

Members' Update – East Sussex County Council – July 2025

Cllr Bob Bowdler - Wealden East Division - *"The Heart of Wealden"*

(Heathfield, Horam, Hooe, Herstmonceux, Ninfield, Warbleton & Wartling parishes)

LOCAL ISSUES:

UTILITY WORKS (Water) Returns to Punnetts Town: Works will recommence for this scheme with SEW starting on site from the 21st July setting up ready to commence the closures from the 23rd July on the B2096 Battle Road and Middle Lane through until 2nd September. A closure will be in place at the same time on Cade Street coming down onto and including Old Heathfield Road.

During this period there will be some minor works at North Street & Hugglets Lane for the electrical connection of the booster units. Dates to be advised but will occur towards the end of the scheme when the main has been tested.

COUNTY REPORT:

Adult Social Care

Beachy Head guides aim to boost cliff's reputation

Volunteer guides have been introduced at Beachy Head to encourage visitors to enjoy the famous landscape for its beauty and history and to improve their mental and physical wellbeing.

New activities include guided walks encouraging birdwatching and photography, yoga sessions and 'dance groove' where visitors can dance together in the landscape with music played through headphones.

The Beachy Head Ambassadors is a two-year pilot project run by the charity 3VA and funded by East Sussex Public Health.

Beachy Head is an area of outstanding natural beauty on the Sussex coastline East Sussex County Council is following in the footsteps of the authorities who manage San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge and Sydney Gap in Australia where footfall has been successfully increased.

More information is available [here](#).

Communities, Economy and Transport

Community welcomes new village speed limit

A community has welcomed speed limit reductions designed to improve road safety in a historic East Sussex village.

Investment from the county council's local transport capital improvements programme has enabled the new 20mph limit to take effect throughout Alfriston to address concerns over the speed of traffic and the dangers posed to pedestrians on the narrow streets.

The scheme also included the installation of two new 'gateway' signs at the start of the new 20mph limit, a high-friction surface where the speed limit changes from 30mph, and a refresh of existing yellow lines and road markings.

New double yellow lines were painted in the village centre to stop obstructive parking and signs alerting motorists to the narrow streets have also been installed at the entrance to the village. During the work, 65

signs were installed and nine new signposts, roadside vegetation was cut back and about 70 metres of footway was reconstructed.

With overnight traffic management in place, the East Sussex Highways contractor Balfour Beatty Living Places also cleaned the roadside across the village, gullies on the high street, removed three dangerous trees, and repaired a pothole and an area of broken carriageway edge in the High Street.

More information is available [here](#).

Skills East Sussex celebrated 10-year milestone

Skills East Sussex celebrated a decade of working to improve local employment and skills levels and boost economic prosperity in East Sussex.

Initially commissioned and funded by the county council for just two years, Skills East Sussex (SES) began in 2015 with the aim of raising prosperity, supporting vulnerable residents and ensuring that people of all ages had the skills they needed to succeed.

Over the past ten years, SES has worked collaboratively to:

- launch six industry sector task groups to align education with industry needs as well as an apprenticeship forum, an unemployment forum and an adult learning network;
- establish one of the UK's first Careers Hubs, now supporting over 40 primary schools as well as all secondary schools in the county with flagship initiatives like Open Doors, the ICAN Careers Fair, and the Steps to Success programme for vulnerable young people;
- help East Sussex businesses navigate apprenticeships and access ESCC's apprenticeship levy funding, through the TRANSFORM programme;
- develop a range of innovative adult learning and employment programmes including Moving on Up, Support into Work, and Multiply, helping adults find work and improve their skills; and
- collectively secure over £60million of additional funding since 2017 for the delivery of employment and skills initiatives and for capital infrastructure, including Plumpton College's AgriFood Centre and immersive learning environments at East Sussex College.

SES also led the county's response to major employment and skills challenges in recent years, including the pandemic and the current cost-of-living crisis, by adapting quickly and delivering targeted employment and skills initiatives in new ways.

More information is available [here](#).

Children invited to grow their imagination with the Summer Reading Challenge

East Sussex libraries are inviting children aged four to 11 to read six books over the summer months as part of The Reading Agency's Story Garden Summer Reading Challenge 2025.

This year's theme of adventures in nature and the great outdoors aims to encourage children to uncover stories that celebrate the natural world and the power of imagination.

It is free for children to take part in the Summer Reading Challenge. Those taking part will receive special Story Garden stickers and other rewards. After reading six books they will earn a certificate and a medal.

Children can read any library book of their choice including fiction, non-fiction, picture books or books they share with parents and carers. eBooks, eAudiobooks and books on CD also count towards the challenge.

A series of nature themed free events will take place in East Sussex libraries throughout the summer as part of the celebrations for this year's Summer Reading Challenge. Activities include Story Garden themed Scavenger Hunts and colouring activities as well as Craft with Nature sessions.

The Summer Reading Challenge started on 5 July and will end on 6 September in all East Sussex libraries.

More information is available [here](#).

Governance Services

Flying the flag for Pride

The Pride Flag was raised above County Hall in July to show support for LGBTQ+ staff and residents. The flag, which celebrates the diversity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and non-binary people, including those from ethnically diverse communities, was raised to mark this year's Pride celebrations.

Representatives from East Sussex County Council, Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, South East Coast Ambulance Service, and Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust gathered to show their support for our LGBTQ+ communities at a special event on 15 July.

Pride events are also taking place around the county with Eastbourne Pride 2025 occurring on 19 July and the Brighton and Hove Pride runs on 2 August and 3 August.

Hastings Pride is on 24 August, with the Hastings Pride Parade along Hastings seafront from 11am, while Seahaven Pride Family Festival takes place the following weekend on 30 August on the Martello Fields.

More information is available [here](#).

Devolution and mayoral election plans move forward

Leaders have welcomed approval of their plans to collaborate in a single strategic authority for Sussex with a directly elected mayor.

The government has agreed to move forward with a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) and confirmed the first mayoral election is due to take place in May 2026. The new MCCA will bring together all upper tier local councils across Sussex to operate across the region while, while existing councils will continue to deliver day-to-day services.

The [Devolution Bill \(2025\)](#) outlines how significant powers, and funding will move down from central government to a local level, where decisions can be shaped with and by the people who live and work here. Including some of the things that impact residents the most, including transport, housing, jobs, economic growth, and public safety.

The legal process for Sussex and Brighton to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) will now begin, this is known as a 'statutory instrument'.

All councils in Sussex and Brighton will now look in details at the powers proposed and understand the financial implications, before giving their formal consent through their decision-making processes.

You Tube Video on the Governments proposed changed to Local Government in Sussex (LGR):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoevHwtzYTI>

More information is available [here](#).

Councils launch resident consultation on Brighton and Hove City Council Local Government reorganisation proposals

Lewes District Council and East Sussex County Council have announced a joint public consultation inviting East Sussex residents to have their say on proposed boundary changes set out by Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC).

The move comes amid BHCC's proposals to absorb areas within Lewes district as part of the government's Local Government Reorganisation. The city council's plans propose that Lewes district residents in Kingston, East Saltdean, Peacehaven, Telscombe, and Newhaven become residents of Brighton & Hove.

Local Government Reorganisation will see new unitary councils established across East and West Sussex, including Brighton & Hove. A unitary council provides all the public services that are currently split between district/borough councils and the county council.

Following the consultation, East Sussex authorities will submit a business case to the government in September based on the creation of one single unitary council, covering the existing East Sussex footprint.

The survey will be open until 5pm on Monday 25 August 2025.

More information is available [here](#).

For your info: **Meetings I attended in June as your County Councillor:**

ESCC 3 x Weekly DCS/ADCS Briefing
LGA Conference – Liverpool
Member briefing – Housing strategy
Lead Member for Education & SEND
Visit to 6th Form College & Exhibition
ESCC Full Council
Visit to The Youth Justice Service
GATCOM Briefing
Horam Parish Council
ESCC People Scrutiny Committee
ESCC Cabinet
ESCC Governance Committee
ESCC Corporate Parenting Panel
Visit to Childrens Home – Eastbourne
Visit to Holiday Activity & Fun event – Eastbourne
Highways Contractor 'Innovation Day' - Ringmer
Warbleton Parish Council
Highways Contractor Divisional Briefing
GATCOM - Gatwick



1/8/25