

East Sussex

the county and the Council



Corporate Peer Challenge 2023
Position Statement
East Sussex County Council

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Welcome to East Sussex

from the Leader, Cllr Keith Glazier and Chief Executive, Becky Shaw



Becky Shaw
Chief Executive



Cllr Glazier
Leader of
the Council



We are very pleased to be able to welcome the Corporate Peer Challenge team to East Sussex – a fascinating and contrasting county of beautiful landscapes, of vibrant towns and rural villages alongside areas of significant deprivation and challenge.

We are very proud of the achievements of the Council over the last decade, determined at all times to make best use of the resources available and be creative in our partnerships both within the Council and externally to deliver the highest quality support to our residents, businesses and communities. We have delivered faster broadband throughout the county and secured funding for major infrastructure projects, we have pioneered health and social care integration with work held up by the Care Quality Commission as best practice and our most recent Children's Social Care Ofsted inspection rated the service as Outstanding.

During the Covid-19 pandemic our officers went above and beyond to continue to deliver high quality services to some of the most vulnerable people in society. Our strong foundation of partnerships across the county, including with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and our public sector partners, enabled us to create new community services at speed, and these partnerships have continued to evolve and strengthen post-Covid. Critically, we have delivered these services against a backdrop of severe financial challenges over the past decade. Our strong, consistent leadership meant we made difficult decisions when we needed to, in a timely and measured way and as One Council focused on our clear priority outcomes. This has meant that as a Council we have not had to find new significant cuts to services for the past three years and we have recently been able to invest in new measures on climate change and highways improvements.

We know, however, that we are facing a challenging picture ahead.

Local people and the local economy are still recovering from the pandemic and have also been impacted by the recent increases in the cost of living. We know that demands on our services will continue to grow as a result of changing needs in our communities and a range of significant national policy developments will have impacts on the Council's operations. Current and forecast economic conditions will also contribute to a very difficult financial outlook for the Council over the coming years.

The Corporate Peer Challenge is therefore a welcome and timely opportunity to seek the views of peers on how well East Sussex is placed to tackle the challenges of the future, and whether we have positioned our focus and capacity in the right places to deliver our ambitions. We recognise the need to take further steps to be able to tackle these challenges, including, in particular, the urgent need to address climate change and to embrace new ways of working in the vital services we deliver.

The collaborative approach of a Peer Challenge, in which the views of partners, staff and other stakeholders will be sought, is particularly welcome and builds on the partnership approach embedded in the way we work. We are proud that East Sussex has excellent relationships with key partners across the county and leads a number of regional partnership groups, including Transport for the South East and the South East 7 group of local authorities. We want to build on that work and approach in the future.

On behalf of the elected Members and officers of East Sussex County Council we look forward to welcoming you to East Sussex.

East Sussex the place

East Sussex is a county of contrasts: coastal and rural; large towns and small villages; natural beauty and significant deprivation. When compared to other parts of the south east it is notable by its differences.

Over half of the county's area is part of the South Downs National Park and/or the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and East Sussex contains a number of other nationally and internationally designated sites. These huge natural assets offer an exceptional environment in which to live and work. However, they also place limitations on the development and infrastructure which support economic growth and prosperity. There are only 19.8 miles of dual carriageway in the whole county, and no motorway. Rail infrastructure is also limited and these constraints create significant potential for rural isolation. The county has an economy of small businesses, and our geography and infrastructure (despite investment) make it difficult for those businesses to grow. The County Council, through our corporate and schools workforce, is the major

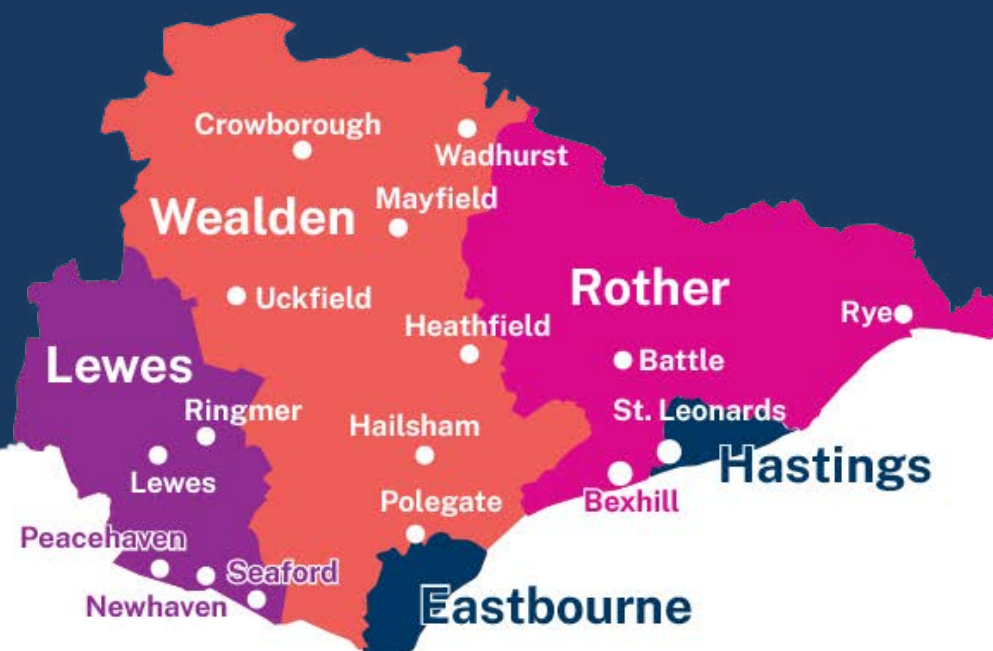
employer in the county and our influence stretches further through our role as a major commissioner from the large care sector. Other large employers in the county are public sector organisations; however retail, construction and hospitality are also important sectors. Earnings are below both the national and regional average. There is a variation across the county – the north and west (being closer to London, neighbouring counties and their transport links) being more affluent than the south and east.

Our demography is very significant in shaping the county and the work of the Council. The majority of our population is located along the coastal strip, particularly the seaside towns of Hastings and Eastbourne, and in the market towns inland, with the rest of the county comprising relatively sparsely populated countryside. East Sussex is ahead of the national ageing population trend. Proportionately we have high numbers of over 65s and over 85s. Rother district had the second highest proportion of over 85s in the country in 2021 (4.8%). Nearly

8% of our households are people aged 66 years and over living on their own, compared to just over 5% nationally. Of the estimated 160,000 people with more than two conditions in East Sussex, 57% are aged 65 or over. By 2028 it is estimated that there will be an additional 22,000 people with two or more conditions in East Sussex. All of this means the pressures on our adult social care services are particularly acute. Pockets of

significant deprivation also impact on demand. For example, geographically isolated Hastings is in the top 10% most deprived local authority areas nationally. In addition, we are supporting an increasing number of migrants, with diverse needs, in the county.

Alongside our unique challenges we are also seeing an increase in demand for services in line with national trends, particularly for children's social care and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.



Key facts and figures



Population
545,800
in 2021

**Growth between
2011 and 2021**
3.6%



Age profile

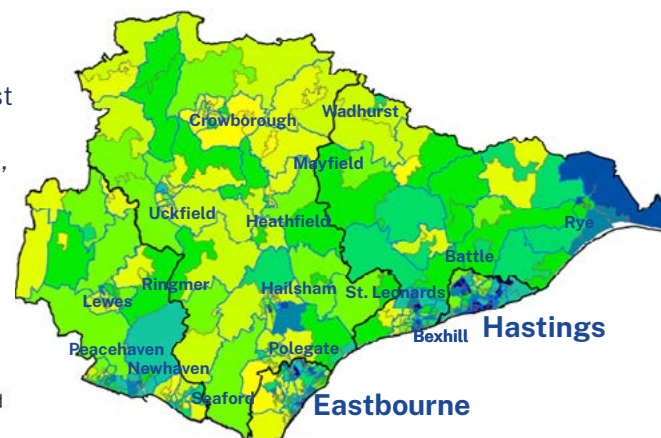
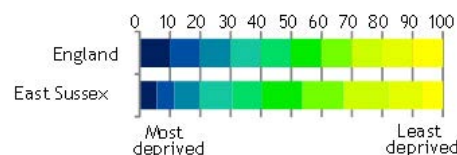


26%
**aged 65 and over
in East Sussex**
(19% SE, 18% England)

3.8%
**aged 85 and over
in East Sussex**
(2.7% SE, 2.4% England)

Deprivation:

Of 329 LSOAs, 22 in the most deprived 10% nationally. 16 in Hastings, 4 in Eastbourne, and 2 in Rother (2019).



Life expectancy gap in 2016-2020

Males

74.5

Gensing ward in St Leonards

86.6

Crowborough North



Females

78.7

Gensing

91.3

Kingston ward in Lewes



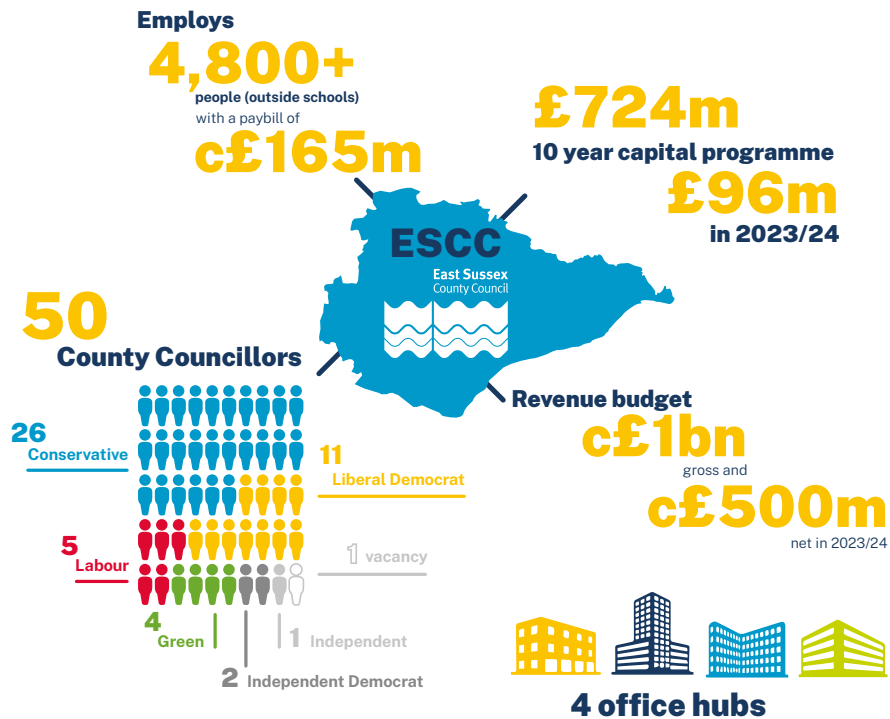
**SME/public sector/tourism
led economy**



Ethnicity

91.8% of people in Wealden identified as White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish or British compared to 82.1% in Eastbourne

East Sussex County Council



Our services:

> 27,000
people supported by ASC in 2022/23

> 9,000 ASC clients
supported with Long Term Support
services in 2022/23

>10,500
health and care contacts per month

>2,000
Children's Services SPOA/MASH
contacts per month

650+
children looked after in 2022/23

2,000+
miles of roads maintained

17
libraries issuing 1.9m+ items per year

10
Household Waste Recycling Sites

c250,000
tonnes of waste dealt with each year

Support 185 schools
with c5500 staff, 89% good or outstanding

Register
12,000
births/deaths/marriages a year

Trading Standards made
530 positive interventions
to protect vulnerable people in 2022/23





The local public sector landscape

East Sussex is a two-tier local government area with two borough councils covering the towns of Eastbourne and Hastings and three district councils, Lewes, Rother and Wealden, covering the more rural areas of the county. The three districts are fully covered by a patchwork of over 100 town and parish councils and parish meetings. East Sussex Fire Authority, covering East Sussex and Brighton & Hove, is a separate organisation, overseen by a Fire Authority comprising elected Members of the City and County Councils.

ESCC is also part of the Orbis Partnership, with Surrey County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council, sharing a number of business services including IT and digital, procurement, internal audit, finance centres of expertise and the Orbis Energy Team. The partnership has allowed us to provide efficient and resilient services while achieving savings which are being used to sustain services for residents of all three areas.

Since late 2019 we have had a closer relationship with West Sussex County Council, and the Chief Executive continues to work across both authorities.

East Sussex is part of the Sussex Integrated Care System (ICS) which is made up of three 'places' – East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove and the NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board. The Sussex-wide Integrated Care Strategy is overseen by the Sussex Health and Care Assembly (the Integrated Care Partnership), underpinned by the local Health and Wellbeing Boards and strategies, and place-based boards in each of the three areas. Acute health services for the county's population are provided by three hospital trusts, two located outside the county boundary and one, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, located within the area, also providing community health services for the majority of the county's residents. A further community services provider covers the west of the county, there is a Sussex-wide mental health trust and an ambulance trust covering the south east coast region.

Sussex Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner also cover East and West Sussex and the city of Brighton & Hove. East Sussex Resilience and Emergencies Partnership is the jointly funded local emergency planning forum covering ESCC, districts and boroughs, emergency services and other partners, feeding into the wider Sussex Resilience Forum.

East Sussex is part of South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), along with Kent, Medway, Essex, Southend and Thurrock. SELEP operates a federated model and Team East Sussex (TES) is the local federated board responsible for agreeing the strategic priorities for the county and driving forward the East Sussex Growth Strategy. We have links to the Universities of Brighton and Sussex, whose main campuses lie just outside the county boundary in Brighton & Hove city. On the environment, key local organisations include the South Downs National Park Authority, which is the planning authority for part of the county, and the Ashdown Forest Trust.



Our workforce

We employ over 10,000 staff, 4,811 in the corporate Council and 5,538 in schools, and have a pay bill of £164.9m for the corporate Council workforce.

Of the non-schools workforce, 92.5% are residents of East Sussex. 76% are female; 28.8% are over 55 years old and 3.4% are under 25 years old. 9.5% are from ethnic minority backgrounds (including 'white other'), 72.1% are white British with 18.4% of unknown ethnicity. 6.3% of our staff are disabled, with 8% not disclosed.

The 2022 median gender pay gap for the Council was 9.3%. This is significantly lower than the national 2022 gender pay gap of 14.9% (ONS). In particular, over the last year we have appointed more women to senior roles and there has been a reduction in the number of part time roles meaning more of the workforce are now working full time. We think this is most likely as a result of the introduction of hybrid working and the flexible working opportunities this provides.

In common with many employers, we are experiencing significant recruitment and retention challenges as a result of current labour market conditions and cost of living pressures. Locally, there are particular challenges in front line social care roles (qualified and unqualified) and some of our technical and professional roles such as legal services and engineering. Voluntary turnover levels, however, are currently 8.6%, a reduction from 10.1% in 2021/22.

Targeted recruitment and retention strategies are in place, including a new 'Refer a Friend' scheme, an updated relocation policy, employee loans policy, salary sacrifice schemes and financial wellbeing resources. Market supplements are paid for some of our roles, for example social workers in Children's Services, and we have recently launched a new employer recruitment brand – We Choose East Sussex – which seeks to position the Council as an employer of choice and attract as wide a mix of job seekers as possible. We are capitalising on the opportunities presented by hybrid working to broaden our recruitment pool and to respond to new expectations in the workforce on flexible working post-Covid. We are also developing digital approaches to support organisational capacity in key areas. Section 5 provides further detail on our approaches to new ways of working and digital.

Temporary agency spend has risen overall in the past two years in response to specific projects and needs, for example the programme to replace our current finance and HR systems. Total agency spend for the year 2022/23 was £8.68m. The spend on unqualified care roles reduced significantly during the pandemic but has now returned to pre-pandemic levels. However, our agency spend in Children's Services is low compared to other authorities.

We Choose East Sussex

We built an eye-catching new brand and campaign to sell the Council as a high-quality employer. 'We Choose East Sussex' launched in 2022 as part of our strategic response to the challenge in recruitment and retention.

Staff told us of their pride in actively choosing to work for their local authority and the value they put on being in a supportive team, building a career and being accepted for who they are. All these shaped the brand and campaign, which is built around their own stories.

Investment in the campaign took it to billboards across East Sussex and to London, to radio and to social media. We've worked together to help managers draw on the fresh approach and embed it in their recruitment.

Initial evaluation of recruitment from 2022 onwards shows:

- the proportion of ESCC vacancies filled has risen from 33% to more than 50%
- applications from candidates of a minority ethnic background have doubled
- an 11% rise in traffic to our online jobs pages and a 17% rise in download of application forms and related documents



Case Study

1. Local priorities and outcomes

Our priorities

Our priorities for East Sussex are evidence-based, ambitious but realistic, and tightly focused. They reflect the particular needs of the county, the statutory roles of the Council and where ESCC is best placed to lead and should focus our resources.

Our relatively weak local economy and poor educational outcomes mean that supporting economic growth, good jobs, improved skills and infrastructure is vital to the wellbeing and resilience of the county and will enable more people to live independently of public sector support.

We know that keeping vulnerable children and adults safe will always be one of our key responsibilities to the community, and this role is heightened given the county's demographic profile. However, we also recognise that, wherever possible, people prefer and need to be independent, and that helping people to be self-supporting will become increasingly important as need increases and the resources available to public services decline. Crucial to our success across the board will be making best use of all the resources available, not only within the Council, but across the public sector, voluntary and community sector and private sector partners, and within local communities – and ensuring that the decisions we take are sustainable both now and for the future.



These key needs and roles for the Council are reflected in our four overarching priority outcomes:

- driving sustainable economic growth
- keeping vulnerable people safe
- helping people help themselves
- making best use of resources now and for the future.

Making best use of resources now and for the future is the priority test through which any activity must pass. The remaining three priority outcomes guide our activities, direct our resources and are reflected in our [Council Plan](#) activities and targets.

Our ambitions are captured in the detailed three year Council Plan, updated annually, which covers what we will do and the specific targets we will use to judge our performance.

Each of our priority outcomes has been informed by a robust evidence base (as they are developed in response to key demographic, socio-economic, financial and environmental trends) and is supported by delivery outcomes (the detailed objectives we will work to achieve to deliver the priority). Priority and delivery

outcomes are reviewed and agreed annually by full Council. They set the purpose of our business and inform the way we deliver services. The key actions we need to take to work towards these outcomes form the basis of our Council Plan. Equalities considerations are built into the evidence base and equalities objectives into the Council Plan.



The Priority Outcomes

The Priority Outcomes

The Council has four overarching priority outcomes: driving sustainable economic growth; keeping vulnerable people safe; helping people help themselves; and making best use of resources now and for the future. Making best use of resources now and for the future is the gateway priority through which any activity and accompanying resources must pass. For each priority outcome there are specific delivery outcomes. These are referenced to performance measures in this Portfolio Plan.

Driving sustainable economic growth - delivery outcomes

1. East Sussex businesses are supported to succeed and grow sustainably
2. The county is an attractive place to live, work and do business
3. Individuals, communities and businesses thrive in East Sussex with the environmental and social infrastructure to meet their needs
4. The workforce has and maintains the skills needed for good quality employment to meet the needs of the current and future East Sussex economy
5. The value of our role as both a significant employer and a buyer of local goods and services is maximised
6. All children progress well from early years through school and into post-16 education, training and employment

Keeping vulnerable people safe - delivery outcomes

7. All vulnerable people in East Sussex are known to relevant local agencies and services are delivered together to meet their needs
8. People feel safe at home and well supported by their networks
9. Children grow up supported by enduring, loving relationships
10. People feel safe with services
11. We work with the wider health and care system to support people to achieve the best outcomes possible

Helping people help themselves - delivery outcomes

12. Commissioners and providers from all sectors put people first when providing services and information to help them meet their needs
13. The most vulnerable get the support they need to maintain their independence and this is provided at or as close to home as possible
14. Through working well with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, individuals, families and communities are supported to be independent and to thrive

Driving
sustainable
economic
growth

Keeping
vulnerable
people
safe

Helping
people
help
themselves

Making best use of resources
now and for the future

Making best use of resources now and for the future - delivery outcomes

15. To help tackle Climate Change East Sussex County Council activities are carbon neutral as soon as possible and in any event by 2050
16. We work as One Council
17. We work in strong and sustained partnership with the public, voluntary community, social enterprise and private sectors to ensure that our collective resources and influence are used to deliver maximum benefits
18. Ensuring we achieve value for money in the services we commission and provide
19. Maximising the funding available through bidding for funding and lobbying for the best deal for East Sussex
20. We are an employer of choice and support our staff to achieve and develop

Our business planning process



The Council Plan, revenue budget and capital programme are fully integrated through our business planning process, **Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)**.

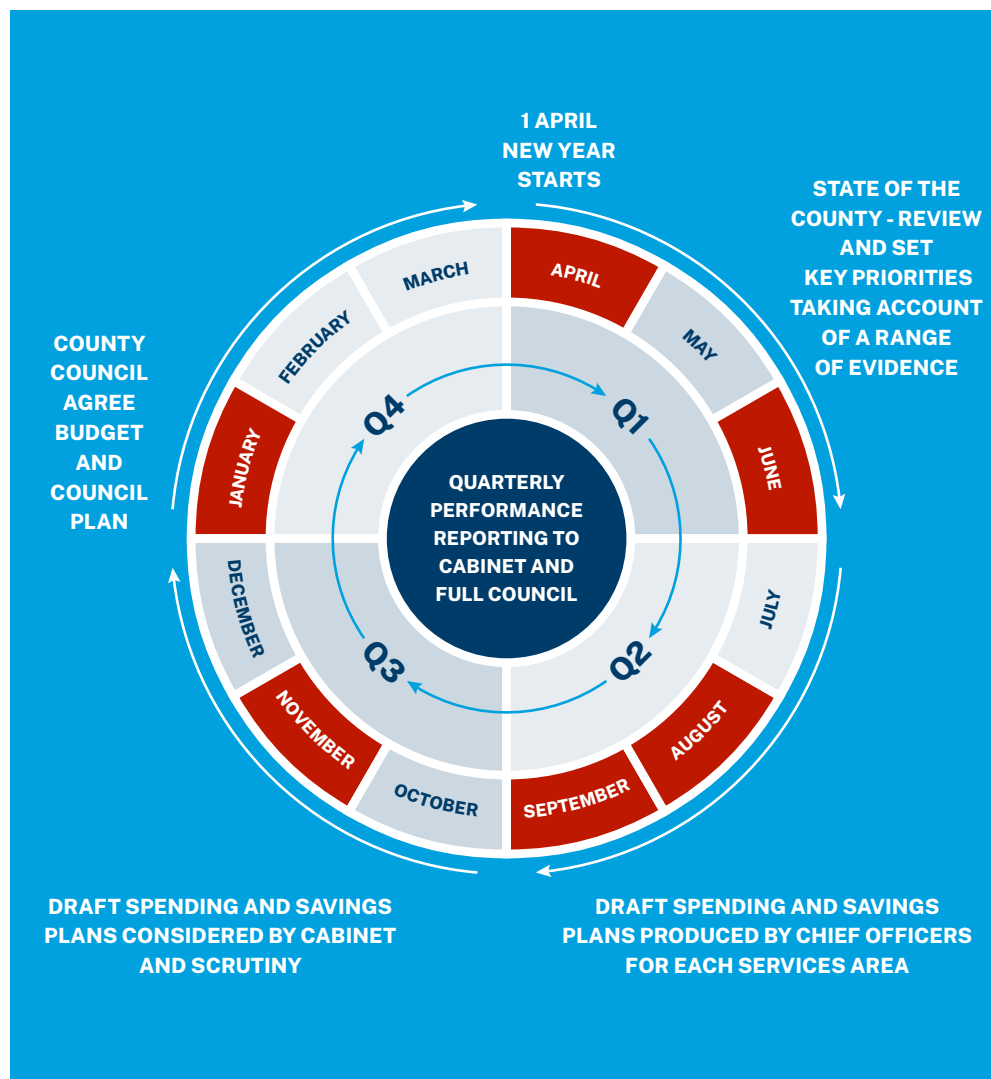
RPPR is unique to ESCC and fundamental to the way the Council plans and manages performance and risk. The process allows us to integrate planning of our policies and service priorities with the resources available to us now and in the future (money, time, energy and consideration of sustainability), and to continually review how effective we are in delivering the objectives and budgets we set.

Portfolio Plans

Portfolio Plans for each department and their relevant Cabinet portfolios provide further detail on the direction for our services over the next three years, and say how we will deliver the priority and delivery outcomes. They

also describe key risks, and how we are going to respond to financial and policy challenges, including links to other key plans and strategies.

The RPPR cycle



‘State of the County’ in the summer marks the start of the new planning cycle each year. It provides an opportunity to take stock of our priorities and financial outlook for the next planning period in light of the up to date context which includes demographic data, the national and local policy context and outcome data.

The report is considered by Cabinet on the same timeline as the Q4 (end of year) performance monitoring report for the previous year which enables planning also to be informed by the year end outcomes. State of the County provides an overview for Members of the environment in which we are planning and a key point for Members to provide officers with a steer on priorities and planning. Both reports are also considered by full Council and scrutiny committees to maximise opportunities for Member engagement.

Through the autumn further detailed work is undertaken to develop and refine service and financial plans through: scrutiny work; assessment of equality impacts; Cabinet consideration of updates on the planning context and initial proposals; and factoring in information received through the autumn Budget statement and provisional finance settlement. Towards the end of the winter there is a focus on wider stakeholder engagement, with events held with strategic partners, business representatives, young people and staff representatives during this period. This enables their views to feed into Cabinet recommendations and Council decisions, alongside comments coming out of Member scrutiny boards.

Final proposals are considered by Cabinet in late January which makes recommendations to full Council which ultimately sets the budget and Council Plan together in February.



The way forward for libraries



Case Study

We have created a dynamic and evolving commissioning strategy for libraries to try and ensure the service meets the changing needs of our residents and businesses.

We apply the Council's core approach of RPPR to first assess the county's strategic needs and then, after development of a strategic commissioning strategy, the resources required for a library service to support key outcomes for the people of East Sussex. The strategy established priority outcomes, developed partly through a robust assessment of the needs of residents of the county (both as a whole and within specific communities). Those outcomes are improved literacy and numeracy, support for the economy, better health and wellbeing and increasing digital inclusion.

The library service is therefore designed and funded not to preserve a set structure but to provide (or commission) activity which best serves the needs of the population and helps the Council achieve its priority outcomes. The service provides a connected universal offer through a network of 17 libraries, community activity and online services.

The initial commissioning strategy covered the period 2018 to 2023 but after the pandemic a review and update was brought forward to the end of 2021, to ensure the strategy continued to meet the needs of East Sussex and could help the county recover.

A survey of library users in 2021 showed 95% thought the service in East Sussex good or very good with satisfaction increasing for choice and condition of books, computer facilities, opening hours and customer care.



Managing performance

There is a golden thread linking our strategic ambitions in the Council Plan, through our Portfolio Plans to team plans and individual staff objectives. Our performance measures mirror this hierarchy. At a strategic level we focus on outcome measures linked to our delivery outcomes. However, we use a wide range of quantitative and qualitative information at an operational level to understand the efficiency and effectiveness of our services and resident satisfaction with these. We set challenging, but realistic, annual targets. Our aim is to optimise performance, maintaining standards where we are doing well and improving where we can.

We have an integrated set of quarterly monitoring reports that set out how we are delivering against the Council Plan and budget. These provide a holistic view of our organisational performance, including updates on key achievements and challenges, financial summaries, performance exceptions and details of strategic risks. They include detailed portfolio summaries, which are reviewed by Departmental Management Teams, as well as an overarching corporate summary. The reports go to our Corporate Management Team, before progressing on to Cabinet and Council.

Alongside our detailed quarterly monitoring reports we also produce an annual report which provides local residents and businesses with a summary of the Council's key achievements for the previous year.

As part of our approach to performance management we aim to understand and address differences in experience or outcomes for different groups of people or communities. We consider differences related to the characteristics protected under the Equality Act but look wider than this, also specifically considering the experiences and outcomes of groups with additional vulnerabilities such as carers. Given the nature of our county we also consider differences between people living in our rural and urban communities.

Our integrated business planning processes mean that potential issues are identified and mitigated at an early stage, leading to realistic deliverables and targets for services. There are strong relationships between performance and finance leads and service leads, which supports our culture of proactively



addressing performance issues. Services are supported to identify the cause of issues and to develop appropriate strategies for addressing these in a timely manner. There are well developed processes to help support any required changes to policy, resources or performance expectations, as well as managing any wider risks.

Issues are escalated as necessary through departmental reporting structures, with clear ownership of issues within management teams. Cross-departmental issues are reviewed by the relevant officer boards and the Corporate Management Team. Cabinet Members provide additional challenge on issues within their portfolio areas. Significant issues are reported up to Cabinet and Council through our standard monitoring processes.

We have a strong focus on continuous improvement, ensuring that we always provide the best value for money for our residents. We use benchmarking groups to assess our comparative performance and share learning on successful delivery models or interventions, as well as sector challenges. We participate in benchmarking groups run by national organisations and their regional sub-groups such as ADCS, ADASS and CIPFA. We also support local groups such as the South East Sector Led Improvement Partnership for Children's Services.



Understanding our communities

Engagement and evidence is at the heart of how ESCC plans, develops and delivers policies, services and priorities. We know the make-up and needs of our communities are ever-changing. We work to understand those changes, as well as long-term trends, in setting our priorities and developing services. This demands conversation and consultation, questioning and listening, analysing data and sometimes co-production with residents, to build services which can work for them. We also aim to give feedback to people we consult and engage with to close the citizen participation ‘loop’.

We **analyse** a wide range of local and national data about our communities and population (from the national Census to our own surveys). We also undertake research to explore specific issues, particularly as part of our [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) process. Our Focus on East Sussex report, produced as part of State of the County, sets out the key needs of the population of East Sussex. This draws upon the key messages from our suite of intelligence products, that look at different aspects of our communities. We are constantly seeking new ways to improve both our use of data and insight. The 2021 Census provides us with the opportunity to better understand our communities at a hyper local level. However, we are also looking to make better use of existing data, for example using the Sussex Integrated Dataset, which contains a range of anonymised health and care data, to support our work on population health management.

We **consult** regularly, especially through the East Sussex Consultation Hub, which carried out 80 consultations in the past 12 months. We use the feedback received through consultation in conducting Equality Impact Assessments and in planning, designing and implementing our policies and services.

We **engage and listen** on an ongoing basis through user panels, partnership boards (such as for Learning Disability or Autism), focus groups, surveys, public events and customer contact channels. For example, our Adult Social Care and Health People Bank and Citizens’ Panel both support commissioning and drafting of new policies and strategies. Parents and carers are involved in the partnership work with neighbouring authorities to inform early help and social care services. Parents and carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) are involved in the multi-agency East Sussex Children and



Young People’s Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Implementation Group
We have a range of engagement mechanisms to engage with people and groups representing protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. User voices are also represented by community advocacy and local representation contracts with PoHWR (for adults with physical and mental health needs, and for disabled children provided with social care), Healthwatch East Sussex, Amaze for SEND parent and carer voice and with Asphaleia for advocacy for children known to social care. We are conducting a project to assess the strength of our collective approach to engagement and possibly recommend ways to keep developing it.

We **co-produce or co-design** services and strategies with many of the people who’ll rely on them. For example, our new SEND strategy, which has been produced in partnership with children, young people and families. We have been designing and developing our Adult Social Care Strategy ensuring it is based on the voices and needs of the people who use or will use our services in the future. Children’s Services bring together youth voice groups including the [Youth Cabinet](#), Social Care Reference Group, Children in Care Council, SEND Young Ambassadors and focus groups of children known to social care so that their voices are amplified. The two priorities identified through a ballot of children in East Sussex of ‘Tackling Climate Change’ and ‘Jobs and Opportunities’ have resulted in increased resources for schools to tackle their carbon

emissions and a Climate Youth Summit to be held in winter 2023; plus targeted engagement work between young people and the Careers and Enterprise teams.

We **work in partnership** with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, as well as other statutory partners, so we are not duplicating engagement but utilising common resources and sharing information to optimise the system resources. Current examples include: partnership work on Financial Inclusion to assist people with cost of living challenges; our Homes for Ukraine Scheme, informed by a dedicated Ukrainian Guests Advisory Group; and our work with external VCSE organisations, such as Priority 1-54, with a specialism in youth voice, to identify the priorities for system wide improvements to the children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing offer. We also provide access to a range of data, briefings and research reports through our local data observatory site [East Sussex in Figures](#), resources which are widely used by partners to inform their work. We are in the process of combining this site and our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment site into a single data observatory for East Sussex.

We produce annual summaries, highlighting service user feedback and how it has influenced our service development, such as through the Children's Services ["You said, we did"](#) report.



Working together for children and families



Case Study

Close collaboration with our partners on the new strategy for SEND in East Sussex didn't just strengthen the strategy – it also created new opportunities to work together in designing services.

Discussions with young people, their parents and carers and with professionals in the field set guiding principles for the strategy which sets out how children with SEND and their families will be supported. Workshops, events with key partners and consultations shaped the final version of the strategy but also helped define how partners can work together to improve services and give young people the best possible results.

Together with our partners we identified five guiding principles, shaped as statements that we would want children and young people with SEND to say about their experiences:

- Participation - My voice is heard and acted upon
- Physical and mental health - My optimum health and well-being are supported
- Safety and security - I feel confident and secure
- Inclusion and belonging - I belong and feel valued for who I am
- Progress and achievement - I am supported to develop and achieve my goals

Working groups have already been established to carry these themes into action, with the new strategy as the framework for further collaboration and co-production.

[East Sussex SEND Strategy](#) | [East Sussex Local Offer](#)



Equality, diversity and inclusion informing planning and delivery

The Council recognises that our county's diverse communities face different obstacles and opportunities and we are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), challenging discrimination and encouraging respect, understanding and dignity for everyone living or working in and visiting East Sussex. We achieve this through our influence in the county, strategic planning, policy formation and delivery in service provision and employment.

In 2022 we reviewed our governance arrangements for our EDI programme and divided our single EDI group into two equality boards comprising Assistant Directors, one focused on services (chaired by our Assistant Chief Executive) and one for workforce matters (chaired by our Assistant Director for HR and OD). These oversee the development and implementation of the Council's equality agenda, provide leadership to departments and enable integration of equality into mainstream activity and processes. Reports on progress are regularly provided through these Boards to CMT. The Boards and the Group before them have overseen the creation of our new equality objectives, established an Equality Data Monitoring Task Group to drive monitoring improvements and ensured the development and wider communication of our discrimination reporting processes.

Our Corporate Management Team oversees and leads a comprehensive set of annually reviewed actions to achieve our EDI aims, spanning all departments and all aspects of the Council's service delivery, commissioning, partnerships, decision-making and role as employer.

We are more explicitly integrating assessment of equality impacts into every stage of our RPPR business planning process. This means that from our Council Plan and Capital Strategy, through our Portfolio Plans, to our consideration of individual projects and services, we prioritise based on a good understanding of diversity and local needs, and identify ways to remove barriers and maximise positive outcomes for people sharing protected characteristics. We are currently developing our approach to capturing equality measures more effectively in our performance monitoring processes. All these processes are overseen and monitored by senior officers and elected Members, so that the identified equality implications and mitigations inform decision making.



Since 2020 we have revised and updated our equality monitoring form, audited key services to identify gaps and good practice in their monitoring practice, and developed a range of guidance and skills development opportunities to support improvements. Our Performance, Research and Intelligence Team is producing briefings on Census 2021 data as it is released, and creating a bank of resources to support monitoring analysis and the completion of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs).

Our approach to EqIAs has been reviewed and strengthened, with a new template, guidance and training workshops developed, leading to more robust assessments. All EqIAs are signed off by a senior manager and also quality assured by an EDI lead, both to ensure consistent standards and to enable identification of common themes or barriers.

Our joint planning and shared learning approach is framed by our One Council model, which increases consistency and supports equitable treatment across all our services for our customers, clients and for staff.

Further detail on our work with staff in this area can be found in section 3.



2. Organisational and Place Leadership

Place leadership

The County Council has a strong track record of leading and working in partnership for the benefit of our place, built on a long-held recognition that the Council alone cannot address the diverse challenges the county faces, or achieve all the outcomes we want for local people.

We work in partnership to maximise our collective ability across the public, private and community sector to meet the needs of local communities and to make best use of the resources available for the benefit of local people. We also work with partners to make the case for East Sussex to Government and to lever in funding to the county.

From strong foundations, the Covid-19 pandemic enhanced many existing partnerships and created new ones, enabling us to deliver new services and support. These partnerships have continued to evolve and are supporting the response to new or ongoing challenges. For example, work during the pandemic provided a foundation for our local response to welcoming 1,600 guests from Ukraine, including 700 guests in Wealden, which had one of the highest volunteering rates for hosts in the country.

ESCC brings together and supports a wide range of partnerships across health, education, community safety, economy and transport as part of our leadership of place. We also support the East Sussex Strategic Partnership, the countywide Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which brings together over 90 organisations and partnerships across East Sussex.



Key partnerships



Local government

We work collectively with district and borough Councils at political level through the East Sussex Joint Leaders and Chief Executives Group and at officer level through the East Sussex Chief Executives Group, which also includes local leaders from Fire, Police and further education. Following recent local elections there have been changes to the leadership of some of the district and borough Councils and we will be developing new working relationships through these and other established partnerships, as well as more broadly with newly elected district and borough councillors, including participating in the induction process for new Members. Engagement with town and parish Councils takes place across the Council on a range of issues, for example the local response to the challenges faced by residents from the increased cost of living.

Impact in practice:

- East Sussex Leaders have jointly agreed collective lobbying priorities based on the needs and priorities for East Sussex as a whole.
- We have worked with East Sussex Association of Local Councils to share information on cost of living, the Winter Support Grant for local not for profit groups and the Homes for Ukraine small grants fund.
- Through our Community Match initiative we have recently worked with Westmeston and Rotherfield Parish Councils to deliver small match funded highway schemes involving a new 40mph speed limit along a rural road and improving existing 30mph gateway signing. These measures were requested by the parish Councils through a feasibility appraisal which they paid for. The delivery costs of the schemes were split equally between the county and parish Councils.



Health and care

The County Council has a strong and innovative history of working with health partners on an integrated approach to health and care over several years, well ahead of the nationally directed shift in this direction, reflecting the imperative to proactively respond to the increasing needs of our older demographic. Thanks to this early foundation we have well-established integrated management arrangements in community services including services such as Health and Social Care Connect (our single point of access), Crisis Response Service and Joint Community Rehabilitation Team, and we have a jointly agreed community health and social care services target operating model (TOM). For many years we have also had a single integrated Early Help Service for children and young people bringing together health visiting and school nursing with targeted family support.

As a Council we have also invested in key partnership ‘convenor’ roles that work across the system locally to support the strategic implementation of health, care and wellbeing integration in East Sussex. At place level, the Director of ASCH, NHS Provider Chief Executive Officer and NHS Sussex Place Executive Managing Director share the ‘system responsible officer’ role and are jointly responsible for the effectiveness of system working in the county.

Following the national move to ICSs, we work with partners across Sussex through the Sussex Health and Care Assembly at ICS level, and participate as partner members in the NHS Sussex ICB. However, in line with the national principle of subsidiarity, there is also local agreement that place is key to strategic leadership, local commissioning and delivery for population services within the Sussex ICS. This model supports ongoing focus on local needs and priorities, builds on existing partnership working, and reflects the different stages of development in each place, enabling East Sussex to move forward from our existing strong foundations. At local place level, the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board (HWP) and East Sussex Health and Care Partnership bring together NHS partners, other local authorities and the VCSE to further develop our integrated approaches to planning, delivering and transforming services and to improve population health through delivery of our Health and Wellbeing Strategy and associated plans.

We have been active in ensuring a strong focus on the critical importance of good mental and physical health in early years within ICS and place level strategies, in order both to enhance the quality of life for children and young people and to prevent ill health in later life. At ICS level the Children and Young People Board brings together a range of senior NHS managers with Directors of Children’s Services and colleagues across the three places in Sussex to achieve coherent strategy and delivery across health, care and education over the coming years. At a local level we are working in partnership with health colleagues through the Children and Young People’s Health Oversight Board to deliver the priorities for children and young people in the East Sussex plan for local health and social care integrated working.

Impact in practice:

- Our strong focus on partnership relationships has helped support rapid utilisation of one-off funding streams such as social care winter and hospital discharge funding, and collaboration on the use of ICS health inequalities unallocated funding in 2022/23 for specific projects covering carers support, equality, diversity and inclusion, social prescribing, public involvement and alcohol care.
- Our fully integrated prevention and early help service, through which NHS employed health visitors and ESCC employed family support workers are managed through a single management structure, has been able to work flexibly to meet different challenges. For example, children’s centre workers have undertaken activity to mitigate the impact of reduced health visiting capacity.

Children and education

In addition to delivery of the wide range of statutory education responsibilities (place planning, admissions, SEND and transport) our Children's Services department also secures school improvement in East Sussex in partnership with schools. Primary and Secondary Boards are at the heart of our school-led system, shaping trusted professional practices between schools, academies, and the Council. A Joint Board connects the work of both boards and maintains a sharp focus on transition. The Primary and Secondary Boards are underpinned by Education Improvement Partnerships and Area Groups respectively. These locality groups are led by serving headteachers and supported by the Council and our external advisers. Careers education and links with businesses are well supported by an innovative Skills and Education team managed jointly across Children's Services and the Communities, Economy and Transport Department, funded through a range of external grants.

We continue to work closely with partners as part of the multi-agency early help and child protection system. This is part of a wider multi-agency safeguarding system, underpinned by strong statutory multi-agency governance and scrutiny by the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership. We work in partnership with health, education, district and borough councils and with a range of providers from both the private and voluntary sectors in delivering our corporate parenting role. This includes ensuring we collectively support care experienced young people through our local offer, particularly regarding extending and developing housing options for vulnerable young people.

Through the partnership network of organisations which constitute the East Sussex Children and Young People's Trust, we work across health, social care, education, and criminal justice – working with partners in the statutory and voluntary sector to progress our priorities.

East Sussex is also the host authority for Adoption South East, the regional adoption agency which includes Brighton & Hove City Council, Surrey County Council and West Sussex County Council, established in 2020.

Impact in practice:

- Work with the Schools Boards has led to joint projects and peer to peer support, for example agreement of new arrangements through which schools can provide mutual support and challenge in relation to inclusion and reducing exclusions, and a clear set of principles for the development of a multi academy trust landscape.
- Following an independent review of young people's emotional health and wellbeing services across Sussex we have established East Sussex Children and Young People's (CYP) Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing (MHEW) Planning Group to drive forward focused local priorities. One outcome from this work is a successful bid for positive activities for CYP with mild to moderate MHEW needs, delivered by two VCSE organisations through social prescribing.



Voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector

There is a strong focus on partnership working between the statutory and VCSE sector in East Sussex, led and coordinated through the Partnership Plus Executive Board which is supported by ESCC. The Board brings together senior management from the County Council, NHS organisations and leaders from the VCSE in East Sussex to support integrated approaches to improving local health, care, and wellbeing through the ongoing development of partnership and whole system working. It also oversees the delivery of specific partnership projects such as a systems approach to tackling loneliness and isolation. The Board, which is co-chaired by the Director of Adult Social Care and Health and the Director of Care for the Carers, links to a wider Partnership Plus group and the East Sussex VCSE Alliance, which give ESCC access to stakeholders from across the VCSE and public sectors.

Impact in practice:

- The East Sussex VCSE Alliance, the County Council and NHS Sussex are working to develop a centre of excellence for VCSE commissioning. The two-year programme will be based on practical, peer-led learning and put into practice the East Sussex VCSE Alliance Commissioning Principles 2022.
- VCSE partners have contributed to the needs assessment for refugees and asylum seekers. They provide a range of support services to these groups which includes help to navigate and access health services, signposting, social networking and social prescribing services.
- Working with Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA) we reached 200 people to understand and address the barriers to Covid 19 vaccine uptake. VCSE partners have also collaborated with us on delivering targeted Covid 19 communications and support for mobile vaccination units and pop up services, improving vaccine access and uptake. Knowledge from the work on Covid 19 will be applied to MMR and other vaccination programmes.



Economy

On the economy, our Economic Development team oversees the development and delivery of the East Sussex Growth Strategy, East Sussex Invest (grants and loans programme for businesses), Business Support and a number of other related activities. It is the main interface with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) which operates on a federated model. This means that the East Sussex Growth Board – Team East Sussex – is at the forefront of improving the economy in the county, and through the County Council delivers East Sussex elements of SELEP-wide programmes such as ‘South East Business Boost’. It manages the inward investment contract for the county (Locate East Sussex) and manages the superfast broadband contract to roll out superfast and ultrafast broadband infrastructure to East Sussex businesses and communities. We work with business and further and higher education partners through a range of Team East Sussex sub-groups, including Skills East Sussex, Developers East Sussex and Culture East Sussex, which also links to the emerging local visitor economy partnership.

Impact in practice:

- In direct response to the pandemic, Team East Sussex led the development of the East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan, a strategy and action plan that focused on businesses, skills and employment in a post-Covid landscape. The strong partnership of local authority and business leaders, including HE/FE and the third sector, meant that the strategy had extremely broad support so could be advanced at pace, with partners leading on different strands of the action plan through to completion.



Environment

A partnership of private, public and educational sector organisations has formed the East Sussex Environment Board, which has developed the East Sussex Environment Strategy and steers its implementation. The main aim of the Strategy is to drive measurable improvements in our environment, to ensure East Sussex continues to be where people want to live, work, study, visit and do business. The Environment Board is accountable to Team East Sussex.

Impact in practice:

- The Environment Board has produced the county wide Environment Strategy and the Climate Emergency Road Map, which provide a holistic picture of the current baseline, the long term trajectory and the short term priorities for the environment in East Sussex.



Emergency planning and resilience

East Sussex Resilience and Emergencies Partnership (ESREP) is the jointly funded local emergency planning forum covering ESCC, Districts and Boroughs, and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS), feeding into the wider Sussex Resilience Forum. The Emergency Planning and Resilience Team, employed by ESCC, provides support to senior officers across the partnership through the development of emergency and business continuity plans, training, and exercising. ESREP strengthens the resilience of East Sussex by working towards a streamlined, common approach to planning, training and exercising, and supports the safety of our communities while improving interoperability. It also offers significant economies of effort and resource by enabling partners to share the workload of common issues that would otherwise be implemented in isolation. Additionally, the Emergency Planning and Resilience team provide the link to the Sussex Resilience Forum to support preparation, response and recovery while representing partner needs and interests.

Impact in practice:

- ESREP is unusual as the partnership includes all the local authorities across East Sussex alongside Public Health and ESFRS. This arrangement enables partners and emergency planners to have links with all the local authority services in the area which means significant access to expertise, efficient use of resources and the ability to plan, train and exercise together across a common framework.
- Over the last year ESREP has continued to deliver positive outcomes for partners including the standardisation of training for rest centre and local authority incident liaison staff to create efficiency and improve interoperability, and also the delivery of a cross-partnership winter preparedness exercise.

Community safety

The East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership is the key strategic partnership bringing together a range of agencies in overseeing the plans to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour and re-offending in the county. The partnership works in collaboration with district and borough level community safety partnerships and at pan-Sussex level with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), to jointly commission a range of services. Through one of these services, Project ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery) we are working with the Home Office and a number of agencies and charities to provide education and support to people affected by substance misuse and find a route out of dependency that is right for them whilst also raising awareness of this issue with the wider community. Initially focused in Hastings, which has one of the highest drug-related death rates in England, it is recognised that harm caused by opiate and crack cocaine use affects the county as a whole. As a result of this, Project ADDER has now been extended to cover the whole of East Sussex.

Impact in practice:

- The Safer Communities Partnership works closely with the Office of the PCC to ensure a strategic approach to tackling domestic and sexual violence and abuse. This is implemented through jointly owned needs assessments, strategies and action plans, and through the joint governance mechanisms of a Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and its sub-groups. Specialist Domestic and Sexual Violence services are jointly commissioned, with contracts managed in partnership.

Regional and national influence

The Council has also been instrumental in establishing and leading regional partnerships – the Leader chairs the sub-national transport body Transport for the South East (TfSE) and the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport is the lead officer for the organisation, which is hosted by the Council. ESCC also chairs the South East 7 partnership – a grouping of seven upper tier local authorities which meets regularly and works together at Leader and Chief Executive level on issues of common interest.

Our senior officers take an active role in regional and national work. For example, the Chief Executive represents the region's senior local authority officers in working with Government, the Director of Adult Social Care chairs the ADASS finance group, the Director of Children's Services chairs the regional ADCS sector-led improvement group, ESCC Children's Services leads on regional benchmarking work and the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport is a past president of ADEPT.



We would welcome the peer team's views on whether we could do more to maximise the benefits of partnership working for East Sussex.

Help with the cost of living in East Sussex



Case Study

The County Council set up a multi-agency Financial Inclusion Group which draws together partners from around the county to devise practical help and support for people struggling with living costs. The group includes VCSE organisations, the NHS, borough and district councils and the Department for Work and Pensions. It is chaired by senior leaders from Adult Social Care and Health and the VCSE sector.

The group has targeted financial grants to local and community initiatives able to demonstrate how their work helps people most affected by cost of living pressure.

It has created online webpages to signpost people to clear and practical advice and support on everything from food and housing costs to mental health and heating: [Cost of living support | East Sussex County Council](#). There have been more than 15,000 visits to these pages, which are promoted through online newsletters and social media. Information has also been produced on postcards to help reach people offline and these are being distributed in libraries, by front-line staff and by councillors.

The group has commissioned data analysis of those communities and neighbourhoods where people are most likely to struggle with the cost of living and this will enable more precise targeting of support and advice.



Shared place ambitions

We are clear-sighted about the needs of the county and focused about what will help tackle the challenges faced locally. Collective leadership capacity and positive relationships within the county, along with a well-understood local evidence base, are felt to provide a strong foundation for continued progress. Looking ahead, we expect joint working locally and at pan-Sussex level to remain fundamental to meeting these needs. **Some areas we expect to be a future focus for partnership and place are outlined below:**

We are jointly exploring how we can take forward the next phase of **health and social care integration** for our residents, including agreeing our roadmap and how it will be delivered. This will be co-produced with all of our stakeholders and there will be a key focus on building wider ownership of our plans and proposals to ensure they fit with the broader offer to our communities in East Sussex. Our East Sussex Health and Care Partnership shared priorities for delivery in 2023/24 have been refreshed and further developed, along with our supporting partnership and programme governance, to support effective leadership and delivery at place level as we move into 2023/24. At ICS level, the development of the Sussex Integrated Care Strategy 'Improving Lives Together' has identified clear priorities across health and care which will benefit from a focus at ICS level moving forward. These include workforce development, improved use of digital, and building integrated



community teams across Sussex to build on what's already in place in East Sussex. The strategy was agreed by the Council and approved by the Sussex Assembly in December 2022, having been endorsed by the East Sussex HWB as building on the JSNA and HWB Strategy for East Sussex. The development of the five year Joint Delivery Plan, known in Sussex as the Shared Delivery Plan (SDP), is currently in process. This will be a testing ground for the primacy of place and the principle of subsidiarity at the upper tier level, as well as what is best taken forward at scale. In particular, the functional roles of place-based partnerships to support leadership and delivery of shared priorities and plans, and the management of collective resources in the context of the ICS, based on the place understanding of population needs and communities. Sussex has also been identified as one of six national discharge accelerator areas, finding innovative ways to support people to leave hospital more quickly.

Further developing our existing multi-agency partnership working, we are working with VCSE, district, borough, town and parish partners to establish **community networks** in each of the five district and borough areas, building on community hubs and networks set up during the pandemic, to strengthen community capacity, support prevention and earlier intervention and help people help themselves (further detail in section 5).



The local response to **climate change** will continue to be a focus for partnership work. Progress on the county-wide Climate Change Roadmap will continue to be driven by the Environment Board, which is hosted by the County Council. A range of existing thematic partnerships will also continue to address climate change in East Sussex, including partnerships covering housing, waste, skills and local planning. ESCC has also recently completed a review with Community Energy South (CES) on ways to align the climate change objectives of the County Council and the network of community energy groups established in East Sussex. We also fund CES to deliver carbon literacy training in the community and recently submitted a bid with CES and UK Power Networks for funding from UK Innovate's Fast Followers programme to develop community energy plans.

Our federated LEP Board puts us in a strong position to transition from existing LEP arrangements for local authorities to take on these functions, depending on the outcome of the Government consultation on the future of LEPs. We are currently working with partners to produce an Economic Insight Analysis which will set out the evidence base for a range of interventions that will have most impact on the economy, particularly in relation to productivity, innovation and pre-scale up businesses. This will inform a new **Growth Strategy** for the county to support longer term recovery and growth.



We are carefully considering the potential opportunities and risks of **devolution** for East Sussex. Given the existing strength and depth of local partnerships, clarity is needed on the additional benefits devolved arrangements would bring, over and above what we can achieve through effectively working together. The local geography and local authority structures are also a key element, with the position of our neighbouring unitary authority of Brighton & Hove an important factor, as well as West Sussex County Council, given the likelihood that devolution arrangements would be considered at a pan-Sussex level. We are clear that a prerequisite for any future devolution proposal would be support from all Councils involved, including districts and boroughs, and from partners.



Delivering on priorities for our organisation and place

Some examples of how we are taking forward our priority outcomes are described below:

Driving sustainable economic growth

We work closely with local businesses to identify and promote the conditions needed to grow our local economy in a sustainable way, helping improve access to quality jobs, goods and services for our communities. During the pandemic the Council played a key role, through Team East Sussex, in the publication of the East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan. The plan set out six missions, with each mission outlining a different way in which the economy in the county could go beyond recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic to grow and thrive while also becoming cleaner and greener.

Alongside work to develop future economic strategy post-Covid, we have, in the shorter term, agreed with our district and borough partners the use of Shared Prosperity Funding to deliver a specialist business support programme across the county. We are also looking to build on the strengths in the local economy, for example working with West Sussex and Brighton & Hove partners to grow the value of our tourism sector by creating a “Sussex Story” marketing narrative and commissioning film and photography that all businesses can access to promote the county to local, national and international visitors. We are supporting the delivery of the South East Create Growth Programme, providing access to business support, investment and grants for pre-scale up creative sector businesses.



We also recognise that businesses can only thrive if they have the local infrastructure they need and access to the right skills in the local workforce. A number of infrastructure projects will continue or be delivered in 2023/24, including improvements to Terminus Road in Eastbourne, walking and cycling improvements in Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings and progressing the project to replace Exceat Bridge, funded via a successful Levelling Up Fund bid. Our e-Sussex project to rollout super and ultra-fast broadband across the county has improved access to services, jobs and education, and has helped support flexible working. Over 98% of premises have been connected to improved broadband speeds during our first and second contracts of work with BT. We are now entering the final phases of our third contract with the aim of connecting as close to 100% of premises in the county as possible.

We work with post-16 providers, strategic partners, and businesses through Skills East Sussex and priority sector task groups to understand and respond to local skills needs and economic priorities. This includes priorities by 2030 for recovery, upskilling the workforce, supporting the unemployed and looking ahead to the skills the economy will need for a net-zero and digitised future. We will continue to address identified areas of skills and employment shortages



within the county by also using our strategy and action plan to make best use of the Apprenticeship Levy scheme to fund apprenticeships in our own workforce and in local small and medium businesses.

As a body with significant spending power in the county we constantly review our procurement processes to ensure they are accessible to local suppliers, maximise the use of local providers in the supply chains, and secure added economic, social and environmental benefits. We aim to deliver at least 60% of the Council's circa £400m procurement spend through local companies. A recent scrutiny review examined our approach to social value and buying local in procurement and we are taking forward scrutiny recommendations to further develop our approach.



The grid adding social value across East Sussex



Case Study

A single contract framework to provide ultra-fast broadband to schools and public sector premises in East Sussex is adding £2.5m in social value to the county.

The South East Grid, which connects the Council and many of its partners on a high-speed network, is a powerful influence on efficient working, digital inclusivity and the local economy. Crucially, this economic benefit includes the social value from local spending commitments, creation of jobs in the area, apprenticeships and training.

Our approach to social value is also shown through our social value marketplace, established to help public, private and social sectors in East Sussex to share and collaborate for the benefit of local communities and residents.

In the marketplace, organisations can post requests for help, offer resources, share information and analysis and join forces when they're working towards similar goals.

Examples have included:

- Volunteers, charities, companies and Council joining forces to support primary school children learning to read
- Donation of commercial kitchen equipment to help community food resources
- A disability charity sourcing ergonomic office chairs for its work through the marketplace

More than 200 organisations or individuals have already signed up to join the marketplace.



Keeping vulnerable people safe

Safeguarding vulnerable children and adults is one of our key priorities and responsibilities to the community. For vulnerable children who cannot be looked after at home by their families, we aim to intervene early and find permanent or long-term placements for them through fostering or adoption where appropriate. We are ambitious so that they can achieve their best and we will continue with effective placement planning to ensure that the right child is cared for, in the right place, for the right amount of time and at the most appropriate cost.

We are continuing to deliver early help services via an integrated service with health visitors as part of the 0-19 Early Help service alongside the development of Family Hubs. The aim is to provide earlier support and prevent escalation to more intensive specialist services helping to manage demand for higher cost services. Our plans to implement further preventative approaches in Children's Services are covered in section 5.

As described above, we worked with our partners in the Sussex Health and Care Partnership (ICS) during 2022 to develop the five year Sussex Integrated Care Strategy which aligns with, and builds upon, the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Strategy 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People 2022-2027' and associated plans overseen by our Health and Wellbeing Board. As part of this, we are taking a lead role in developing the new ICS suicide and self-harm prevention strategy. This will include a local programme of activity and continuation of our work to reduce deaths at coastal locations.

We are sharing learning between the Homes for Ukraine programme and other arrangements and resettlement schemes for refugees, asylum seekers and migrant groups, to ensure East Sussex is a safe and welcoming county for all people arriving in our communities. We have recently strengthened our response to increased levels of migration by establishing a new Migrant Support Team. This team will enhance our capacity to respond to current operational and strategic priorities around migrant communities through a coordinated countywide partnership approach.

Helping people help themselves

This priority recognises that people prefer and need to be independent. If we can encourage families and communities to work together to build better local communities, meet local need, and support individuals to stay independent, we can meet our objectives of breaking dependency, while reducing demand for services and therefore costs. To achieve this, we have a clear focus on people's needs when designing and providing services and information, and on providing support as early as possible and in an integrated way.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on people who were previously experiencing significant health and structural inequalities. Their recovery requires a detailed understanding of their concerns, a commitment and collaboration between agencies and genuine efforts to co-produce solutions. The three-year 'Living Well with Covid' programme, which started in May 2022, covers a range of statutory functions and good practice public health interventions. Taking a community leadership approach framed within a disaster recovery context the programme seeks to support three target communities: young adults living in deprived areas, black and ethnic minority groups, and our workforce. A Creating Healthier Lives – Arts in Public Health workstream is being developed locally to sustain, improve and prevent ill health and promote wellbeing through arts, creativity, and culture. The plan will link in with the [East Sussex Cultural Strategy](#) and support community recovery and renewal.

Following an independent review of young people's emotional health and wellbeing services across Sussex, the East Sussex Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing (MHEW) Planning Group has been set up. The Group will drive and oversee improvements in MHEW services in East Sussex as part of implementing the new Sussex wide strategy 'Foundations for our Future'.

We know that people, families and communities across East Sussex have huge potential to thrive and to support each other. We are working with partners across health, social care, the voluntary and community sector, and others to



Case Study

Food and fun brings long term benefits for East Sussex children

increase community and personal resilience in East Sussex. This includes work on financial inclusion (as described above), tackling loneliness and the development of community networks which provide a range of prevention support, access to practical help and increase the availability of social opportunities to local communities.

ESCC and Rother Voluntary Action were among a team of 15 project partners from across the UK, France, Belgium and Netherlands involved in delivering the [Healthy Ageing through Innovation in Rural Europe \(HAIRE\)](#) project, funded by Interreg 2 Seas and the EU's European Regional Development Fund. HAIRE worked with older people in Robertsbridge and Rye to develop and test systems that empower and enable older people to define what support they need, participate in the design and delivery of services and develop solutions for themselves, supported by the voluntary, private and public sectors. As part of the Ageing Well in East Sussex 2020 Digital Festival, the HAIRE project ran a series of [one-hour events](#) around the themes of healthy ageing.

Children will benefit for years to come from the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme in East Sussex which has put down roots in local communities across the county.

We took a 'small and local' approach to introducing the government scheme, encouraging a broad range of providers to set up fun and health activity schemes in their community for children receiving benefits-related free school meals. This local network has steadily grown across the county, with potential demand now almost double the available HAF funding.

This has enabled more children to benefit from the HAF programme – over 6,000 young people in 2022. But

it has also strengthened the resilience of East Sussex, helping community providers acquire the experience and network to expand their offer. Partnerships developed through HAF have enabled many organisations to continue their work outside holiday periods. Smaller providers have gained the confidence and experience to apply for other funding, and longer-term partnerships have developed between schools and local activity and community groups to meet local needs.

More than 100 local organisations have been funded since the programme started.

Feedback from families and providers

has shown the focus on health eating and activity has made attendees more active in the holidays and more aware of healthy eating. Many children have reported increased confidence, reduced anxiety and better engagement with school. One child told their mum: "I finally found somewhere that feels right and for the first time I actually fit in and people liked me."

ESCC is now developing further projects and, using the evidence, has secured NHS funding to develop a social prescribing approach, linking young people to positive activities during term time to support their mental health and emotional wellbeing.



Making best use of resources now and for the future

This priority underpins all our activities and is a key measure of success for all our priority outcomes. It applies to all the resources available for East Sussex, not only within the Council, but across the public sector, voluntary and community sector and private partners, and within local communities. We aim to work in a unified way so that resources are focused on delivering our priority outcomes, minimising the cost of back-office services and directing resources to frontline services.

The County Council has updated its corporate Climate Emergency Plan and, as a member of the Environment Board for East Sussex, is playing a key role in delivering some of the programmes and projects set out in the East Sussex Climate Emergency Road Map. Our plans in this area are covered in more detail in section 5.

We are investing in enabling technology and evolving our working practices to ensure we have modern, flexible workspaces and work styles that enable hybrid ways of working, building on the success of existing flexible working options. This also means reviewing our office estate, ensuring that it is the right size for our future needs. New working practices will drive efficiency, as well as significantly reducing carbon emissions through a reduced requirement for staff travel. Further detail on our Workstyles programme is in section 5.

We are in the process of implementing a new Oracle Fusion system, to replace the Council's core finance and Human Resources systems, through our Modernising Back Office Systems programme. The improvements delivered by the new system will help support our new working practices.

We are proactive in making the best use of our assets, for example investing in support for our staff to ensure we get the best from our people resources, and embracing technology to improve efficiency – further detail on both in section 5. We share property, staff, technology and data with partners so we work as efficiently as possible, removing duplication and increasing flexibility. For example, the Strategic Property Asset Collaboration in East Sussex (SPACES) programme was formed by a number of public and third sector organisations coming together in partnership to look for opportunities to co-locate and collaborate around property, to ensure cost effectiveness and to improve the customer journey by creating more effective environments to deliver services from. We also review the potential for income generation from our properties.

We will also join with partners to seek opportunities to achieve better value through our procurement. We are actively working to strengthen our planning processes to enable better strategic decision making in this area and maximise value for money.





Mixing it up to reduce carbon



Case Study

ESCC has developed a carbon reduction strategy which invests in a mix of technologies to have the most impact and make the best use of resources.

This includes a 'whole life' and 'whole building' approach, meaning that we tend to only replace old oil and gas boilers when they're about to fail – putting in heat pumps at this point. When this happens it's accompanied by building fabric improvements like improved insulation to drive down energy bills.

At the same time we have a rolling programme of installations across our buildings, including schools, to drive energy efficiency through LED lighting and to increase the amount of renewable energy we generate through solar panels. Last year we delivered carbon reduction projects across 21 buildings and this year we will deliver a further 23 schemes.

Our strategy of mixed interventions as the best route to net zero is based on detailed modelling done for us by a leading asset management and construction consultancy.



Communicating with our residents

Our communication with residents has four main aims:

To help meet their needs

By providing clear and useful information for our residents we help them find services and sources of advice and support. This is done both through universal platforms like a user-focused website and mass advertising but also through targeted campaigns aimed at specific places or demographics. Our campaigns and projects include both corporate and service-specific activity, but all support the Council's priority outcomes. The digital revolution has transformed communications as much as any sector with new ways to target particular audiences, evaluate effectiveness and to tell stories: making use of these is essential to our approach and demands continuous exploration and development on our part. But it must not come at the expense of the non-digital (or digitally-disadvantaged) residents, so using channels and tactics which suit them is integral to our approach.

To be clear about the Council's mission and activity

A transparent conversation about our democracy, policies, expenditure and outcomes is crucial for our engagement with residents. Regular contact through email newsletters, media work, social media, surveys, consultations and events, and listening to the response, is an important part of our communications and engagement, not only with residents but also with staff, partners and elected Members.

To influence behaviour

We want people to be healthy, independent, secure, and prepared for the future. Our communications can suggest actions and choices which may help people achieve those aims.

To celebrate life and achievement in East Sussex

The Council can act as a focal point in East Sussex and our communications includes celebrating the county's landscape, people, traditions and innovation. We share stories and conversation through our [Your East Sussex](#) brand (including website, newsletter and social media) to enhance pride and pleasure at living here and reinforce connections between people.

YourEastSussex

Category: Things to See & Do



How wildflowers are blooming alongside East Sussex...

Posted by Laura Hughes | Jul 13, 2021

Our approach to communications

Our overall approach to communications is drawn together in a communications strategy and monitored by a cross-Council communications management board.

A rolling communications plan is kept updated with each service department to give a 12-month forward look and agree strategic priorities. These inform an annual communications plan for the Council which identifies major campaigns and projects which will support ESCC's priority outcomes in the year ahead.

We see as essential that we co-operate on communications with other partners, including NHS, emergency services and district and borough councils to ensure clarity and consistency for residents.

We've done significant work to modernise our web content with a focus on web accessibility. A Government Digital Service audit found our website compliant with new accessibility standards (WCAG) and monitoring software scored it 'excellent.'

Another focus area is communications on climate change, where we are overhauling our approach to engaging the public, staff and members in the issues, the practical steps they can take to help, and our own journey towards net zero.



Organisational leadership



Becky Shaw
Chief Executive



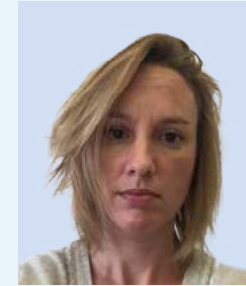
Philip Baker
Assistant Chief Executive
(and Monitoring Officer)



Rupert Clubb
Director of Communities,
Economy and Transport



Alison Jeffery
Director of Children's
Services



Ros Parker
Chief Operating
Officer



Mark Stainton
Director of Adult
Social Care and Health

The **Corporate Management Team (CMT)** brings together the Chief Executive and Chief Officers, who meet, along with the Chief Finance Officer (the Council's s151 Officer), on a weekly basis to consider strategic and operational issues and to review and refine key reports prior to recommendation to Members. Once a month an extended 'awayday' session allows more time for discussion of longer term strategic issues, particularly forward planning through the RPPR process. Importantly, reflecting the collegiate nature of CMT, the meetings also serve as a sounding board for Chief Officers and a forum for collective problem solving.

CMT plays a key role in leading our One Council approach, making cross-organisational links, supporting information and practice sharing and consistency of approach where required. CMT works closely with a range of themed cross-Council boards, covering areas such as Customer Experience, Digital, Communications and HR. These bring together senior officers from across departments, with specialist lead officers, to develop and co-ordinate Council-wide approaches on cross-cutting issues. Our Statutory Officers Group, which also feeds into CMT, brings together the group of statutory officers with the Chief Operating Officer to dynamically consider current governance issues and identify any wider implications for the organisation.

Broader senior officer leadership and engagement is through the Council's **Leadership Group**, another important part of the One Council approach at ESCC. The group, which meets every 5-6 weeks, comprises CMT and all Assistant Directors in the Council, along with the Head of Communications, Head of Performance, Research and Intelligence and Head of Policy. At each meeting the Chief Executive provides an update on strategic issues affecting the Council's work, including national and local policy and political developments, and it is an opportunity for CMT to jointly cascade information to senior leaders. The meetings also enable all departments to come together to discuss and provide input into cross-cutting Council matters including, for example, at key junctures in the RPPR process, on shared ways of working issues and common policy themes.



3. Governance and culture

Governance arrangements

The Council operates a Leader/Executive form of governance. Our Cabinet is made up of:



The Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development
Cllr Keith Glazier



The Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change
Cllr Nick Bennett



Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health
Cllr Carl Maynard



Lead Member for Children and Families
Cllr Bob Bowdler



Lead Member for Economy
Vacancy



Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability
Cllr Bob Standley



Lead Member for Transport and Environment
Cllr Claire Dowling



Our constitution

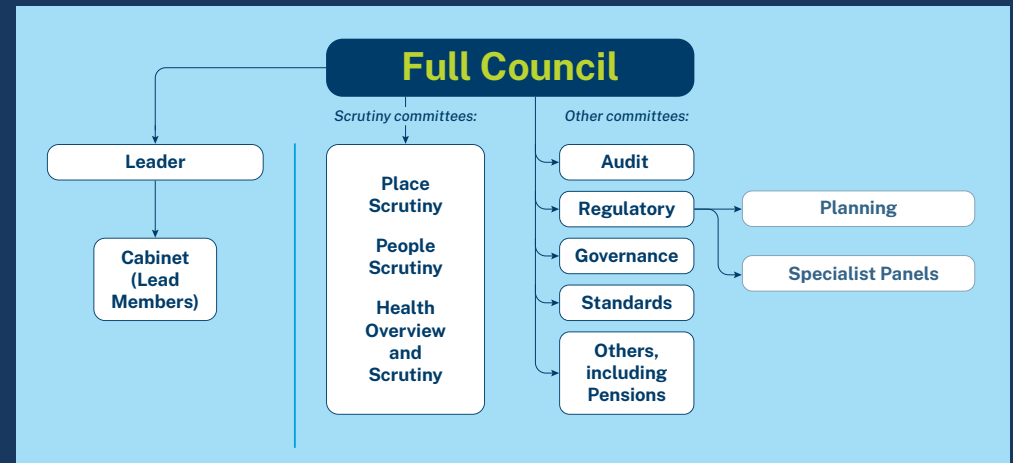
Our constitution sets out the framework under which the Council conducts its business. It aims to:

- enable the Council to provide clear leadership to the community in partnership with citizens, businesses and other organisations;
- support the active involvement of citizens in the process of local authority decision-making;
- help Councillors represent their constituents effectively;
- enable decisions to be taken efficiently, effectively and in an open and transparent manner, ensuring that those responsible for decision making are clearly identifiable to local people and that they explain the reasons for decisions;
- create a powerful and effective means of holding decision makers to account; and
- provide a means of improving the delivery of services to the community.

The majority of functions rest with the Cabinet, other than those reserved to full Council by statute or local choice. Each year at the annual meeting of the County Council, the Leader sets out the areas of responsibility that fall within each executive portfolio and that are to be the responsibility of the relevant Lead Member. Decisions may be taken by individual cabinet members within their portfolio.

The Council has also established a number of **committees** to carry out its non-executive functions. These include: Planning Committee, Audit Committee, Governance Committee, Pensions Committee, Regulatory Committee, Standards Committee and scrutiny committees.

Where decisions are made



Support for cabinet members is provided within relevant departments, and regular meetings of the Cabinet and CMT support planning and discussion on strategic policy matters between senior officers and Lead Members collectively. Opposition spokespeople meet as required with Chief Officers to discuss current and upcoming issues. Regular informal group leaders calls support liaison across the political groups.

A popular training session for staff, 'Working in a Political Environment', supports any officer needing to gain a better understanding of the Council's democratic processes and the local political environment in East Sussex. Political awareness masterclasses for Heads of Service and managers on our leadership programme provide a more detailed insight. All sessions feature a Member sharing their experiences and perspective. All new managers receive an introduction to the political environment via induction sessions. Alongside the training offer, an Officer Guide to Governance is also available to staff.

Scrutiny

The Council has a well-established system of scrutiny which works alongside the Cabinet to help make sure the Council is delivering services efficiently and effectively, and that the Council is responsive to the needs and opinions of the County's residents and organisations.

East Sussex scrutiny has an evidence-based approach to providing constructive challenge that ultimately improves the lives of people living and working in East Sussex. A positive and open relationship between Cabinet and scrutiny means that there is opportunity for scrutiny to influence decisions before they are made and use of call-in is rare.

The work of scrutiny is divided between three scrutiny committees - two committees (People and Place) focusing on Cabinet portfolio responsibilities and a third, the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), scrutinises health services. Each committee sets its own work programme which includes input to the RPPR process throughout the year. Scrutiny work is undertaken flexibly through a mix of scrutiny reviews, reference groups, briefings and site visits, as well as the formal meetings at which Members regularly review and agree priorities for scrutiny activity.

The chairs and vice-chairs of scrutiny and Audit committees are allocated proportionately across the political groups and regular meetings of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group oversee and guide the effectiveness of scrutiny activity and support. An overview of scrutiny and Audit Committee activity is regularly reported to this group, the Council's Governance Committee, Statutory Officers Group and Corporate Management Team to help ensure the visibility and effectiveness of scrutiny work. Scrutiny reviews are reported to both Cabinet and County Council for debate and response. Formal meetings of the overview and scrutiny committees are webcast.

Support for elected Members

Support for elected Members is overseen by a Member Reference Group comprising a Councillor nominated by each political group. The Group provides steer on areas such as the Member development programme, IT support and the Member wellbeing offer. The varied Member development programme is also informed by regular surveys of Members to identify training needs. Following on from an extensive induction programme provided in 2021/22 after the last Council elections, the 2022/23 programme has incorporated topics such as scrutiny leadership, climate change awareness, equality and diversity, use of digital tools and councillor wellbeing. Regular virtual Whole Council Forums are held to provide briefings to all Members on key issues such as State of the County, the development of the Budget and Council Plan or the Covid response.

Advice and support on the Council's governance and decision making processes is provided to Members and officers by the Member Services Team with scrutiny support by the corporate Policy Team. A councillors' intranet area hosts a range of information and resources to help Members resolve issues independently and to access support where needed, particularly in representing and supporting residents in their division.

To support and encourage local people from all walks of life who may be considering standing for election as a County Councillor we maintain a [Be a councillor](#) website in partnership with the LGA. We also hold a Be a councillor engagement event in the year ahead of elections, offering a chance to find out more about the Council and what's involved in the elected Member role.



Remote working

Building on a positive experience of remote meetings during the Covid pandemic, the Council has taken steps to retain the benefits identified by Members as far as possible within the current legislative framework. In July 2021 the County Council agreed to adopt a range of opportunities for remote attendance where permitted by law, including Lead Member meetings being held remotely. The approach has been implemented successfully, resulting in a number of meetings being held fully online or as hybrid meetings where officers and some Members can attend remotely if they wish. This has maintained a number of benefits including a reduction in carbon emissions and costs, greater flexibility in organising meetings and reduced time spent travelling, enabling councillors to have more time for their other duties. The online or hybrid format has also been adopted for a range of informal meetings such as scrutiny boards and Member training events, resulting in greater flexibility and opportunity for Members and others to attend. Longer term, it is recognised that remote working has the potential to enable more people to consider standing for election given the benefits for accessibility and balancing the councillor role with work or family commitments.

Strategic Risk Management

The Council's Risk Management Framework sets out the Council's policy on risk management and its strategy for effective identification, assessment and, where appropriate, management of risks as well as defining the roles and responsibilities relating to the risk management process.

Risks are captured on departmental risk registers, divisional and project risk registers as appropriate. Risks are escalated or de-escalated to the strategic risk register when they relate to strategic objectives and/or cannot be managed at an operational level. As a minimum, all risk registers are formally reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis as part of the Council's monitoring process. The strategic risk register is reviewed and updated by CMT prior to being reported to Cabinet and the Audit Committee.

CMT is responsible for endorsing and promoting robust risk management across the Council and maintaining and monitoring the Council's strategic risk register. The role of CMT includes managing escalated risk, including reputational management, and agreeing intervention approach when assurance is not satisfactory.

Each year the Chief Executive and Leader jointly sign off the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) to confirm that the Council's governance arrangements are in order and comply with the nationally agreed principles of good governance for public bodies. It also contains an action plan of any steps proposed to address issues or areas for improvement the AGS identifies. The content and actions of the AGS are overseen by both the Audit Committee and the Governance Committee, and the Council's internal and external auditors also contribute to and comment on the AGS.

The Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Audit Plan is updated annually and is based on a number of factors, particularly management's assessment of risk (including that set out within the strategic and departmental risk registers) and internal audit's own risk assessment of the Council's major systems and other auditable areas. This allows internal audit to prioritise those areas to be included within the audit plan on the basis of risk.

Staff culture and engagement

Our **People Strategy** sets out our commitments to supporting and developing our managers and staff to enable them to respond to the Council's changing and challenging operating environment. The Strategy is built on the four themes of:

- Leadership and Management
- Performance Development and Reward
- Employee Engagement and Inclusion
- Employee Health and Wellbeing

Following the pandemic, and the resulting significant changes to the way we work, priorities in our People Strategy include supporting staff and managers to adapt to new ways of working, digital leadership skills including leading and managing remote teams, coaching and compassionate leadership.

The People Strategy is underpinned by the '**East Sussex Way**' which sets out five key values:

The 'East Sussex Way'



These core values were developed jointly with staff through a series of engagement events in 2017/18 and are embedded within the Council through the induction process.

We use a number of different mechanisms and approaches to **engage** with our staff. We have chosen to take a flexible and diverse approach to support ongoing dialogue, having previously run whole Council staff surveys for a number of years, with limited response rates and therefore confidence about how representative the findings were. This more targeted and focused approach enables us to respond dynamically to current issues and priorities using the most appropriate methods. For example, recent PULSE surveys have been run on the topics of developing our approach to reasonable adjustments in the workplace, the impacts of hybrid working, and wellbeing during Covid. In addition, both Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Health have specific departmental staff engagement groups. Regular meetings at several levels also take place with our recognised trades unions. Our maximising performance process encourages ongoing conversations between individuals and their line managers on topics such as wellbeing, development and workload, and an annual extended conversation to discuss goals for the year ahead. Managers are supported to take a coaching approach to these conversations.

Our **internal communication** is designed to be responsive and inclusive, so that all staff can talk to and question senior managers, including through webchats, town hall meetings (online and offline) as well as getting clear and regular updates via staff newsletters (corporate and departmental), manager briefings and video messages [\[like this from the Chief Executive at Christmas\]](#). Free discussion through yammer forums is integrated into our internal communication wherever possible and we have resourced a particular focus on internal communication about equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure that, from Black History Month to helping ESCC welcome neuro-diverse colleagues, inclusive themes get the attention they deserve. The wide range of approaches ensure our communications reach all our staff, including those who are traditionally harder to reach in front line operational roles.

Planning for the future

In recognising increasing challenges around recruitment and retention we undertook a broader piece of work, pre-pandemic, to understand our market position, recruitment and retention hotspots, areas of skill shortages and proposals for addressing these. This led to the establishment of two workstreams focused on attracting and recruiting the future workforce and leading the workforce which have continued to progress post-Covid, taking account of the new context.

In the recruitment and retention space, the new brand –We Choose East Sussex – has been launched. This showcases a number of our current staff and the benefits of working for the Council and whilst early days, initial feedback from candidates has confirmed the positive impact this had on their decision to apply to work for the Council. In addition, changes have been made to our recruitment processes to make them more accessible and quicker and work is on-going to understand the barriers faced by different parts of our communities in applying to work with the Council in order to develop proposals to overcome these barriers.

In terms of leading the workforce, a number of initiatives to support our leaders and managers have been implemented including the development of a new ‘Ladder to Leadership’ programme, a series of masterclasses for Heads of Service and the enhancement of our existing Leadership and Management Capability Framework to embed these qualities within both our recruitment and development processes. Further detail on these leadership initiatives is in section 5 –workforce capacity.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and our workforce

Since 2020 we have significantly restructured our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), working across all departments to identify common issues and opportunities and find shared solutions, and also to identify where tailored and focused activity is needed to meet a specific service need. Our goal through this One Council approach is to ensure that EDI is integral to everyone's 'business as usual' and that our approach is systematic, consistent and continually developing. Engaging with colleagues to develop curiosity and competence in EDI topics has been a core component of our approach.

We are providing development support to four self-organising staff networks which offer constructive and creative spaces for colleagues to share experiences, exchange information, offer their perspectives and generate new ideas that inform and support ESCC's EDI aims.

We are increasing the range of opportunities for colleagues to improve their understanding of EDI topics, through a wide range of 'formal' learning and development courses, e-learning, access to an EDI resource library, regular posts highlighting awareness days / months, and informal webinars and sessions on a range of topics, some of which are organised by our staff networks.

We value our workforce and the skills, perspectives and life experiences that every employee brings. Our four self-organised staff networks are central to how the Council continues to develop a diverse and inclusive workplace. The networks are focused on race equality, LGBTQIA identities, disability, and caring responsibilities and are inclusive of colleagues sharing specific characteristics or those who are (or wish to become) allies. They meet regularly to engage with HR and other teams seeking their views. In the past year they have been involved in consultations to streamline our workplace adjustments process, organised a range of talks for colleagues, including a webinar series for LGBTQ History Month, and engaged increasing numbers of staff in their meetings.

4. Financial planning and management

Current financial health

The Council's budget position is relatively stable, in what is a very uncertain environment for local government. This is built on over a decade of working as One Council, proactively managing the resources we have as effectively as possible for local residents. Part of this required taking difficult decisions to reduce or step back from services when we had to, in order to live within our means and protect services for the most vulnerable. Overall, this meant delivering savings of £138m between 2010 and 2022.

We use the process of Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR), as described earlier, which matches available resources with our delivery plans for our priority outcomes, so that we focus and protect our spending where it will deliver our priorities most effectively. The process of planning, through RPPR, for 2023/24 and beyond has taken into consideration a full analysis of key trends and pressures and translated this into updated service and financial plans. The RPPR process has been applied across all services in the development of the Council Plan supported by the Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan, Reserves and Capital Programme.

There is a culture of strong financial management and awareness resulting from embedding the RPPR process throughout our delivery of services. The process ensures that staff are engaged with the development of financial plans and the impact of decisions are fully understood and explored and help to support difficult decisions when required.

Medium Term Financial Position

The 2023/24 balanced budget was approved on 7 February 2023 by full Council; the summary position is shown below:

<i>Medium Term Financial Plan (£m)</i>	<i>2022/23 Approved Budget</i>	<i>2023/24 Approved Budget</i>	<i>2024/25 Estimate</i>	<i>2025/26 Estimate</i>
Total Planned Expenditure	453.231	501.446	524.224	544.846
Cumulative Deficit / (Surplus)	0.000	0.000	2.196	40.672
Annual Deficit / (Surplus)	0.000	0.000	2.196	38.476

The balanced budget for 2023/24 was agreed with Council Tax at 4.99% inclusive of an Adult Social Care precept of 2%. This supports the continued delivery of services without having to seek additional new savings on top of those previously identified. Whilst the Government has confirmed flexibility to extend Council Tax at this rate into 2024/25 this has not been included in the MTFP. Inflationary pressures, pay, energy and service contracts, have been built into the MTFP. The Treasury Management Strategy has enabled investment opportunities to utilise interest rates rises to help offset some of these pressures.

Key Financial Risks

Through our RPPR process, the Council completes a full risk analysis including those relating to short term and medium term projected volume (including demography), cost pressures from demand led services and contract inflation together with service development/investment opportunities and delivery of remaining savings. This is supplemented by the formal section 25 statement from the Chief Finance Officer.

The most significant risks at the time our budget was set included the continued impact of inflation and demand on our Children's Services post-Covid. As per the national picture, this is primarily in looked after children and home to school transport. We have invested £15m in Children's Services including support for the implementation of a new Family Safeguarding model. Whilst the risks from Adult Social Care reform have been pushed out to 2025, the pressures on services remain, with the sustainability of the care provider market being of particular concern, together with discharging patients from hospitals.

Strong financial management, coupled with better than expected national grant funding and flexibility on Council Tax and Adult Social Care precept means that we have not had to resort to using existing reserves. In setting the budget, we include a budgeted contingency of £4.9m, together with a general reserve of £10m and a strategic financial management reserve, of which £24m is unallocated to specific areas.

As outlined in section 3, we have an established risk management framework and maintain a strategic risk register which is reviewed and reported to Cabinet and full Council on a quarterly basis.

Financial Governance

The RPPR process and ‘in-year pressure protocols’ incorporate a number of stages to allow for challenge, review and refinement.

Financial controls are communicated, managed, and adhered to so service ownership and financial transparency are ever present. This is achieved through robust schemes of delegation, an effective internal audit function and regular reporting to Audit Committee, Cabinet and Council.

Internal audit services are provided to the Council as part of the Orbis shared service arrangement, and the 2021/22 Chief Auditor’s opinion was that of “substantial assurance”.

Grant Thornton, our external auditors, 2021/22 Annual (Value for Money) Report continues to show no significant weaknesses in Financial Sustainability, Governance and Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness and the report confirms “the Council has a strong understanding of its financial position and awareness of the significant challenge that it will be facing in the coming years”.

Budget Monitoring

We have a robust framework of financial management and controls to support effective budget monitoring. Monthly budget monitoring takes place through Directorate Management Teams and quarterly budget monitoring, together with policy priorities, performance updates and risk metrics, is taken through the Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Council.

Oversight of the capital programme is through the Capital Strategic Asset Board (CSAB), a cross-departmental group consisting of officers from each service department, Finance, Property and Procurement. Sitting below the CSAB are departmental sub-boards with direct input into service capital developments. The capital programme is refreshed twice a year as part of the RPPR process at State of the County (June) and Budget setting (January/ February).

Capital Investment

Through the RPPR process, the Capital Strategy and programme are regularly reviewed to ensure they support the Council's responsibilities and departmental service strategies. To manage investment to a sustainable level, a 20 year Capital Strategy focuses on the delivery of targeted basic need, for the Council to continue to deliver services as efficiently as possible, supported by a 10 year planned capital programme of £724.9m to 2032/23.

Capital Programme:

Capital Programme to 2032/33 (£m)	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 to 2032/33	Total
Capital Investment	82.207	96.744	102.376	61.050	382.528	724.905
Current Funding Assumptions	(74.553)	(61.840)	(53.599)	(30.837)	(171.200)	
Borrowing Requirement	7.654	34.904	48.777	30.213	211.328	332.876

As part of the RPPR process, services have reviewed their capital investment requirement in accordance with Capital Strategy principles, reprofiling programmes/projects as accurately as possible, and reviewed key investment areas such as highway maintenance, schools basic need SEND provision and IT infrastructure.

The first three years are considered approved with investment of £342.4m to 2025/26 requiring £121.5m of borrowing, with remaining years to 2032/33 indicative long term plan.

Our capital financing costs are low compared to other County Councils, and the impact of escalating interest rates is low.

Decisions on future capital investment are considered in the context of Treasury Management capacity and the impact on revenue budgets. Treasury Management modelling takes a holistic approach considering a number of variable factors including availability of cash balances and interest rates impacting borrowing costs and return on investments, ensuring that any capital investments are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

There are several risks and uncertainties, notably excess inflationary pressures on construction costs, regarding the capital programme to 2025/26 and beyond which have necessitated holding a capital risk provision. The provision is managed through Treasury Management capacity and is reviewed annually, providing flexibility to react to emerging risks.

5. Capacity for improvement

Our approach – continuous improvement, partnership and thinking local

The Council operates in a rapidly evolving context of changing need, national reforms and resource pressures. This demands that we are ready to adapt, change and improve, or develop responses to new challenges, often at pace. Our approach to innovation and development is focused on evidence-based continuous improvement, rather than large scale transformation programmes.

This is underpinned by working in partnership, by our ongoing review and planning through RPPR, and by our use of data, benchmarking, engagement and feedback to identify where we can improve. Rather than reinventing the wheel, we have a pragmatic and open approach to seeking out evidence-based best practice and adapting and building on that in an intelligent way that works for East Sussex and specific places. Where we need to, we work with partners and

residents to devise local solutions that address the specific challenges we face, and which recognise local needs rather than ‘one size fits all’. We aim to create a culture where staff feel empowered to suggest areas of improvement and to make the evidence based case for change, and where leaders and managers are open to different ways of doing things.

Some examples of how we are using this approach to develop, improve and prepare for future challenges are outlined below:



Demand management and prevention

Faced with rising demand and reduced resources over a number of years and into the future, we have a clear focus on demand management and preventative approaches, particularly in our major demand-led areas of Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Health. For example, in **children's social care** we are implementing a range of preventative approaches, both to address rising demand and costs, and to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families. We launched our new edge of care 'Connected Families' Service in September 2022 to enable more children to live safely at home, to prevent family breakdown and support reunification. This new investment in a multi-disciplinary team including Intensive Support Practitioners, Connected Coaches and Multisystemic Therapists, has supported over 120 families to date and continues to develop and embed. We are preparing to implement the nationally trialled and evidenced Family Safeguarding model from January 2024. These developments involve re-engineering the profile of costs to the service through investment in stronger support for families in the short term, which evidence suggests would then lead to reduced need for children to be provided with care outside their family, reducing or avoiding costs to the Council in the longer term. A strong service, delivering cutting edge Family Safeguarding, in which social workers have manageable caseloads, will also be important in the current extremely competitive labour market. We are also implementing the family hubs programme as part of our early help offer, having successfully attracted funding.

We are currently working with partners to develop five **community networks** across the county. These will broaden the community hub mechanism developed locally during the pandemic to encompass a wider range of upstream prevention support, ensure access to practical help, support and make social opportunities available in local communities. Based on partnership delivery models, networks will work to an agreed core specification that is tailored to each district and borough and targeted towards the greatest levels of need. The approach is locally-led, building on existing community assets and place leadership, and ensures links to existing work, for example Public Health activity in Hastings. An internal governance group will ensure connections are made across all County

Council services, together with a joint leadership group with strategic partners including the VCSE sector. Initial pilots will be evaluated to inform the overall business case for the model of prevention and upstream intervention.

As part of the Shared Delivery Plan with the NHS, specific delivery milestones have been set out to take forward plans to develop **integrated teams for health, care and wellbeing** in local communities in East Sussex. This aims to increase levels of prevention, early intervention and proactive care and improved health outcomes overall, including enabling more targeted and nuanced deployment of resources based on specific assets and challenges faced in local areas.

In 2023/24 plans are aiming to deliver an initial 'proof of concept' in Hastings, building on local health inequalities initiatives and strengthening our agreed target operating model (TOM) for better **coordinated community health and care services** for people with long term complex care needs and multiple long term conditions. This will inform our broader shared approach to locality planning and delivery within the county and further phases of implementation. The plans outlined above for the five sustainable community networks based on our borough and district and Voluntary Action boundaries will further enable this, building on the partnership referral hubs previously developed during the pandemic, to ensure streamlined access to support with wider social and economic wellbeing needs across the wider complement of local government and VCSE services, including social isolation and loneliness.

Alongside this there will be a shared programme of **health outcomes** improvement targeting the leading causes of years spent in ill-health and early death for our population. Cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, mental health and frailty are all areas where there are sizeable and measurable opportunities for upstream primary prevention combined with improvements to the quality of care pathways and services. Whole system partnership action is intended to both improve immediate demand for health and care services and population health over the longer term.

Systems approach to tackling loneliness and social isolation

Public Health has been leading work with partners to take forward a system stewardship host/convenor role to support tackling loneliness and social isolation in the county, across all the services and infrastructure that can contribute. This will include agreeing core principles, what is needed from the host and what success will look

like. Once appointed the host will lead action planning to implementing recommendations from recent wide-ranging engagement on this issue.

Asset based community development

Through the commissioning of the 'Making it Happen' community development programme, Public Health continues to support residents living in areas with high levels of deprivation to come together to tackle issues that matter to them most. By encouraging residents and communities to focus on what is positive and works well to improve local places, the programme is supporting a wide range of community activity for examples through projects that aim to tackle climate change, improve access to nature, address

loneliness and increase access to arts to improve health and wellbeing. The programme will continue to deepen its understanding of how and why Making it Happen works to achieve the outcomes it does, and to increase the engagement of groups who are experiencing inequalities and are less represented within community activities.



Sustainable Adult Social Care

Given our older demographic, how we respond to an increasingly ageing population is key. As described in section 2, we have recognised for many years that East Sussex needs to be leading the way nationally on integrated health and social care services with a focus on supporting independence. We have also developed our **Adult Social Care Strategy** with local residents and partners. The strategy, to be launched in summer 2023, includes 14 'We will' statements and summarises how those working within and alongside ASC will respond to the priorities of local people. Once launched, these 'We will' statements will be converted into a detailed delivery plan which, in turn, will inform



the department's core policies and practice. The **Adult Social Care and Health Workforce Programme 2022-2024** brings together stakeholders to explore ways in which we can improve our recruitment processes and attract and recruit prospective staff more successfully and efficiently, with a particular focus on hard to fill posts. The programme will pilot and evaluate a range of creative approaches to recruitment in order to identify the most successful and effective methods for wider deployment across the department and Council.



Developing local transport

We have a number of key programmes underway to further develop local transport infrastructure, recognising the critical importance of connectivity to driving sustainable economic growth and access to services. These include a new seven-year (with option to extend for a further seven) **highways maintenance** contract worth £297m with Balfour Beatty Living Places. The new contract commenced on 1 May 2023, and includes enhanced quality requirements, carbon reduction targets and enhanced social value providing more apprenticeships and training and community benefits.

The Council has developed an Enhanced Partnership following the launch of the Government's National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better' alongside leading on the development of an East Sussex **Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)**. The East Sussex BSIP is an ambitious plan that aims to deliver to East Sussex residents and visitors the highest possible quality bus services that provide frequent and comprehensive choice, reduce congestion, and make a positive contribution to better air

quality and decarbonisation. The plan also aims to deliver a raft of supporting measures on fares and ticketing, information provision, technological innovation, and bus stop facilities. East Sussex received a funding allocation of £41.4m over 2.5 years to March 2025, the third highest for shire/rural authorities, and the highest per head of population amongst these authorities.

These developments sit within the context of our **Local Transport Plan** which is currently being updated. The updated Plan will consider how transport can help support sustainable economic recovery and growth in the county and improve the economic connectivity of East Sussex whilst also working towards achieving the Council's commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Our work with Transport for the South East frames our transport plans on a broader scale, including its ambitious Transport Strategy for the region and its recently agreed supporting Strategic Investment Plan which sets out priority transport interventions, including schemes in East Sussex, for national investment.

Responding to climate change

In October 2019 the County Council set a target of achieving carbon neutrality from its activities as soon as possible, and in any event by 2050. We have recently agreed our second corporate **Climate Emergency Plan** covering 2023 to 2025. This includes a focus on reducing the carbon emissions from our buildings, as well as committing capital investment on heat decarbonisation in our schools and non-school buildings. The Council has committed an additional £9.9m of funding up to March 2025 to cut corporate carbon emissions. We will continue work to reduce carbon emissions from our supply chain (scope 3 emissions). In line with our Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy we will seek to minimise negative, as well as promote positive, environmental impacts, where possible, within the Council's supply chain, from commissioning and procurement through to contract management.

Modelling work carried out to inform the development of the Climate Emergency Plan indicates that the Council is currently investing in an appropriate mix of measures to cut its carbon emissions, including low energy lighting, heat decarbonisation, solar PV and vehicle electrification. In order to increase the pace and scale of corporate carbon reduction the additional resources agreed by Cabinet are being used to invest in more of these measures and to establish a more structured, One Council programmatic approach, recognising that the journey to net zero requires additional organisational change to ensure that climate change is embedded throughout the organisation. This includes the delivery of interventions such as staff behavioural change, greater focus on scope 3 emissions, an assessment of carbon off-setting and developing a more robust approach to climate change adaptation across the Council.



We recognise that no single organisation, acting alone, has the powers or resources to secure the scale of change we need at a local level. Alongside what the Council is doing to show leadership in reducing its own emissions we are also working on a range of projects that reduce carbon emissions across the county, from assisting those in fuel poverty, providing grants to businesses to cut carbon to improving local bus services and developing a co-ordinated approach to the provision of on-street electric vehicle charge points.



We would welcome the peer team's view on our approach to working towards our net zero target and how we can further embed climate change considerations across the organisation.

Climate change meets the Blue Heart of a community



Case Study

Because climate change is already affecting East Sussex, we're beginning to adapt to its impact. The Blue Heart project is helping Eastbourne and parts of neighbouring Wealden understand and mitigate flooding, but also to live with changes in the local water flows and catchment.

Blue Heart combines development of a smart water management system which warns of heavy rainfall, calculates the best water management and issues flood warnings when necessary, with a public communication project. Discussion with residents about how they live alongside water resources (like rivers, streams and lakes) which are also part of their leisure time, will both inform flood mitigation work and increase public understanding of how climate change is being managed where they live.

Grants have been made to local groups who identified activities to help manage flooding or drought, reduce the impact of climate change, increase sustainability, or protect the natural environment.



Making best use of digital and data

The Council has a strategic digital framework that defines the thematic areas of digital technology use and the development of digital approaches to support service improvement. Research into best practice examples from other local authorities is used to shape our understanding and ambition for digitally enabled service improvement. Our IT and Digital Service is part of the Orbis partnership and this arrangement provides further opportunities to share digital learning and experience across the three partner authorities. The IT and Digital service also ensures that technology refresh decisions factor in the opportunity to enable and progress the digitisation of Council services. The delivery of digital change is service

led and is in response to reforms and increased service demand. Examples of delivery includes the Adult Social Care Being Digital programme, Our Care Connected programme, a health and care partnership digital initiative, and our current programme to replace our single back office system covering IT, HR and Finance with an Oracle Fusion suite. Cross-Council working is facilitated by the Corporate Digital Board which oversees corporate initiatives, shares learning and supports consistency of approaches across the organisation.

We have an active community of practice which brings together policy and data professionals from teams

across the Council to help identify and address common issues and share best practice. This includes learning from external networks such as the Advanced and Predictive Analytics Network in Local Government, the Cross Government and Public Sector Data Science Network and sector specific groups such as Data to Insight. Alongside building a longer-term vision for our use of data and insight, the group helps drive immediate improvements and provides peer support and development.





A caring vision of the near future



Case Study

Our Being Digital strategy set out a vision of how digital technology can be used to support adults in need of care across the county.

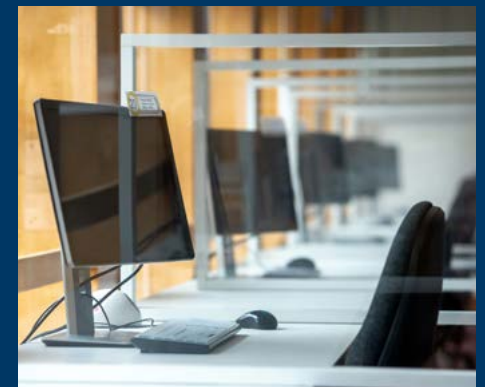
The three-year strategy, adopted in 2021, includes 30 projects that could improve care and help with access to services and sets out ways these can be introduced.

The projects outlined in the strategy include the introduction of online financial assessments, which could cut down the amount of time staff spend on these – as well as technology that provides real-time information about services and pressure points.

The strategy also outlines how the Council and providers can benefit from remote working, such as video assessments from staff and telecare.

The aim of the strategy is not to replace current options with digital technology, but enabling those that can use technology to improve the lives of care users, keeping them more independent – and cutting down on hospital stays.

[Adult Social Care and Health - Being Digital strategy, 2020-2023 | East Sussex County Council](#)



Workforce capacity

Supporting and developing our staff

As covered in section 3, our current **People Strategy 2020-2023** sets out the actions we are taking to support and develop our managers and staff and incorporates the activities arising out of the recruitment and retention and leading the workforce workstreams. One-off investment was agreed by Cabinet in September 2022 to further progress these actions which will enable the continuation of the current work on our employer brand and work to update the jobs pages on our website, as well as the updating of our recruitment processes and documentation. Work will also include looking at how we extend our reach into sections of the labour market that are underrepresented

and/or face significant barriers to employment by working in partnership with organisations that support these communities. This will be supported by a programme of work to build our organisational capacity in workforce planning to enable us to forecast workforce gaps and future need and to identify opportunities for succession planning.

We have in place well established arrangements for supporting new and existing staff to undertake apprenticeship training, funded through the apprenticeship levy. In particular, we are using apprenticeships to develop a progression pipeline wherever possible.

Our experience has identified the need to support some groups to become 'work ready' and the additional funding provided by Cabinet will fund a new Pre-Employment Co-ordinator post which will have specific responsibility for establishing clear pathways for jobseekers to access opportunities within the Council. We are fortunate enough to have an in-house apprenticeship provider in the ESCC Apprenticeship and Qualifications Team. This Team delivers a number of the apprenticeships for our staff including the Operational Manager apprenticeship which is one way for staff to develop their leadership skills.

We know that, amongst other groups,

we need to attract more young people to work in the Council and we are therefore linking in with our Youth Cabinet and via the Participation Team in Children's Services to access this cohort and talk to them about jobs in the Council. We have also recently signed up to advertising our roles and promoting the Council as an employer of choice on a study app (Study Smarter) for people who are studying from GCSE level through to university.

OUR • COMMITMENTS
Delivering the PEOPLE STRATEGY

ENGAGEMENT



Leadership development

Our new 'Ladder to Leadership' programme has been designed to equip leaders in the early stages of their career with the leadership skills and competencies needed to enable them to step into more senior roles when they become available. The programme launched in 2022 and our first cohort has recently completed the programme. This programme is built on a series of work-based projects in areas identified by senior managers as priorities for change thus enabling both a grounded change-focused development experience for participants and real outcomes for the services concerned.

The Heads of Service masterclass programme was developed in parallel for our senior leaders. Comprising a series of webinar masterclasses, the programme is designed to inspire and support the development of our Heads of Service and Assistant Directors. The webinars provide insight into key topic areas that are relevant for strategic leadership in the public sector and the programme is playing an important

role in creating a network to bring our Heads of Service together to learn collectively, develop their networks and discuss challenging issues with their peers from across different service areas.

These initiatives will help us to develop our future managers and leaders. Supporting the continuous professional development of our staff to enable them to reach their full potential will not only support succession planning within the organisation to provide a pipeline of potential future talent but is also a strong retention tool.

New leaders on the ladder



Case Study

We've already been bowled over by the success of our Ladder to Leadership programme, introduced in 2022 to encourage and develop the next generation of ESCC leaders.

The programme was designed to offer a small group of colleagues in the early stages of leadership the chance to develop the skills and experience that would equip them for senior leadership roles at ESCC. For the Council, the programme was intended to nurture future leaders to strengthen the organisation and encourage more cross-department vision.

Applicants who were selected from a competitive field for the programme were assigned to develop a specific project important to the Council but overseen by a senior manager from a different department.

They were also helped to develop and reflect on their leadership style and potential with a senior mentor, one to one coaching, personality assessment and leadership masterclasses.

All 15 of the first cohort completed the programme with aplomb and spoke of how it had enriched their working life. A 360 assessment against our leadership capability framework at the start of the programme and at the end showed they had all demonstrated significant improvement against the capabilities and

many are now ready to step up into more senior leadership roles.

Applications for the second cohort of the programme are now underway.



Absence and wellbeing

Sickness absence levels reduced significantly during the pandemic. However, the 2022/23 year end sickness absence figure for the whole authority (excluding schools) was 10.07 days lost per FTE, an increase of 8.9% since last year. The predominant reason for the increase is a rise in Covid related absence at the beginning of 2022/23. Mental health absence has also increased by 1,483 days compared to the same period last year. However, benchmarking data suggests this is a common theme across local authorities and our absence rates are within the average for this. Nonetheless, set against this background, we have put a range of measures in place to

increase support to staff including an improved stress risk assessment tool, a dedicated ‘mental fitness’ campaign for stress awareness month in April, a series of interactive staff webinars in partnership with ‘able futures’ to raise awareness of the mental health support available from our Employee Assistance Provider and a film for World Mental Health Day to promote the resources available, raise awareness and encourage early intervention.

More broadly, the Council has in place an extensive package of **wellbeing support** built around the four key themes of:

- management and leadership – covering areas such as managing teams remotely, compassionate leadership, coaching etc.
 - mental health and emotional support – including mindfulness, wellness plans, mental health first aiders (we now have over 100 staff who are trained in this role), menopause, support for staff who are carers, neurodiversity, Counselling and Employee Assistance Programme provision.
 - physical wellbeing – covering, for example, how to work safely from home, workstation assessments, reasonable adjustments, musculoskeletal concerns.
 - financial wellbeing – incorporating staff benefits such as salary finance (an organisation providing insights into money management), travel and loans benefits, credit unions.
- Following Covid and the move to hybrid working, additional resources have been added including sessions around exploring isolation and its impact on mental health and wellness



New ways of working

We are working to maximise the benefits of new ways of working for our staff, our services, our costs and our carbon emissions. Following the pandemic, the **Workstyles Programme** was established to support the organisation with the wider return to the workplace and a shift to hybrid working. A series of Q&A workshops were held with staff to enable them to learn more about Workstyles and our proposed hybrid working arrangements. The Council's new hybrid working model was launched in April 2022 to support the wider return to the office, including for those staff who had been wholly working from home during the pandemic.

Subject to the needs of the service, hybrid working allows work to be structured in a way that enables our staff to be as productive as possible, regardless of where they are working. All teams were asked to undertake a 'Team Agreement' which sets out the arrangements the Team has agreed to put in place to ensure they work together effectively whilst working from different locations some of the time, and can be used as the basis

for ongoing conversations about how the team will work together. The Team Agreement ensures a shared understanding and commitment on issues such as communication, team meetings, the induction of new staff members and the minimum time to be spent in the office.

A survey was undertaken in October 2022 to understand how staff were adapting to the new ways of working and to identify any further support needed. The majority of staff who work in a hybrid way are working one day per week in the office and the majority of staff said that hybrid working has increased their effectiveness and their wellbeing.

A new Workstyles Policy has been developed which sets out the key requirements and considerations that will enable both managers and staff to work from Council premises, or other suitable alternative locations. All staff who work in a hybrid way are asked to ensure that they comply with the policy and use it to help complete their Team Agreement.

As part of the support arrangements, a number of e-learning modules focussed on hybrid working have been developed, including performance management in a hybrid working environment and managing hybrid meetings.

The move to hybrid working has had a significant impact on how we use our office estate. Occupancy levels across our main office buildings were assessed towards the end of 2022 at below 25% of desk capacity and there is increased demand for confidential meeting space and technology to support hybrid meetings. In response we have reviewed our future requirements and made a number of changes including low cost adaptations to our office bases in Eastbourne and relocation of our Hastings office base into a more compact premises which better meet service needs and reduces our office footprint in Hastings by 39%. We have also begun a project looking at the long term future of our main County Hall site. Across this work, opportunities for cost and carbon efficiencies, as well as flexibility to meet future needs are guiding principles.

We would welcome the peer team's perspective on our approach to new ways of working, and how we can best maximise the opportunities arising.

We would welcome the peer team's views on:

- whether we could do more to maximise the benefits of partnership working for East Sussex.
- our approach to working towards our net zero target and how we can further embed climate change considerations across the organisation.
- our approach to new ways of working, and how we can best maximise the opportunities arising.



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