

Communities, Economy & Transport – Q1 2025/26

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

Economy and environment

Employability and Skills

The Skills East Sussex Engineering Task Group delivered engineering clubs at schools in Hastings in Q1. We also procured partners to deliver eight Skills Bootcamp courses during 2025/26. Delivery of the Bootcamps is scheduled to start in Q2. We are expecting to achieve the targets for the year against both elements of this measure (**ref i**).

225 Industry Champions were supporting schools and colleges with activities such as career talks and Open Doors workplace visits, at the end of Q1. 334 pupils attended Open Doors visits during Q1. A celebration event for Industry Champions was held in June 2025, to thank them for offering over 1,800 young people from 35 schools/colleges 152 Open Doors visits between September 2024 and July 2025.

Working with colleagues in West Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council, we are currently drafting a Get Sussex Working Plan for submission to the Government in Q2. The plan will have a pan-Sussex overview and 3 implementation plans, one for each authority.

Skills East Sussex celebrated a decade of working to improve local employment and skills levels and boost economic prosperity in East Sussex in Q1. As the county's strategic body for employment and skills, Skills East Sussex has grown from a modest local partnership into a nationally recognised model of best practice. Work over the last decade has included:

- securing over £60m of additional funding for the delivery of employment and skills initiatives and capital infrastructure
- launching six industry sector task groups
- establishing one of the UK's first Career Hubs, which now supports dozens of schools with programmes such as Open Doors, ICAN Careers Fairs and Steps to Success
- developing adult learning and employment programmes such as Moving on Up, Support into Work and Multiply

Apprenticeships

Q1 has seen 41 new apprentice starts and we are now spending, on average, over £100,000 of Apprenticeship Levy funding on apprenticeships monthly. The majority of new apprenticeship starts within the Council have been for management apprenticeship qualifications and within Children's Services for front line care staff. In line with central government changes to the criteria for eligible use of the Levy, enrolments for Level 7 senior leader masters degree apprenticeships are being discontinued at the end of 2025 for anyone over the age of 22 years old.

The Government has recently released a programme of 'Skills Boot Camps' and we are currently working through our approach to ensure that we make the best use of these without detrimentally impacting on the Council's Levy spend.

Cultural investment and recovery

The East Sussex, Brighton & Hove, and West Sussex Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) has launched the ['How to Sell Sussex to Visitors' toolkit](#). This project was launched in response to the 2021 Sussex Visitor Economy Baseline Review, which identified the need for a clear, unified identity for Sussex. The LVEP has a goal to help grow the visitor economy from £5 billion to £7.5 billion. The Toolkit is supported by a [graphic language document](#) which will be used for joint campaigns. In addition, a series of photography assets are available. With numerous consumer-facing brands already active in Sussex's visitor economy, the primary aim of this project is not to replace these brands, but to promote the broader use of consistent Sussex messaging. A

comprehensive plan to promote the toolkit with the help of the LVEP Advisory Board and Destination Forum is in progress. The resources are being shared with stakeholders, along with a set of social media templates for Sussex Day and English Wine Week.

An [Experience Sussex](#) tourism digital marketing plan is now in place and a campaign on Expedia in Q1 saw almost 1,400 travellers book to visit and over 154 room nights secured. 200 East Sussex businesses are now listed on the Experience Sussex website, and there was a 31% increase in users of the site in Q1 2025/26, when compared to Q4 2024/25.

Business Support

67 businesses in East Sussex were supported through business support programmes in Q1. 47 of these were supported through the Growth Hub, 17 through Newhaven Business Grants and 3 through Rural Business Grants. The support has led to increased profitability, new jobs and new product development.

Environment and climate change

We continue to work both across the organisation and with partners across a range of environment and climate change areas. This included:

- finalising the climate change adaptation toolkit, which will be rolled out to 3 services during 2025/26
- continuing discussions with GB Energy about options for securing third party funding for rooftop solar panels on grant-maintained schools
- continuing to provide environmental advice to local planning authorities in East Sussex
- assessing the tenders for the fourth round of Sussex Solar Together, which will be available to residents in autumn 2025
- continuing to host the [Sussex Nature Partnership](#) and the [Sussex Air Quality Partnership](#)
- continuing to develop the local nature recovery strategy for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove, which is currently planned to be published by early 2026

Planning

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

Highways, transport and waste

Highways improvements and road condition

7,080 potholes were repaired in Q1, with 4,903 of these being carriageway potholes; the remainder were primarily footway potholes. We completed 42 road improvement schemes in Q1 to improve the condition of the roads.

Following the exceptionally high percentage of unclassified roads reported as requiring maintenance in 2024/25 further work was undertaken to determine the underlying issues. This validation work raised questions around the accuracy of the condition survey that had been undertaken. A piece of work looking at a sample of the roads that had been surveyed was commissioned from a different highway condition survey contractor, TRL Ltd, to assess the validity of the original results. During Q1 we received the results of this validation work which indicate that the original survey did overestimate the percentage of unclassified roads requiring maintenance. We have discussed these findings with the Department for Transport who have agreed that, due to the data quality issues identified, this result will not be included in their national statistics on unclassified road condition.

As a result of the issues identified it is recommended that the outturn for Q4 2024/25 is updated from 31% to 'not available' in public documentation, including the 2025/26 Council Plan (**ref ii**).

We have not renewed the contract with XAIS, the contractor who was commissioned to carry out the 2024/25 survey, and have commissioned TRL Ltd to do the 2025/26 survey. We are confident that following this change, the issues experienced with last year's survey will not be encountered in future. Each year we assess 50% of the unclassified road network, with 100% of the road network assessed within a two-year period. This goes above the DfT expectation that local authorities will assess their entire road network over a maximum four-year period. The outturns reported are based on combining the results of the surveys from the latest two years. As the survey undertaken in 2024/25 is of insufficient quality to be used the DfT has agreed that we can use the survey results from 2022/23, which looked at the same roads, to calculate our outturn for 2025/26 in the national statistics.

It is proposed that, while this approach is not ideal, in the absence of a suitable alternative, that this is used for reporting against the Council Plan measure for 2025/26. For context, of the 50% of the roads assessed in 2022/23, 16% required maintenance.

Road safety

Planning for the road safety schemes to be constructed during 2025/26 continued in Q1, with 5 schemes scheduled to be completed in Q2.

The Council runs courses aimed at giving children and adults the skills they need for riding their bikes on the road. We delivered 140 Bikeability courses to 1,211 individuals in Q1. 130 'Wheels for All' sessions were delivered to 1,617 attendees in Q1.

Transport and parking

£18.5m of capital funds were allocated to bus priority measures in East Sussex as part of the Government's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). 5 bus priority schemes across Eastbourne, Newhaven and Peacehaven were identified, and a public consultation on all schemes took place in summer 2023. 3 of the 5 schemes are progressing into detailed design with construction to follow in 2026/27. In Q4 2024/25, a Project Adjustment Request was approved by the Department for Transport to transfer funds from 2 of the bus priority measures to the Exceat bridge project. Approval to reallocate these funds was given by Cabinet in Q1 2025/26. The Council has allocated the 2025/26 BSIP capital funding to the Newhaven bus priority scheme. To meet DfT programme targets the scheme has been split into 2 phases, the Drove phase and the Denton Corner phase. The Denton Corner phase is progressing into detailed design with construction scheduled to follow in 2026/27. The Drove phase is still to be scheduled. We aim to deliver the Telscombe Cliffs to Peacehaven bus priority scheme at the earliest opportunity if future BSIP funding is available.

Following approval by the Department for Transport and the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles, the Council has received the full allocation of £4.441 million from the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund, which will support the delivery of on-street electric vehicle charge points across the county. A tender for the procurement of a Chargepoint Operator was published in mid-April, with bids due back by the end of June. Following a period of evaluation and approval, we expect to award the tender in Q2/Q3.

Waste

The 2024/25 outturn (reported a quarter in arrears) for the amount of waste re-used, recycled or composted or used beneficially was 55%. Although total household waste has continued to increase, the recycling and reuse figures have also increased, meaning we met our target for the year.

Rights of Way (RoW) and Countryside Sites

We completed 95% of high priority maintenance work on schedule in Q1. The proactive annual clearance programme has started and the dry weather in Q1 has also enabled bridge projects to begin.

Communities

Trading Standards

Trading Standards made 45 active interventions in Q1 to protect vulnerable people, including installing call blockers and CCTV for vulnerable people who have been repeatedly targeted by scammers. 63 businesses received training or advice from Trading Standards in Q1. This included advice on food standards labelling following notifications from the Food Standards Agency and advice on product safety and trademarks, in particular in response to a national wave of counterfeit Labubu dolls.

Libraries

635 IT for You sessions were attended in Q1. The Library service continues to recruit volunteers to support the sessions. There were 501 enrolments on Family Learning Programmes in Q1, to help people develop their English, maths and language skills.

Revenue Budget Summary

The CET revenue budget is £76.247m and is forecast to overspend by £93k. The largest overspend is in Highways where the cost of electricity for streetlighting and depots is much higher than budgeted (**ref vi**). The underspend in Planning and Environment is in Transport Development Planning where there are staff vacancies and additional s278/s38 income contributions (**ref vii**). The underspending in Communities (**ref v**), and Customer, Library and Registration (**ref iv**) is mostly due to staff vacancies. It is likely that £83k of the planned 2025/26 savings will not be achieved this year (**ref iii**).

Capital Programme Summary

The CET capital programme has a gross budget of £60.245m and there is slippage of £8.096m, overspend of £244k and spend in advance of £13k. The slippage is across the two Bus Service Improvement Plan schemes where project staff sickness has resulted in delays in the delivery of critical tasks. Action has been taken to try and accelerate spend on the projects (**ref ix and x**). The overspend is mostly due to ongoing archaeology on the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road scheme (**ref viii**).

Performance exceptions (Q1 – RAG status Red, Amber, and amendment)**Priority – Driving sustainable economic growth**

Performance measure	Outturn 24/25	Target 25/26	RAG Q1 25/26	RAG Q2 25/26	RAG Q3 25/26	RAG Q4 25/26	Q1 outturn	Note ref
Deliver East Sussex Skills priorities for 2021-2026	a) Delivered seven interventions that meet the Skills East Sussex priorities b) Delivered fourteen embedded numeracy interventions	a) Deliver six interventions that meet the Skills East Sussex priorities b) Eight Level 3 sector related Skills Bootcamp courses delivered	A				a) 1 intervention delivered b) 0 Bootcamp interventions delivered	i

Performance update 2024/25 outturn**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	2024/25 outturn	Note ref
Percentage of Unclassified roads requiring maintenance	17%	25%	G	G	G	R	Recommended amendment from: '31%' To 'Not Available'	ii

Savings exceptions 2025/26 (£'000)

Service description	Original Target For 2025/26	Target including items c/f from previous year(s)	Achieved in-year	Will be achieved, but in future years	Cannot be achieved	Note ref
Trading Standards	94	94	94	-	-	
Road Safety	18	18	18	-	-	
Registration Service	119	119	119	-	-	
Library – Adult learning	92	92	92	-	-	
Library - Stock	100	100	100	-	-	
Parking – on Street	110	855	855	-	-	
Parking - Other	410	410	410	-	-	
Parking - Rother DC	28	28	-	28	-	
Waste – Booking system	50	50	50	-	-	
Waste	65	65	65	-	-	
Rights of Way and Countryside Sites	48	48	48	-	-	
Highways	50	50	50	-	-	
Economy Division (Service-Wide)	369	369	314	55	-	
Total Savings	1,553	2,298	2,215	83	0	
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹			0	0	0	
Total Savings and Permanent Changes	0	0	2,215	83	0	iii

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total	Note Ref
Parking Rother DC	-	28	28	
Economy	55	-	55	
Total	55	28	83	

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 2025/26 (£'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	6,310	(3,186)	3,124	6,298	(3,175)	3,123	12	(11)	1	
Customer and Library Services	9,642	(4,115)	5,527	9,554	(4,134)	5,420	88	19	107	iv
Communities	3,242	(940)	2,302	3,055	(900)	2,155	187	(40)	147	v
Transport & Operational Services	124,699	(79,780)	44,919	124,832	(79,885)	44,947	(133)	105	(28)	
Highways	22,097	(4,993)	17,104	22,787	(5,162)	17,625	(690)	169	(521)	vi
Economy	2,477	(550)	1,927	2,946	(1,019)	1,927	(469)	469	-	
Planning and Environment	5,832	(4,488)	1,344	5,765	(4,622)	1,143	67	134	201	vii
Total CET	174,299	(98,052)	76,247	175,237	(98,897)	76,340	(938)	845	(93)	

Capital programme 2025/26 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget Q1	Actual to date Q1	Projected 2025/26	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	212	-	212	-	-	-	-	
Gypsy and Traveller Site Refurbishment	700	700	137	53	137	-	-	-	-	
Peacehaven Library	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Libraries	5,139	5,139	489	1	489	-	-	-	-	
Broadband	33,800	33,800	338	15	338	-	-	-	-	
Bexhill and Hastings Link Road	126,247	128,347	-	-	200	(200)	(200)	-	-	viii
BHLR Complementary Measures	1,800	1,800	132	3	132	-	-	-	-	
Economic Intervention Fund	8,884	8,884	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Economic Intervention Fund - Loans	3,000	3,000	22	9	35	(13)	-	-	(13)	
Community Focused Road Safety Interventions	750	750	422	23	422	-	-	-	-	
Safer Roads Fund A2100	840	840	864	-	864	-	-	-	-	
Climate Emergency Works	8,859	8,903	242	33	286	(44)	(44)	-	-	
Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation	4,891	4,891	840	17	840	-	-	-	-	
Flood Management SuDS	600	600	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	
Newhaven Port Access Road	23,271	23,271	28	3	28	-	-	-	-	
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	4,541	4,541	500	-	500	-	-	-	-	
Real Time Passenger Information	3,181	3,181	267	(18)	267	-	-	-	-	
Bus Service Improvement Plan	18,500	18,500	5,877	155	1,281	4,596	-	4,596	-	ix
BSIP Passenger Transport	3,815	3,815	183	282	183	-	-	-	-	
Bus Service Improvement Plan 2025-26	4,555	4,555	4,555	-	1,055	3,500	-	3,500	-	x
PAX Software System	37	37	5	-	5	-	-	-	-	
Queensway Gateway Road	3,313	3,313	470	365	470	-	-	-	-	
Hastings and Bexhill Movement & Access Package	9,583	9,583	2,346	150	2,346	-	-	-	-	

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget Q1	Actual to date Q1	Projected 2025/26	Variation (Over) / under Q1 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
Eastbourne/South Wealden Walking & Cycling Package	6,936	6,936	1,892	21	1,892	-	-	-	-	
Hailsham/Polegate/Eastbourne Movement & Access Corridor	2,251	2,251	310	19	310	-	-	-	-	
Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package A	6,936	6,936	2,290	33	2,290	-	-	-	-	
Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package B	5,454	5,454	4,328	305	4,328	-	-	-	-	
Other Integrated Transport Schemes	66,646	66,646	4,063	254	4,063	-	-	-	-	
A22 Corridor Package	3,393	3,393	1,112	274	1,112	-	-	-	-	
A22 North of Hailsham	118	118	242	56	242	-	-	-	-	
Community Match Fund	780	780	397	39	397	-	-	-	-	
Emergency Active Travel - Tranche 2	438	438	403	18	403	-	-	-	-	
Area-wide traffic management scheme – Schools Streets	200	200	154	-	154	-	-	-	-	
ATF Eastbourne Liveable Town Centre	274	274	117	50	117	-	-	-	-	
Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections	9,689	9,689	772	(82)	772	-	-	-	-	
Exceat Bridge	10,591	10,591	2,587	141	2,587	-	-	-	-	
Queensway Depot Development	1,956	1,956	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	
Urban Tree Challenge	262	262	15	2	15	-	-	-	-	
Core - Highways Structural Maintenance	499,175	499,175	16,667	5,064	16,667	-	-	-	-	
Visibly Better Roads	5,800	5,800	248	(6)	248	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Bridge Assessment Strengthening	38,785	38,785	3,480	253	3,480	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Street Lighting - Life Expired Equipment	39,248	39,248	2,596	21	2,596	-	-	-	-	
Core - Street Lighting - SALIX scheme	2,961	2,961	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Rights of Way Surface Repairs and Bridge Replacement	10,417	10,417	642	130	642	-	-	-	-	
Total CET Gross (Planned Programme)	979,712	981,856	60,245	7,692	52,406	7,839	(244)	8,096	(13)	