

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 29 September 2025.

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| PRESENT | Councillors Matthew Beaver (Chair), Julia Hilton (Vice Chair), Chris Collier, Ian Hollidge, Philip Lunn, Steve Murphy, Paul Redstone, Stephen Shing, David Tutt and Brett Wright |
| PRESENT, VIRTUALLY | Councillor Eleanor Kirby-Green |
| LEAD MEMBERS | Councillors Nick Bennett, Penny Di Cara, and Claire Dowling |
| ALSO PRESENT | Rupert Clubb, Director of Communities, Economy and Transport Ros Parker, Chief Operating Officer Tom Alty, Deputy Chief Finance Officer Lisa Simmonds, Infrastructure Planning & Policy Manager Jon Wheeler, Team Manager - Infrastructure Planning & Place Ismina Harvey, Head of Communities Kelly Burr, Road Safety Team Manager Patrick Major, Scrutiny and Policy Adviser |

9. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 22 JULY 2025

9.1 The Committee agreed the minutes of the non-statutory meeting held on 22 July 2025 and RESOLVED the actions within them.

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

10.1 There were no apologies for absence. Cllr Kirby-Green attended via Teams.

11. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

11.1 Cllr Hollidge declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest for items 14 and 15, as he wrote a regular article in a local paper that related to cycling.

12. URGENT ITEMS

12.1 There were no urgent items.

13. WORK PROGRAMME

13.1 The Chair introduced the report which outlines future items for the Place Scrutiny Committee. The Committee discussed potential areas of interest for addition to the work programme.

13.2 The Committee discussed an approach to the scrutiny of the Queensway Gateway Road project, noting the challenges and delays to construction, and the need to learn lessons from the project to inform future major projects, including the planned construction of the new Exeat Bridge. The Committee noted the considerable public interest in the issue, but that the road had not yet opened and that scrutiny could not begin until after it had. The Committee agreed to discuss an approach to scrutinising the issue at its awayday in the afternoon.

13.3 Cllr Hilton made the following points in relation to Queensway Gateway Road:

- in her view there had been no proper independent challenge or scrutiny of the whole decision making process, in particular the risk register/assessment and the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process which to her view should have been completed before any further funding was awarded, and asked what lessons there were for future oversight and scrutiny of major projects to ensure rigorous challenge of business cases at an early stage. She suggested that there appeared to have been no proper independent scrutiny of decisions throughout the whole project from 2015 onwards with South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) not providing any serious scrutiny, and asked how the Committee could ensure this for future projects, such as the Exeat Bridge replacement.
- whether the Council had demonstrated sufficient duty of care not to be sued for negligence by local businesses who have suffered major financial losses from the ongoing delays
- A shorter scrutiny review should take place, covering the process, timeline, project management, traffic management, communication and engagement plans since ESCC decided to complete the QGR itself and how a project timeline of 16 weeks turned into one covering 52 weeks and still counting.

13.4 The Committee discussed its approach to scrutinising major projects and commented that it should be able to have a role in scrutinising ongoing projects for assurance that they are progressing as planned and to understand challenges that emerge during them. The Committee agreed that scrutiny should not add unnecessary delay to what can be complex schemes and should therefore be considerate and proportionate in its approach to scrutinising major projects, and would not be able to make decisions regarding the project.

13.5 The Committee noted the upcoming contract award for the on-street electric vehicle (EV) charge point contract and requested a report to the next meeting on the approach to the rollout of on-street EV charging.

13.6 The Committee requested a briefing to be added to the work programme on the work undertaken by the trading standards team to combat illicit trading of cigarettes and vapes, including through the use of recently acquired powers.

13.7 The Committee discussed the inclusion of verge cutting policy in the future scoping of a footway maintenance review, noting concerns about the impact of grass cutting on pavements. It was noted that town and parish councils may have the option to fund additional cuts, although this is not possible in all areas such as Eastbourne and Hastings.

13.8 The Committee requested a progress report on the updated strategic highways policies and asset management plans adopted following the Lead Member for Transport and Environment meeting on 8 September 2025.

13.9 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- 1) amend the work programme in line with paragraphs 13.2, 13.5, 13.6 and 13.8.
- 2) confirm the membership of the street works scoping board.

14. EAST SUSSEX LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LCWIP)

14.1 The Infrastructure Planning & Policy Manager introduced the report and gave a presentation. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is a five-year strategic plan aimed at improving walking, wheeling, and cycling infrastructure across East Sussex, with the overarching goal of embedding active travel into everyday life through accessible, high-quality infrastructure. Active Travel England (ATE) is responsible with setting standards, allocating funding, and monitoring local authority performance in the development and delivery of active travel infrastructure.

14.2 The LCWIP was originally approved in September 2021 and prioritised areas with the greatest potential for active travel improvements, particularly the coastal strip and larger market towns. Of the 20 priority schemes in the original LCWIP, 15 are either in development or have been delivered. Since it was first approved, walking levels in East Sussex have increased, but cycling levels have declined, both in line with national trends. The Council is undertaking a review of the LCWIP and these trends highlight the need for balanced investment across all active travel modes.

14.3 Funding for active travel comes from a wide range of sources with capital and revenue funding having been secured from ATE annually, alongside other sources including the Local Growth Fund, Town Deal funding, Levelling Up Fund, and developer contributions (through s106 and CIL). Approximately £20m had been secured for capital schemes over the last five years. Examples of schemes in development or being delivered included:

- School Streets: 3 permanent schemes had been introduced following trials using experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO), resulting in a 10% increase in children using active travel modes to travel to school.
- Eastbourne Liveable Town Centre: Multi-phase improvements to pedestrian access between the railway station and seafront, with further funding being sought for enhancements to Memorial Roundabout.

- A22 Corridor Junction Improvements: Active travel integrated into major infrastructure upgrades, including light-controlled crossings.
- Uckfield Transport Hub: A multi-modal transport hub that would support people to use active travel to get to and from the new bus station funded through developer contributions.

14.4 ATE assess local authorities on an annual basis on their ability to design and deliver active travel initiatives, based on a local authority submitted self-assessment, and are rated at a level from 0 to 4. The assessment considers budget, leadership and organisational capability, network planning, and scheme delivery. ESCC is currently rated at level 1 overall, with level 2 scores in leadership and network planning. ESCC has undertaken extensive officer training and is working to improve scheme delivery outcomes.

14.5 A review of the LCWIP is underway to align it with LTP4 and develop a new pipeline of schemes in response to evolving national policy and active travel trends. Concept design and appraisal work will be undertaken, with public consultation currently planned for January 2026. Officers will also undertake site visits to Cambridge and Camden to explore best practice. The revised LCWIP will be presented to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment in June 2026.

Maintenance and accessibility

14.6 The committee raised concerns regarding vegetation overgrowth or parked vehicles on cycle paths and pavements, which can obstruct access and pose challenges for pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair and mobility scooter users from using active travel infrastructure. The Infrastructure Planning & Policy Manager responded that maintenance issues could be reported directly to the team and that they could address issues in specific areas promptly in coordination with the asset management team.

Network connectivity and integration

14.7 The committee commented on the presence of short, disconnected cycle lanes that do not link to wider networks, which can be perceived as poor value for money and potentially hazardous, particularly where vehicles park on cycle lanes. The Infrastructure Planning & Place Team Manager noted the concerns caused by fragmented infrastructure and commented that some short stretches of cycle lanes were historic. He outlined that the LCWIP review would aim to connect bits of infrastructure which were not currently connected and create a more comprehensive and integrated network. Officers would engage with members and local cycling groups ahead of the public consultation to identify priority areas.

14.8 The committee raised concerns about how individual objections from councillors raised at Planning Committee to elements of a scheme in their division can undermine the wider integration of the active travel network, and asked what communication there was so that members understood the impact of objections on the wider network. Officers agreed to consider how to better communicate the impact of local objections on the overall network and will explore mechanisms to support more cohesive decision-making across schemes and would consider this as part of the LCWIP review.

Behavioural Change and Usage Monitoring

14.9 The committee asked why there had been a decline in cycling levels since the pandemic and asked whether behavioural changes or increased traffic were contributing factors. The Infrastructure Planning & Policy Manager confirmed that cycling levels have returned to 2020 levels, with a 2% decline observed nationally. She suggested that increased post-pandemic traffic may be a contributing factor and agreed to explore the evidence and provide information outside of the meeting.

14.10 The committee asked how usage levels of active travel infrastructure is monitored and whether this is compared with forecast activity levels. The Infrastructure Planning & Place Team Manager explained that an active travel assessment was undertaken for potential schemes to understand what the likely additional trips from introducing infrastructure and this was done using a standard national assessment tool and supported business case development. This helped to prioritise schemes that would have the biggest impact. He noted that monitoring is currently limited to off-road cycle counters and national datasets and that scheme monitoring and evaluation was an area that the Council was seeking to improve.

Communication and Public Engagement

14.11 The committee discussed modal shift and behaviour change the importance of inclusive messaging that communicates the broader societal benefits of active travel. Cllr Hollidge commented that communications on active travel should emphasise the benefits for all user groups, not just those that use active travel modes. Cllr Hilton commented that a wider narrative should include messaging on the environmental and health benefits of active travel. The Infrastructure Planning & Policy Manager confirmed that tailored communications are developed for each scheme, often with support from local stakeholders. She cited the School Streets programme as an example where engaged parent groups contributed to effective communications.

14.12 The committee welcomed the use of co-design and experimental TROs in the development and implementation of schemes and suggested enhancing the process to speed up future schemes. Officers are working to streamline the development process for future schemes under the revised LCWIP. The Infrastructure Planning & Policy Manager explained that following the successful implementation of 3 school street schemes officers were working to develop a clear process to set up these schemes in future.

Funding

14.13 The committee raised concerns about potential reductions in Government funding for active travel and asked about the risk of reduced funding. Officers acknowledged the uncertainty around future funding, particularly in light of local government changes and the establishment of the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA). Officers noted that the June Spending Review indicated £616 million in capital funding for active travel from 2026/27 to 2029/30, but allocations to East Sussex are not yet known.

14.14 The committee asked whether Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 contributions could be better utilised for active travel. Officers confirmed they are exploring how to better use CIL and s106 funding for active travel measures, including smaller measures such as dropped kerbs, however they noted that s106 contributions are often tightly defined by legal agreements, and that ESCC is not a CIL charging authority, therefore requiring it to bid for CIL funding from those that are.

Speed limits

14.15 The committee discussed the role of 20mph zones, as lower speed limits could potentially reduce perceived dangers for people who may be considering active travel options. The committee asked if further guidance from government on 20mph zones was expected in the near future. Officers confirmed they were not aware of any new guidance coming forward at the moment.

14.16 Cllr Wright commented that he had been told by councillors in Oxford that the most effective way to increase active travel was by lowering speed limits, and encouraged officers to visit areas such as Oxford, London, and Wales, where proactive 20mph policies had supported modal shift. Officers confirmed that East Sussex's 20mph policy aligns with existing national guidance and is applied when assessing new zones.

Infrastructure Enhancements

14.17 The committee suggested exploration of a number of 'quick wins' which were relatively inexpensive enhancements that could increase active travel, such as timings on traffic lights to allow to allow longer crossing times for pedestrians or cyclists to set off before cars. Cllr Hilton commented that there was high demand for cycle storage in Hastings and that some communities may be willing to self-fund cycle hangers. Officers commented that they were hoping to bring forward a trial in Hastings to roll out cycle hangers, and that they worked with the highways maintenance contractor Balfour Beatty Living Places when they were upgrading signals to incorporate cyclist head-start signals where feasible.

Scheme Delivery Timelines

14.18 The committee noted that some schemes took a long time to bring forward, and officers noted this was largely due to limited funding streams that meant schemes had to be prioritised and delivered over longer timeframes.

Site Visits and Best Practice

14.19 The Committee welcomed the team undertaking site visits and learning from best practice in other areas such as Cambridge and Camden, and suggested they also visit Oxford, Southwark and Waltham Forest.

14.20 The Committee RESOLVED to:

- (1) note recent project development and delivery associated with the East Sussex LCWIP alongside other active travel schemes, initiatives and training;
- (2) note ESCC recent response to ATE's Local Authority Capability assessment;
- (3) note the current activities associated with the review of the LCWIP; and
- (4) note engagement with the Place Scrutiny Committee, with an invite circulated to all Councillors, on the draft East Sussex LCWIP will take place through a workshop in early November 2025, prior to a public and stakeholder consultation in early 2026.

15. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF LOCAL SPEED LIMIT POLICY

Note: The Committee's report attached as Appendix 2 is a previous version of the report. The final agreed version of the report was included with the agenda of the Full Council meeting on 11 February 2025 and can be found [at this link](#).

15.1 The committee received a six-month update report on the implementation of the recommendations from the scrutiny review of the Council's speed limit policy. The action plan arising from the review was agreed by Full Council in February, and the update outlined progress against each recommendation.

15.2 The Head of Communities confirmed that all elements of the action plan were either completed or in progress. She confirmed that updates to the website were being finalised and would be published online in early October. A revised Councillor Toolkit had been finalised and will be shared shortly. A Parish Council Toolkit, based on the Councillor version, would also be distributed in October.

15.3 Cllr Hollidge, who had been Chair of the Review Board, commented that progress had been positive and welcomed the update. He reiterated that speeding remains a concern and suggested that reducing the speed of vehicles could encourage greater uptake of cycling. He welcomed and supported further collaboration between the road safety and active travel teams.

15.4 The committee RESOLVED to note the updates to the recommendations and action plan set out in Appendix 1.

16. ANY OTHER ITEMS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 4

16.1 There were none.

The meeting ended at 12.03 pm.

Councillor Matthew Beaver (Chair)