

Communities, Economy & Transport – Q3 2025/26

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

Economy and environment

Employability and Skills

230 Industry Champions were supporting schools and colleges with activities such as career talks and Open Doors workplace visits, at the end of Q3. In May 2025, the Government changed the way Gatsby Benchmarks are measured within schools. These new criteria began in September 2025 and mean that the target previously set for the average benchmarks achieved by schools is no longer applicable. As a result, it is recommended that the element of the 2025/26 target relating to the benchmarks is deleted. Data on what schools achieved during the 2025/26 academic year will not be available until Q2 2026/27, which means we will also be unable to set a target for the benchmarks in the 2026/27 financial year (**ref i**).

The construction task group's roofing working group has developed a roofing apprenticeship in partnership with East Sussex College Group, and this was rolled out from 26 September 2025. The Health and Social Care Group has instigated the Boosting Skills Pathway project, with the University of Brighton and Pharmacy Teams to promote careers in pharmacy. 12 Bootcamps were delivered in Q3, to help people increase their skills in areas such as digital, horticulture, leadership and health and social care. 178 people participated in Bootcamps during Q3 (**ref ii**).

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has tasked the Council, alongside our partners West Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council, with creating a Get Sussex Working Plan 2025-2035. The plan will aim to ensure that 80% of working age residents are economically active by 2035. A Partnership Group, including the Integrated Care Board, the DWP, Sussex Chamber of Commerce and the 3 authorities, oversaw the development of the plan. During Q3, the draft plan was approved by Members from the 3 authorities and the DWP, and a formal launch event is scheduled to take place in the spring.

Apprenticeships

By the end of Q3, 130 members of staff have enrolled onto an apprenticeship in 2025/26. This exceeds the uptake in all the previous years since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, and we anticipate over 150 members of staff will have started an apprenticeship by the end of Q4. The current figure includes significant numbers of management and professional staff enrolling on Level 7 programmes ('high value' Master's degree equivalent programmes) before they were withdrawn at the end of 2025.

In order to replace the loss we will see from being unable to take up any more level 7 apprenticeships, a wide range of other apprenticeships have been promoted to all staff which is likely to be a factor in the higher numbers being reported in Q3. These apprenticeships include systems thinking degrees, coaching, youth work degrees, Safeguarding and, within Council schools, undergraduate teaching degrees.

From April 2025 the Apprenticeship Levy transitioned into the Skills and Growth Levy. The Government's aim is to provide greater flexibility to fund a wider range of training programmes including shorter courses and upskilling initiatives. From April 2026, the Levy can be spent on shorter courses in high-demand areas like digital and AI, enabling us to address critical skill needs by offering targeted training. This greater flexibility only extends to areas of recognised skills shortages, with Health and Social Care due to follow sometime in 2026/27.

The Autumn Budget made a number of adjustments to the Growth and Skills Levy. The most significant was halving the time employers can draw down money paid into the Levy (from 24 months to 12 months) before it is claimed by government. This comes into effect for funds paid in from April 2026, and means the Council now has only 12 months to draw down the approximately

£1.3m it will pay in during 2026/27. Currently, we have over £2m in our Digital Services Account, much of which is accounted for with upcoming training. However, anything left will need to be spent on apprenticeships before the Council is eligible to start drawing down the monies paid in for 2026/27. As such, a significant amount of this funding is expected to be taken by Government.

The Transform Project, which is a joint project between the apprenticeship team and the Communities, Economy and Transport department, continues to make a sizeable contribution to our levy spend and in supporting local businesses within the county. Currently we are working with Wealden District Council through the Transform service to support some of their staff to enrol on an AI focused apprenticeship, funded via our unspent levy.

Cultural investment and recovery

As part of the [Experience Sussex](#) tourism digital marketing plan, 4 campaigns were delivered in Q3, focusing on autumn events, wine tourism, the run up to Christmas, and Nordic markets. During Q3, the website saw 19,871 views of listings, leading to 9,797 business leads.

Business Support

158 businesses in East Sussex were supported through business support programmes in Q3. 156 of these were supported through the Growth Hub and 4 through Rural Business Grants.

Environment and climate change

We continue to work both across the organisation and with partners on a range of environment and climate change areas. During Q3 this included:

- publishing the corporate climate emergency progress report for 2024/25
- working with Property colleagues to establish the potential to lease a closed landfill site to a third party for development as a solar farm
- working with partners across Sussex to develop a briefing on energy and climate change for the new Mayoral Combined County Authority
- providing environmental advice to local planning authorities in East Sussex on over 900 planning applications
- completing the procurement of a new specialist consultancy to manage air quality data for all local authorities across Sussex
- completing the public consultation on the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove

Planning

100% of County Matter applications were determined within the statutory determination period during Q3. 100% of County Council development applications were determined within 8 weeks or within an agreed extension of time during Q3.

Highways, transport and waste

Highways improvements and road condition

4,828 potholes were repaired in Q3, with 3,531 of these being carriageway potholes; the remainder were primarily footway potholes. The carriageway works programme has been completed, so only 2 road improvement schemes were completed in Q3.

Road safety

3 road safety infrastructure schemes were delivered during Q3. The Council runs courses aimed at giving children and adults the skills they need for riding their bikes on the road. We delivered 92 Bikeability courses to 579 individuals in Q3. 74 'Wheels for All' sessions were delivered to

1,561 attendees in Q3. A number of Bikeability sessions were cancelled in December due to the wet weather, with schools aiming to rebook these sessions in the summer. Training sessions planned for Q4 are expected to achieve the target, however they are weather dependent (**ref iii**).

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 in Eastbourne, Newhaven and Peacehaven were identified, and a public consultation on all schemes took place in summer 2023. The Council has allocated the 2025/26 BSIP capital funding to the Newhaven bus priority scheme. However, to meet Department for Transport programme targets the scheme has been split into 2 phases, the Drove phase and the Denton Corner phase. During Q3, the Department for Transport agreed to extend the completion date for the Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue scheme, the Eastbourne Station scheme, and the Newhaven Denton Corner scheme until late 2026 / early 2027. The Drove phase is still to be scheduled. The Project team aim to deliver the Telscombe Cliffs to Peacehaven bus priority scheme at the earliest opportunity if future BSIP funding is available.

Following approval from the Department for Transport and the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles, the Council has received the full £4.441m allocated to East Sussex from the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund. This funding will support the rollout of on-street electric vehicle charge points across the county. The Council ran a procurement process in the Q2 to appoint a Chargepoint Operator. During Q3, the bids received were evaluated, and a preferred supplier selected. This proposal has been approved by both LEVI and the Department for Transport. A mandatory standstill period is in place, which is due to end in Q4, following this the Council will be able to formally award the contract and begin delivery of the scheme.

Waste

The Q2 outturn (reported a quarter in arrears) for the amount of waste re-used, recycled or composted or used beneficially was 54%, a reduction from the Q1 outturn of 55%. There has been a reduction due to a significant drop in green waste. Residual waste and dry recycling levels have remained stable.

Rights of Way (RoW) and Countryside Sites

We completed 96% of high priority maintenance work on schedule in Q3. Planned seasonal countryside work, as well as a relatively quiet period of weather, has resulted in an increase in the amount of high priority work completed on schedule during Q3.

Communities

Trading Standards

Trading Standards made 51 interventions to protect vulnerable people who had been the target of rogue trading or financial abuse in Q3. The team have investigated and worked alongside Sussex Police on scam interventions which involved over £1.5m of financial risk to the vulnerable people involved, with one scam alone involving £1.2m. 72 businesses received advice and support from Trading Standards in Q3. The advice included work on toy safety in the lead up to Christmas, and fireworks and fancy dress safety as we approached bonfire night and Halloween.

Libraries

561 It for You sessions were attended in Q3. Work continues to grow the volunteer team at locations with the greatest need and demand. There were 112 enrolments on Family Learning Programmes in Q3, to help people develop their English, maths and language skills. Forest Row

library reopened on 6 October 2025 after a refurbishment, with an improved children's library, new furniture and the library being redecorated.

Revenue Budget Summary

The CET revenue budget is £76.420m and is forecast to overspend by £324k. The largest overspend is in Highways. This reflects the higher than expected cost of damage to the highway primarily due to accidents and oil and fuel spills. The Council fixes these issues and then attempts to recover these costs from the perpetrator's insurance, however where this isn't possible the cost falls to us. These costs have increased in 2025/26 due to a number of large costly incidents. In addition, in the absence of additional Council funding for highway maintenance the weather is taking its toll on road conditions, resulting in additional costs arising from larger pothole repairs, additional jet patching, temporary repairs and emergency defects, on top of increased electricity costs for street lighting and contract inflation as reported at Q2 **(ref v)**. The largest underspend is in the Waste area of Transport & Operations where the in-year waste tonnage forecast, based on data to September, shows a 2.6% reduction in waste volumes compared to the budgeted tonnage, and 2% lower than last year. This is mainly due to the dry summer reducing garden waste, and low levels of landfill use. The Waste underspend is partially offset by an overspend in the Bus Service Improvement Plan Passenger Transport budget due to the excess cost of the current capped bus fare scheme. These enhancements will cease from 1 February 2026 **(ref iv)**. The underspend in Planning and Environment is in Transport Development Planning where there are staff vacancies and additional s278/s38 income contributions **(ref vi)**. Underspending across other services is due to staff vacancy and general spending controls.

Capital Programme Summary

The CET capital programme has a gross budget of £52.222m and there is an overspend of £5.175m, a spend in advance of £688k, a slippage of £2.164m, and an underspend of £212k. The large overspend is mostly due to the Queensway Gateway Road which has suffered from significant scheme redesign, and unexpected challenges such as utility diversions and ground conditions **(ref viii)**. The Eastbourne Town Centre scheme has spent in advance for a number of reasons including the discovery of a sink hole and an asbestos pipe **(ref ix)**. A number of schemes are slipping. The largest slippage is on the Exceat Bridge scheme. A dormouse licence is in place but has delayed vegetation clearance and groundworks **(ref xii)**. The assessment framework for the Emergency Active Travel School Streets scheme has only just been finalised, and schemes will commence in 2026/27 **(ref xi)**. Community Match schemes approved at the Lead Member for Transport and Environment meeting in October will be completed in 2026/27 **(ref x)**. The Broadband team are working with Cityfibre to fill gaps in broadband coverage, particularly in rural areas, most likely through a voucher scheme, and initial proposals are still being worked up **(ref vii)**. There are a number of smaller variations across the CET programme.

Performance exceptions (Q3 – 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	Q3 outturn	Note ref
East Sussex Careers Hub	Schools supported to achieve an average of 5.8 benchmarks 211 Industry Champions are in place	Target proposed for amendment: East Sussex Careers Hub to support schools to achieve an average of 5 national benchmarks 215 Industry Champions support schools and colleges in the county	G	G	AD		230 Industry Champions in place	i
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 (subject to funding)	A	A	G		a) 3 interventions delivered b) 12 Bootcamp interventions delivered	ii

Priority – Helping people help themselves

Performance measure	Outturn 24/25	Target 25/26	RAG Q1 25/26	RAG Q2 25/26	RAG Q3 25/26	RAG Q4 25/26	Q3 outturn	Note ref
Road Safety: Deliver targeted cycle training activities to vulnerable road users	476 Bikeability Courses delivered to 4,085 individuals 474 Wheels for All sessions delivered to 5,823 individuals	Deliver Bikeability Training to 4,000 individuals and 350 Wheels for All sessions	G	G	A		92 Bikeability Courses delivered to 579 individuals 74 Wheels for All sessions delivered to 1561 individuals	iii

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	106	749	-	
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	369	-	-	
Total Savings	1,553	2,298	1,111	1,187		
Subtotal Permanent Changes ¹						
Total Savings and Permanent Changes						

Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000)	Temporary Funding ²	Part of reported variance ³	Total	Note Ref
Parking – on Street		749	749	
Parking - Other		410	410	
Parking Rother DC		28	28	
Total		1,187	1,187	

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).

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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	6,182	(3,186)	2,996	6,140	(3,175)	2,965	42	(11)	31	
Customer and Library Services	9,865	(4,075)	5,790	9,908	(4,333)	5,575	(43)	258	215	
Communities	3,334	(940)	2,394	3,213	(1,038)	2,175	121	98	219	
Transport & Operational Services	124,776	(79,780)	44,996	123,852	(79,835)	44,017	924	55	979	iv
Highways	22,163	(4,993)	17,170	25,577	(6,365)	19,212	(3,414)	1,372	(2,042)	v
Economy	2,519	(926)	1,593	3,422	(1,885)	1,537	(903)	959	56	
Planning and Environment	5,960	(4,479)	1,481	5,834	(4,571)	1,263	126	92	218	vi
Total CET	174,799	(98,379)	76,420	177,946	(101,202)	76,744	(3,147)	2,823	(324)	

Capital programme 2025/26 (£'000)

Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2025/26	Actual to date Q3	Projected 2025/26	Variation (Over) / under 2025/26 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	212	-	-	
Gypsy and Traveller Site Refurbishment	700	700	137	89	137	-	-	-	-	
Peacehaven Library	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Alder Close Heating	188	188	188	26	141	47	-	47	-	
Libraries	5,139	5,139	442	79	442	-	-	-	-	
Broadband	33,800	33,800	338	41	66	272	-	272	-	vii
Bexhill and Hastings Link Road	126,247	128,347	-	35	137	(137)	(137)	-	-	
BHLR Complementary Measures	1,800	1,800	132	4	4	128	-	128	-	
Economic Intervention Fund	8,884	8,884	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Economic Intervention Fund - Loans	3,000	3,000	-	41	-	-	-	-	-	
Growing Places Fund	6,913	6,913	650	-	650	-	-	-	-	
Community Focused Road Safety Interventions	750	750	131	55	131	-	-	-	-	
Safer Roads Fund A2101	840	840	28	27	28	-	-	-	-	
Climate Emergency Works	6,154	6,165	242	105	253	(11)	(11)	-	-	
Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation	4,891	4,891	910	550	1,001	(91)	-	-	(91)	
Flood Management SuDS	890	890	445	(25)	333	112	-	112	-	
Solar Panels	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	
Newhaven Port Access Road	23,271	23,271	28	14	28	-	-	-	-	
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	4,541	4,541	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Real Time Passenger Information	3,181	3,181	199	32	199	-	-	-	-	
Bus Service Improvement Plan	11,372	11,372	1,231	608	1,231	-	-	-	-	
BSIP Passenger Transport	4,370	4,551	804	1,170	985	(181)	(181)	-	-	
PAX Software System	37	37	5	3	5	-	-	-	-	

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Approved project	Budget: total project all years	Projected: total project all years	Budget 2025/26	Actual to date Q3	Projected 2025/26	Variation (Over) / under 2025/26 budget	Variation analysis: (Over) / under spend	Variation analysis: Slippage to future year	Variation analysis: Spend in advance	Note ref
Queensway Gateway Road	3,313	8,159	470	4,105	5,316	(4,846)	(4,846)	-	-	viii
Hastings and Bexhill Movement & Access Package	9,583	9,583	735	730	743	(8)	-	-	(8)	
Eastbourne/South Wealden Walking & Cycling Package	6,936	6,936	183	109	181	2	-	2	-	
Hailsham/Polegate/Eastbourne Movement & Access Corridor	2,251	2,251	150	41	110	40	-	40	-	
Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package A	6,936	6,936	2,290	1,417	2,862	(572)	-	-	(572)	ix
Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package B	5,454	5,454	4,328	4,107	4,328	-	-	-	-	
Other Integrated Transport Schemes	66,646	66,646	2,995	1,441	2,748	247	-	247	-	
A22 Corridor Package	6,092	6,092	6,092	5,074	6,092	-	-	-	-	
A22 North of Hailsham	118	118	272	198	272	-	-	-	-	
Community Match Fund	780	780	451	44	150	301	-	301	-	x
Emergency Active Travel - Tranche 2	438	438	403	17	17	386	-	386	-	xi
Area-wide traffic management scheme – Schools Streets	200	200	154	-	-	154	-	154	-	
ATF 5 School Streets	61	61	61	-	-	61	-	61	-	
ATF Eastbourne Liveable Town Centre	274	274	80	77	97	(17)	-	-	(17)	
Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections	9,689	9,689	1,024	596	1,000	24	-	24	-	
Exceat Bridge	21,719	21,719	2,587	843	2,197	390	-	390	-	xii
Queensway Depot Development	1,956	1,956	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	
Urban Tree Challenge	262	262	15	8	15	-	-	-	-	
Core - Highways Structural Maintenance	499,175	499,175	16,875	17,796	16,875	-	-	-	-	
Visibly Better Roads	5,800	5,800	248	164	248	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Bridge Assessment Strengthening	38,785	38,785	3,480	2,793	3,480	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Street Lighting - Life Expired Equipment	39,248	39,248	2,396	1,545	2,396	-	-	-	-	
Core - Street Lighting - SALIX scheme	2,961	2,961	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Core Programme - Rights of Way Surface Repairs and Bridge Replacement	10,417	10,417	810	516	810	-	-	-	-	
Total CET Gross (Planned Programme)	987,158	994,296	52,222	44,479	55,709	(3,487)	(4,963)	2,164	(688)	