the use of traffic management measures and diversionary routes to ensure safe delivery of the scheme and to meet essential health and safety requirements on site. It is of course regrettable that these measures may have caused disruption and inconvenience to residents and local businesses.

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As the works take place on the region's strategic road network, it is almost inevitable that introducing any traffic management needed to deliver the project may inherently have some impact on public and commercial traffic movement.

The County Council, as the highway authority, is not obliged to pay compensation for traffic disruption or loss of business during the carrying out of road works or infrastructure projects nor does it have the funding to do so. That being said, these works, when completed, will ultimately deliver long term benefits for residents, visitors and businesses helping to improve connectivity, accessibility and economic growth.

E) Lessons Learnt and a request for public examination/inquiry by a Scrutiny Committee.

At this stage we are focused on completing the last phase of this project and all the County Council's resources for the project are focused on achieving this. Once the road has been completed and all construction operations have been ceased and the Council's contractors have exited from the site, as part of our procedures in closing out the activity on this project, and in common with other similar projects, we undertake post project appraisals to inform future projects. Scrutiny committee may wish to consider additional appraisals or review as part of their work programme.

END